

MEETING MINUTES
Olean Public Library Board of Trustees
January 15, 2025
5:30 pm – Conference Room

The mission of the Olean Public Library is to assist all people with their educational, informational and recreational needs.

Call to Order at 5:30 pm by Board President Lanna Waterman. In attendance were trustees Copella, J. Mahar, McElfresh, Shumway, Tenglund, Waterman, Whitford, Treasurer Steffen, Business Office Manager Angell, Assistant Director K. Mahar, and Director La Voie.

1. Waive the reading of the minutes of the previous meetings and approve as mailed.
2. Voice of the Public/Correspondence: None
3. Approval of Warrant Sheets for December 31-January 15:
 #959 Operating Fund: \$82,992.47
 #332 Capital Fund: \$896.25

Discussion:

- Everything looked in order on the warrant sheets, with ordinary expenses.
- The warrant sheet was short because of the meeting at the end of December.
- We were up on investment income in 2024, and that was positive.
- The Baker & Taylor bill that came in January 2025 for books received in 2024 caused use of fund balance to increase for 2024.
- We should record capital as expenses, not an asset, and not worry about depreciation expense.

4. Review of Financial Statements

Discussion:

- Discussion ensued about how to track campaign revenue if we have a capital campaign. With a big project, it would have to be by itself.
- There was a budget line adjustment for health care.
- **MOTION McElfresh, Copella):** To move \$500 from the Disability line into the Health Insurance line for the 2024 budget. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION (Whitford, Tenglund) : To approve Agenda items 1, 3, and 4. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Director's Report

Trustee Election and Budget Vote Calendar

- A trustee election and budget vote calendar is usually presented to the Board for approval in January. However, with uncertainty about whether we can hold the bond vote simultaneously, we will hold off on creating the calendar. The election and budget vote is usually held on the first Tuesday in May (May 6 this year). We need to confirm if we can have the bond and budget vote on the same day. The architect also needs to provide updated cost estimates.

- We can schedule the vote up until June 30, so if the Board wants to move the vote further ahead in the hopes that we will have everything we need to hold the bond vote at the same time, the calendar could be created with a later date.
- The budget hearing will be held 2-3 weeks before the vote. The Board should discuss the timing of the vote and whether there is enough information to set a date.
- There are certain constraints in the calendar creation, such as the required public notices, when petitions need to be turned in, etc. Because of these requirements, we have to have a date before the calendar can be done.

2026 Budget Planning

- Because we are asking for a tax increase for 2026, we have to approve the 2026 budget by March 2025, which the taxpayers will vote on in May or June, depending on what the Board decides.
- Though we usually ask for a 2 percent increase (last year, we also asked for a small carryover amount of \$3,891 that was available from the prior year's tax levy increase due to coming in under the allowed amount), this year, we may go out for a tax increase that exceeds the tax cap limit. Once the proposed budget is set, the Board votes to approve overriding the tax cap.
- The Finance Committee discussed budget scenarios created by Angell and La Voie. The Finance Committee asked Angell to develop a budget scenario that includes a 2.5 percent wage increase, except for three full-time staff who receive the minimum NYS exempt salary, which is set to increase by 3.23 percent, as well as a tax levy increase that would eliminate the use of fund balance in the 2026 budget.
- There will be a public hearing at the Library in April or May for constituents to ask questions about the proposed budget and possibly the capital project if the bond vote will also be held.
- The history of fund balance use was discussed.

Bequest to OPL through CRCF

- The Cattaraugus Region Community Foundation (CRCF) is working with the executor of the estate of Thomas Barnes, which made a bequest of \$50,000 to the Olean Public Library through the Foundation. A number of other bequests were made to other nonprofits, all of which had an established fund with the Foundation. OPL, however, has no such fund, so something will need to be established to accept this donation for the Library's benefit.
- The library has researched the possibility of opening a fund there in the past, but we are very limited by law on the types of investment vehicles we can invest public funds in. Another option could be to open a designated fund in the donor's name, where an annual grant is made to the Library, since in that scenario, OPL would benefit, but the Library would not own the fund. There are other donor-advised funds of that type at CRCF that benefit the Library.
- The matter will be referred to an attorney for advice.

NYS Construction Aid

- On December 16, we received 90 percent of the aid (\$61,762) for the restroom renovation project we applied for in 2023. We should postpone this work until we begin work on the building renovations. At that time, La Voie will put in an amendment so the aid can be used toward the restrooms that will be a part of that project.

- La Voie submitted updated information for the teen room project we applied for in 2024. The DLD reviewers requested an updated letter of available funds to reflect the potential for 90 percent state aid for the project (currently, CCLS approved us for approximately 60 percent funding, as that was all the system had left to divvy out). Maybe other library systems won't use all their allotted aid, which would then be given to other systems to provide additional funding for their projects.
- DLD did not accept our request for a State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) waiver based on their criteria on the application. La Voie forwarded the teen room project and the history of our building to SHPO, in the hopes that OPL will not be of interest as a historic building. This would mean we would not have to go through SHPO for future projects. SHPO is now involved because the current OPL building turned 50 in 2023, which is when buildings can gain historic preservation status.

Bullet Aid

- In May, Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library System (CCLS) Director Jan Dekoff announced that Assemblymen Andy Goodell and Joe Giglio released Grants in Aid funds (formerly known as Bullet Aid) to CCLS for distribution to member libraries to help pay for special projects. CCLS received \$40,000 for Chautauqua County libraries and \$30,000 for Cattaraugus County libraries. OPL requested funds to replace a large number of older chairs throughout the Library, including at the public computers, scanning station, tutoring/ADA computers, microfilm readers, the conference room, and the Information Desk.
- We were awarded partial funding of \$3,163 to purchase four handicapped-accessible chairs for our ADA-compliant workstations, four chairs for the microfilm reader stations, and new chairs for the Information Desk. The approved chairs have been ordered. Quotes are being updated for the remaining chairs we are hoping to purchase. We plan to ask the Friends if they would be interested in covering this, as we need to replace all the chairs in our request.

Personnel Update [Action Item]

- On January 3, 2025, building attendant Lester Baker put in his two-week notice. His last day will be Friday, January 17. He has offered to fill in for the night-time cleaner's bi-annual vacations if we need him.
- We had already posted for a building attendant position, as Les had cut his hours back to 9 per week a number of months ago; however, we have not received any qualified applications (the position requires security duties, some cleaning, occasional light maintenance duties, and running errands once every week or two). The security aspects of the job make it a more difficult hire.
- We are considering other places to advertise the position besides our website and social media, which might result in more qualified applicants.
- Our other building attendant, Joe Reagle, has picked up additional hours to help fill Les's hours.
- **MOTION (Tenglund, Copella):** To accept, with regret, the resignation of building attendant Lester Baker, effective January 17, 2025. The motion carried unanimously.

December Gifts/Grants/Donations [Action Item]

- **MOTION (Whitford, Shumway):** To accept, with gratitude, the following donations received in December 2024. The motion passed unanimously.
 - \$300 from Love in Action for Outreach Services to purchase non-circulating books for programs;
 - \$10 anonymous donation from the PayPal Giving Fund;
 - \$20.50 in anonymous donations;
 - \$2,665.43 quarterly payment from the Marjory Burdus endowment;
 - \$1,001.31 additional one-time Marjory Burdus fund payment due to a change in IRS regulations;
 - \$5,000 John Henry Eldred, Jr., Foundation grant (as reported at last month's meeting);
 - \$25 memorial donation for Mr. & Mrs. Victor Stebbins, Sr.;
 - \$15 memorial donation for David Thomas Gaeta.

Conflict of Interest Forms

- Board members were asked to complete the annual Conflict of Interest form.

Strategic Planning

- The Board approved the 2023-25 Strategic Plan in February 2023. The plan will expire at the end of this year. The planning process needs to start soon. Larry Sorokes will assist as part of his current consulting work. This is an ideal time to look at the strategic plan as we rededicate our efforts to improving and expanding the current building.
- Sorokes noted it would make sense to identify annual objectives in addressing the plan and having things to measure against and assess each year. Consider where we want to be in a year, what measurable outcomes are there, and how to measure progress. We could use what we have and expand it with these items. Restate and drill into a couple of objectives for each of the goals. This information can be shared with donors to encourage giving as well.
- The board will meet on Tuesday, February 4, at 4:30 pm to discuss strategic planning.
- Anyone on the board would be welcome to the CRCF Funding Hub sessions. They have sessions on fundraising, grants, etc., that could be helpful.

Friends of the Library

- The Friends' annual beer tasting fundraiser, FeBREWary, is scheduled for Friday, February 28, from 7–9:30 pm. Tickets will be on sale soon. The Friends are requesting basket donations for the basket raffle. All of the proceeds from these events go to the Library to help pay for presenters, programming supplies, circulating materials, furniture, technology, and many other items.
- Tenglund had an idea for a basket from the board: Books and Brew from the Board. Board members liked the idea, so we will put a basket together with that theme.
- As they do every year, the Friends treated Library staff to pizza and wings as a holiday treat in December. The staff were very appreciative.
- At the end of their January 13th board meeting, Cookie Lindamer announced her retirement from the Friends board. Her last day as president of the Friends will be February 11, or sooner if the Friends select a new president before then.

News from the Library

- Assistant director K. Mahar was awarded an \$800 scholarship from CCLS to attend the NYLA conference in Syracuse this year. She provided a report on the conference:
 - "The NYLA workshops were very informative. She attended presentations about construction, creating flexible library spaces, and how to better deal with patrons and staff. The keynote speaker was interesting and relevant to today's environment of censorship and book banning.'
 - 'Group tours were also available to the Onondaga Historical Association and Onondaga County Public Library Central Library. She saw some ideas that could be implemented here, such as how their maker space and local history sections were arranged. The children's area had a lot of creative things. Their signage was large and easy to read.

6. Committee Reports

Finance Committee – 2026 budget planning (Shumway)

- Shumway said there was a robust budget discussion. The committee decided to recommend 2.5% for salary increases. They thought certain positions were necessary, including a full-time assistant position for the children's department, and security during all open hours. The recommendation was not to use fund balance, which would mean a more significant tax increase. They discussed the amount of the tax increase, which would affect households less than initially anticipated when determining the school tax value.
- There was some concern about asking for a large increase.
- When looking at the median value, the school district generally uses \$50,000 as the average assessed taxable home value. The tax increase would also be less if the bond term were longer. We need to point out that we went years without asking for a tax increase, and now we need it.
- It might be better to package the tax and the bond votes together on a single ballot.
- Part of the rationale is to eliminate fund balance usage from our budget. For people with a home valued at \$50,000, the proposed tax increase would be a little over \$27.
- We could potentially reduce the cost and/or the repayment amounts through fundraising.
- As a board, we need to decide on a social media strategy. Board and staff will have to adhere to the Library's social media policy.

CCLS Board meeting (McElfresh)

- McElfresh said they recognized Don Watkins for his service as president. They discussed the budget. They talked about how IT services are delivered to member libraries. They asked the counties for an increase and are getting 3% from Chautauqua and 2% from Cattaraugus. They negotiated a three-year lease from Prendergast for the CCLS office space. They have an "out" clause too. The Seneca Nation libraries' population increased with the 2020 census, so now future directors must meet the education requirements of an MLS-certified library director.
- The Olean Library might be the site for a summer CCLS board meeting.
- There were some employment changes.
- System members will get free access to Amazon Business Prime this year. Our library can take advantage of this and not pay for it.
- They are looking to get a new phone system.

7. Old Business

Library space needs – updates

- **MOTION (Whitford, Shumway):** To enter executive session at 5:45 pm to discuss space needs. The motion passed unanimously.
- **MOTION (McElfresh, Whitford):** To leave executive session at 6:03 pm. The motion passed unanimously.
- The attorney said he does not believe we would pledge our full faith and credit if we went through the CRC. We have no legal authority to issue debt, so we would need to go through either the school district or another entity that would issue the tax on our behalf. The library also cannot take out a mortgage. If we go through the CRC/IDA, we should be okay, but the attorney is doing more research to be certain.
- The attorney is also researching if we could hold two tax votes on the same day.
- At what point do we make our best guess on how much we can fundraise? Or do we want to put the entire project into the bond and then work on raising funds for specific needs and borrow less if we are successful?
- We cannot invest public money at the CRCF. Ideas for handling funds in the CRCF were discussed, in case donors wanted to donate through the CRCF. Would the CRCF be willing to set up a fund to benefit the library? A specific donor's name might not need to be on the fund name. If trustees were the fund advisors, they could elect when to distribute funds. Some of our board members have fund advisor experience.

Community Bank investments (Angell)

- Angell said a CD is maturing on 1/29/2025 for \$300,000. She got rates from the bank. As she finished cash flow for the year, she recommended investing \$200,000 for three months. We spend approximately \$118,000 monthly, and keeping some of this aside will help ensure cash flow. She recommended reinvesting the full amount when the \$600,000 CD matures in February.
- Discussion ensued on whether we should be investing the reserve funds. We will see increased architect expenses once the bond passes. However, getting interest on the funds would make sense until they are needed.
- Angell will not know the February rates until closer
- **MOTION (Angell, J. Mahar):** To invest \$200,000 from the maturing CD for three months and the Capital Reserve funds for six months. The motion passed unanimously.

Personnel update

- **MOTION (McElfresh, J. Mahar):** To enter executive session at 7:24 pm to discuss personnel matters. The motion passed unanimously.
- **MOTION (Whitford, Tenglund):** To leave executive session at 7:32 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

2024 annual audit

- Angell has sent everything to the accountant, who is now working on this. He will attend the February board meeting to present his findings.

8. New Business

TIPS

- The Interlocal Purchasing System (TIPS) was used for our HVAC project. In December, La Voie received an email that said it was following up on an earlier advisory. TIPS members need to determine if using their service is appropriate. New York contractors have threatened legal action on entities using the purchasing system.
- La Voie contacted Bob Schofield, who had never heard of the TIPS cooperative. He determined the equipment purchase was okay, which was the bulk of it. He recommended not using TIPS again because we are a public entity. It was noted that the library had put the project out to bid, as required.

Employee Handbook update [Action Item]

- **MOTION (Copella, J. Mahar):** To approve the change in the handbook, as presented, which noted that "employees on disability leave receive 50 percent of their average weekly earnings." This was a change from the 60 percent which was paid by our previous insurer. The motion passed unanimously.

Trustee Training

- There are a few possibilities for trustee training. It would be most helpful to have someone with experience with bonding.

Adopt 2025 EBALR Reserve amount [Action Item]

- Angell said EBALR gets adjusted on 12/31. It encompasses the cost to pay accrued vacation time if all full time staff decided to leave the Library's employment in December.
- **MOTION (McElfresh, J. Mahar):** To accept the amount as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer Authorizations

- **MOTION (Whiteford, Copella):** To authorize the Treasurer to pay utilities, insurances, equipment leases, periodical renewals, credit card bills, database subscriptions, payrolls and payroll withholding, and local contracted services as they become due in 2025. The motion passed unanimously.
 - "Local contracted services" were added to this. They often do not want to wait for a board meeting to receive their payment, as they typically do not have a lot of overhead allowing them to wait for payment for services rendered.
- **MOTION (Tenglund, Shumway):** To authorize the Treasurer to maintain the following accounts for 2025. The motion passed unanimously.
 - Tax Fund Account – Community Bank
 - General Operating Fund Checking – Community Bank
 - Capital Fund Checking – Community Bank
 - Investment Holdings Checking – Community Bank
 - State Aid Fund Account – Community Bank

MOTION TO ADJOURN (J. Mahar, Tenglund): at 7:44 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann M. Tenglund