

WEST FAIRLEE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES – MEETING MINUTES
January 12th, 2026– 5:35 PM

The meeting of the West Fairlee Free Public Library Trustees was called to order at 5:35 PM. Present were Sarah Molesworth, Jillian Hatch, Caitlin Leonard, and Bekka Cadwell and librarian, John Raynor. Absent was Melanie Bacon.

The minutes of the December 8th meeting were reviewed and approved without changes. The trustees added additional items to the agenda: Jillan’s conversation with Bree Carlson on the capitol budget plan as well as next year’s library budget. Also, the summer reading grant and other potential grants to help the library with upcoming needs.

The trustees continued their discussion around the opening of the library in the upcoming weeks. This included planning for the coming year, with a focus on budgeting, technology needs, catalog systems, and grant opportunities. Much of the discussion centered on strengthening the library’s operational capacity while working within the constraints of the town’s fiscal cycle.

Budget Planning and Financial Status

The board reviewed the proposed 2026 budget, noting that it represents a substantial increase over past budgets, which have typically been \$2,000. The proposed increase to approximately \$10,000 reflects a desire to more realistically support book purchasing, technology upgrades, and day-to-day operations. Trustees emphasized that the goal of this year’s proposal is to clearly present the library’s most immediate and annual needs.

The budget must be submitted by Monday, with the intention of circulating a draft for review by Friday. The board also discussed the unusual timing of the town’s fiscal cycle, noting that while budgets are due in March, funds are not released until October after taxes are collected. The current financial balance was reviewed, with the remaining funds now in the high \$14,000 range following a \$3,000 payment from the original \$17,000.

Technology and Equipment Needs

Technology needs were discussed in detail, particularly the desire to purchase a ceiling-mounted projector and pull-down screen for programs and presentations. Cost estimates ranged from \$100 to \$500 for the projector and \$85 to \$200 for an electric screen, with a total projected cost between \$500 and \$750. Installation considerations include the need for mounting hardware, HDMI cabling, and potential challenges related to ceiling support. Additional equipment needs discussed included a multi-function printer and antivirus software to protect the library system.

Library Catalog Software and Consortium Planning

The board revisited long-term plans to transition to the COHA catalog system and join the VO-CAL consortium. After speaking to a few people, John noted that VO-CAL is currently slowing the addition of new libraries to the consortium due to their board members' upcoming retirements. This will delay our potential membership until at least Autumn 2026. Because of this delay, the board agreed to continue using ResourceMate in the interim.

It was noted that ResourceMate does not affect the library's ability to participate in interlibrary loans and can be upgraded to allow remote catalog access. Joining VO-CAL remains a longer-term goal, as it is required for participation in the One Card program, which allows reciprocal borrowing among approximately 20 libraries in the Upper Valley. This would be a major asset for the library going forward. John also said that the library is now added to the Green Mountain Library consortium. This provides Audio books as well as E-books for the our patrons.

Book Purchasing and Discount Opportunities

The board discussed book purchasing strategies, noting that hardcover books typically cost between \$15 and \$20 each. Several cost-saving options were identified, including potential discounts of approximately 40 percent through the Massachusetts Higher Education Co-op, as well as 15–20 percent discounts from local bookstores such as Bear Pond Book store in Montpelier and The Norwich Book Store. Trustees also discussed working with distributors, which can offer a wider selection and deliver books already processed with protective covers.

Grant Planning and Fundraising

Grant opportunities were discussed as an important way to supplement the library's book and programming budgets. Sarah mentioned that the Summer Reading Program grant is now open and is estimated at approximately \$2,000 with a deadline around March, as well as the CLiF grant, also estimated at about \$2,000. The discussion highlighted the importance of assigning a dedicated grant writer to ensure that application deadlines are tracked and opportunities are not missed. It was noted that some grants require minimum participation levels, such as at least 30 children for the summer reading grant. Sarah offered to take the lead on exploring and applying for grants, drawing on experience and contacts developed through state-level training she is currently in.

Action Items and Next Steps

Several follow-up tasks were identified to move the board's work forward for the following month.

- John will research technology and software costs including pricing for a ceiling-mounted projector and screen.
- John will also investigate upgrades to ResourceMate for remote access, the longer-term COHA transition, and antivirus software, with findings to be shared by Thursday.
- John will also measure the existing external directory sign and contact sign companies for quotes on a larger sign, potentially including an LED display, and will coordinate with a local woodworker who has offered to donate a custom podium.
- John will search both digital and physical records for past grant applications and share relevant materials with Sarah leading grant efforts.
- Sarah will begin work on grant applications, starting with the Summer Reading Program and CLiF grants. Also potentially reaching out to the Jack and Dorthey Byrne Foundation.
- Jillian will finalize the 2026 budget proposal and submit it to the town by Monday, aiming to share a draft for board review by Friday.
- Jillian will also contact WB Mason to obtain pricing and information on renting a water dispenser and/or Keurig machine for the library.
- Finally, John will formally introduce himself and raise the issue of purchasing procedures, advocating for a more efficient system—such as the use of a P-Card—to streamline library purchasing for the future.

The next trustee meeting will be determined at a later date.

The meeting adjourned at 7:21pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Caitlin Leonard