

MEETING MINUTES
Olean Public Library Board of Trustees
March 18, 2026
5:30 P.M. – 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 5:32 P.M. by Board President Lanna Waterman. In attendance were trustees R. McElfresh, P. Shumway, L. Whitford, J. Mahar, and G. Copella. Absent: M. Morgan. From the Library: Treasurer Steffen, Business Office Manager Angell, Assistant Director Mahar, and Director La Voie.

Waive the reading of the minutes of the previous meetings and approve as mailed.

1. Voice of the Public/Correspondence: None
2. Approval of Warrant Sheets for February 19 – March 18:
 #975 Operating Fund: \$86,306.41
 #346 Capital Fund: \$39,053.00

Discussion:

The Colligan Law payment for \$170 was to respond to the auditor letter.

3. Review of Financial Statements

Discussion:

Capital balance sheet

The State Aid bank account balance is down due to spending of HVAC state aid. The amount remaining in the account is restroom remodel state aid & monthly interest. The approved state aid for the teen room should be received soon.

Capital appropriations

Going forward, remove prior month, and month to month change on the report.

General balance sheet

The investment holdings bank account is for funds that will be invested in a CD. Community bank pulls from this account and then deposits the earned interest and any funds not being reinvested into this account. The \$608,694 is the interest and amount not reinvested from the original \$1,000,000 in a CD at Community Bank that matured on 02/26/2026.

General appropriations

It is unlikely that the library will see any savings or decreased usage in gas & electric utilities until the April or May bills after the recent discovery that the 2 new rooftop units were running 24/7 due to a programming issue. The presenter appropriation line is high compared to the budget, as invoices/contracts have been received for all of the summer programs. Due to the closing of Bakery & Taylor and switch over to Brodart late in 2025, the book appropriation line is high with many of the orders from 2025 not received until 2026. Approximately \$8,000 of total spend YTD is from 2025 orders. Staff with ordering responsibilities have been notified.

MOTION (J. Mahar, R. McElfresh): To approve agenda items 1, 3, and 4. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Director's Report**

2026 Trustee Election/2027 Budget Vote

As a reminder, the 2026 Trustee Election and 2027 budget vote is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5th, at the library. Polls open at 9 am and close at 8 pm. The terms of trustees Reed McElfresh and Jen Mahar expire on June 30th. Both have indicated they plan to run for another 5-year term. They will have to have their petitions filled out with the required

number of signatures and returned to the library by 5 PM on April 6th.

Last month, the Board approved the proposed 2027 budget; however, since then we learned from our fiscal advisor that the bond debt service has to appear in our operating budget beginning in 2027. He suggested we confirm this with our attorneys, including the need to override the tax cap, which they did confirm. Heather and I discussed how this should appear in the budget, and we agreed keeping it separate from the operating budget, at the bottom of the page, makes it clear it's debt service that was previously approved (see attached). The Board will have to vote to approve this new version of the budget.

It will have to be made clear to voters in the library's press release and at the budget hearing that we are asking for a 2 percent tax increase for the 2027 operating budget, and that the inclusion of the debt service was approved by voters last year, to avoid any misunderstanding of the large increase in the budget.

Every year, the Board votes to override the tax cap in case the approved levy increase ends up being higher than what NYS allows (it is not always 2 percent, in other words, and it is illegal to go over the tax cap without a board vote approving it prior to the budget vote; it requires 60 percent board approval). The allowable levy isn't released until months after our vote. Again, because of the large debt service now being added to the annual budget, we are required to override the tax cap in year one of bond repayment.

The budget hearing will be held on Tuesday, April 21st, at 6 pm. Trustees should plan to attend.

Burt Memorial Fund Grant

Earlier this month, the library received a grant for \$25,000 from The Burt Memorial Fund, which is overseen by the Session Board of the First Presbyterian Church in Olean! They requested that the money be used to help fund the planned expansion of the library; therefore, the funds were placed in the restricted capital fund.

The Burt Fund has supported the library with several generous grants over the past 10 years, and we are so grateful for their ongoing generosity. While the Library will send a thank you letter, the Board should consider sending handwritten thank you notes for large gifts supporting the capital project (we have stationery for this purpose).

Last month, I reported receiving a \$10,000 donation from the Carnegie Foundation. While that donation was unrestricted, it would probably make sense to move this to the capital fund as well. Do we want to designate an amount that automatically goes to the capital fund, if the gifts are unrestricted and not needed to support the operating budget?

Motion (G. Copella, J. Mahar): To move the Carnegie unrestricted gift of \$10,000 to restricted capital gifts, grants, & donations.

HVAC System/Utilities

On March 9th, our commissioning agent, Jeff Jaskier (M/E Engineering) visited the library to test start-up and shut-down of the HVAC units and boiler. They discovered that both of the new units did not turn off when the remote-control timer settings were changed to "unoccupied" (that is the setting we use during most of our closed hours). He said it's fair to assume that the new units have been running 24/7 since they were installed in early October, which is the likely cause of the increase to our utility bills. He notified Stark, the company which installed and services the remote-control software, that they would need to investigate the problem ASAP.

When Stark looked into it, they determined the cause was due to a discrepancy between the older units and the new ones. The units are now shutting off when the schedule switches from occupied to unoccupied. As the technician described it to Heather, it had something to do with the old units listening to commands via "on" and "off" and the new ones using "1" and "2" to communicate, so when they were being told to turn off, the new units didn't understand. So basically, a language barrier. Jeff said these kinds of issues aren't that unusual after HVAC installations.

As mentioned at previous Board meetings, Mazza did not properly insulate the units when they were installed. Insulators came in November after Collier's HVAC sub-contractors noted the missing insulation; however, Jeff noted that additional needed insulation was still missing when he first visited in early December, but insulators did not arrive to complete that work until early February. Additionally, insulators arrived again in early March; Jeff noted that piping insulation was still incomplete, and so they had come to finish that.

It is disappointing that these problems contributed to the enormous increase in our energy bills. We can now hope that they will go back to "normal," which is still very high but at least explicable. Because the heating system and HVACs are now running normally, Jeff suggested we release 5 percent of the final 10 percent owed to Mazza. He will come back again in June/July to test the AC, at which time the final 5 percent will be paid when testing is successful and any needed fixes are completed.

February Gifts/Grants/Donations [Action Item]

MOTION (L. Whitford, P. Shumway): To accept, with gratitude, the following gifts, grants, and donations

received in February 2026. The motion passed unanimously, with:

- \$10,000 Carnegie Corporation – unrestricted
- \$5,000 WNY Foundation for Love in Action, Race Unity, and League of Women Voters
- \$4,995 from the Friends of the Olean Library for microfilm machine funded in part by Manley
- \$200 Cindy Kifer to support children’s programming
- \$101.44 from Kevin & Susan O’Connell for FBO exhibit reception craft materials
- \$50 memorial for Mary Pownall
- \$30 memorial for Mary Quantrall
- \$25 memorial for Barbara Galey Compher
- \$22.80 in anonymous donations

Personnel [Action Items]

Library page Thomas Baker resigned his position effective 2/23/26. Sydney Stringer was hired as a Library Assistant with a starting date of 3/17/26. Library Assistant Michele Pfeffer has resigned from her position due to moving; her last day will be 3/31/26. The Board needs to approve the hire and resignations for the minutes.

MOTION (J. Mahar, R. McElfresh) To hire Sydney Stringer as a part-time library assistant and accept the resignation of Thomas Baker and Michele Pfeffer. The motion passed unanimously.

Friends of the Library

This year’s annual beer tasting fundraiser, FeBREWary, held on Feb. 27th, earned approximately \$3,100, with 81 tickets sold. Those earnings are comprised of event ticket sales, and basket raffle and 50/50 tickets sales. The event was less well-attended than last year’s, but it was held on the first weekend of St. Bonaventure’s spring break, meaning some of those people who normally attend may have been away. It is always less well-attended than the wine event in September, with the thinking being that more women than men tend to come to these events, and women also tend to prefer wine to beer (this has been observed at the events). They are looking at other ideas for a winter fundraiser that might be a little more successful. Still, it’s a good amount of money for one evening!

They did receive a complaint via email the day of the event from someone concerned that Library policies, which are posted online, all state that alcohol is strictly prohibited in the library, and they questioned the legality of an event serving alcohol in the library. I responded, stating that libraries in NYS are allowed to hold these kinds of after-hours events, as long as they obtain a beer and wine permit from NYS. I also added that the pourers are certified, as required by our Library’s insurance company, and that all ticket holders must be 21 or over and are ID’d at the door. I never heard back from the complainant; however, we may want to consider creating an “after hours” policy for these events, especially when we have the large meeting room space that can be rented out after-hours by community members. I believe the number of beer/wine permits for a public library are limited to a certain number per year, so we will need to look into that when such a policy is created. I am uncertain if that applies only to library-sponsored events, or if it includes other entities holding after-hour events at the library.

The annual Peg Bothner bookmark ceremonies were held March 14th with approximately 120 people attending the 11am ceremony and 170 attending the 1pm ceremony.

The library will be again asking the Friends for a donation for flowers to be placed in the planters out front.

5. Committee Reports

CCLS February Board meeting (McElfresh)

CCLS is still looking for Cattaraugus County trustee and have hired a new delivery driver. They are actively working on new policies such as vacation/time off, whistle blower, & conflict of interest. With fixed finances and CCLS funding being cut by Cattaraugus County cost sharing with the member libraries still remains a focus with the initial phase to include payroll processing fees.

Coming soon is a library card design contest. CCLS was awarded and received bullet aid to be used to upgrade & refresh CCLS office space.

6. Old Business

Capital Project Updates

Architect and Construction Management updates

New contract received from Colliers for the construction document phase. The contract is being reviewed by legal and will not be signed until the budget gap is closed up and design document phase is complete.

Design Development cost estimates - Collier's, LeChase

LeChase, as construction management, completed a cost estimate towards the end of design development, and DJB, subcontracted by Collier's, completed a cost estimate towards the end of the schematic design phase. The two cost estimates vary significantly in a few areas as listed below:

- Square footage of renovation lower on DJB, need for sprinkler system makes this project an entire building renovation
- Collier's states that architect fees under incidental costs are higher than should be by approx. \$70,000-\$90,000
- Finishes cost extremely low on DJB estimate; this category would include flooring/carpeting & ceiling (DJB: \$540K, LeChase: \$984K)
- HVAC/Mechanical on DJB estimate appears to only include the cost of one rooftop unit addition while LeChase included duct work, boilers, and the HVAC unit - \$367K vs. \$1.3M
- Site improvements and earthwork \$325K vs. \$700K
- Incidentals are much lower on DJB at \$430 vs. \$2.3M; there was mention at the bi-weekly OACMF meeting that the permit & legal fees are higher than typically seen in a project of this type and size

The basement is no longer a viable option for the expansion project due to the lack of surrounding land needed for staging. It is also likely the library will receive very little-to-no bids due to the risk of adding the basement. The cost per square foot due to these factors and others makes it cost prohibitive. During the next bi-weekly meeting with construction management, potential ways to cut costs, and the new estimated construction costs after design changes, will be discussed. LeChase will attend the April board meeting.

The Board and Library are struggling to identify aspects of the project that could be reduced or removed, as the project design chosen in the beginning was the smallest renovation of the 4 original options, and had the least financial burden on the taxpayers. Alternates are needed in the event construction bids come in much higher. Alternates discussed include:

- 2nd story – problem: needed for storage and office spaces, and no other location for planned makerspace
- Large dual purpose meeting rooms or partition – problem: space needed for large programs to address safety concerns and improve community access; partition is needed to allow for multiple group use simultaneously; otherwise, this would represent a major waste of space
- Children's – problem: many aspects of this area renovation are included in the approved State Construction Aid funding
- Elevators – problem: also included in the approved State Construction Aid funding
- Not outfit the 2nd story – possible to finish some areas at a later date with additional funding; however, office spaces will need to be finished as part of the project
- Furniture – reuse current furniture and purchase new at a later date

Donor opportunities exist with areas such as local history, maker space, and site work.

DASNY resolutions (see attached)

DASNY Bond resolution [**Action Item**]

Signed resolution included at the end of the minutes.

MOTION (R. McElfresh, P. Shumway): To approve the resolution authorizing the financing of the library project and the borrowing from DASNY. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution accepting the results of the 6/26/2025 bond proposition vote

Signed resolution included at the end of the minutes.

Eligible reimbursements and expenses – DASNY bond counsel will review expenses spent to date to see what all is reimbursable.

Construction Management Contract

The contract with LeChase is still in legal review due to who has the authority to stop work if necessary. The owner, or owner designee, has the authority to stop the project if something isn't being done correctly.

Builder's Risk insurance application

LeChase is currently working on the builder's risk insurance application. If there is something library specific, Cameron will ask the library for that information.

Other Considerations

Temporary location for storage, office spaces, materials

What collections will be available during the project?

Could phasing be done in smaller sections to not disrupt all staff? Where will staff work?

Options to look into for storage and offices: Big Lots, Value Home Center, Olean 2020/Vicki Blessing, Churches, St.Mary's, Intandem. The story time room could be temporary location for some offices during construction.

There is concern that limited services during construction could be detrimental to future library use.

Staff are able to handle moving of the stacks instead of a moving company, with moving based on the proposed phasing.

The Common Council will need to be approached to discuss handicapped and 15-minute on-street parking spots.

Fundraising consultant report (Sorokes)

Donor outreach

Grant opportunities (Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation/Rural Libraries grant; others?)

The library is requesting a 2-year grant for meeting room space construction costs for a total of \$140,000. The meeting rooms will be used by local non-profits, public agencies, and other groups. This may allow the library to approach Ralph Wilson separately for a stand-alone grant outside of the Rural Libraries grant.

The library was recently notified of a \$250,000 fund to be opened by Cutco for programming expenses at CRCF (\$50,000/year for 5 years).

There will be a meeting this coming Friday (3/20) between Michelle, Lanna, & Larry to discuss donor messaging and cost escalations. Donor opportunities exist with areas such as local history, maker space, and site work, in addition to others.

The library is anticipating the upcoming Construction Aid round. Confirmation needs to be made with Noah, Munistat financial advisor, that an application can be made in relation to the capital project without creating any issues with the bond.

House donation updates

MOTION (R. McElfresh, L. Whitford): To enter executive session at 7:12pm The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION (L. Whitford, J. Mahar): To leave executive session at 7:21pm. The motion passed unanimously. No actions taken.

2027 Proposed Budget [Action Item] – Updated (see attached)

Inclusion of debt service

MOTION (L. Whitford, G. Copella): To approve the proposed 2027 budget. The motion passed unanimously.

Tax cap override [Action Item]

This motion is necessary due to the debt service approved in 2025 being included in the 2027 budget.

MOTION (R McElfresh., P. Shumway):

- Whereas the adoption of the 2027 budget for the Olean Public Library may require a tax levy that exceeds the tax cap imposed by state law as outlined in General Municipal Law, Section 3-C, adopted in 2011; and
- Whereas General Municipal Law, Section 3-C, expressly permits the library Board to override the tax levy limit by a resolution approved by a vote of 60% of qualified board members; now, therefore, be it.
- Resolved that the Board of Trustees of the Olean Public Library voted and approved to exceed the tax levy limit for 2027 by at least 60% of the Board of Trustees, as required by state law, on March 18, 2026.
- The motion carried unanimously.
 - This motion was necessary because the library’s 2% tax increase may exceed the tax cap percentage approved by the state, which can be set lower than 2% (this occurs after the library’s vote).
 - In the event that we do not need to exceed the tax cap, this motion can be rescinded in September.

Trustee Training

Trustees are required to receive two hours of training annually. The two hours may be achieved with trainings of one hour each by two library directors (suggested by Noah Nadelson from Munistat) who have overseen capital projects paid for with DASNY bonds. One library completed a large project where costs came in \$4-\$5M higher than originally estimated. The other library did not have issues with their budget but did have issues with the tax cap and the timing of borrowing. This training was approved by Jan as acceptable to satisfy the annual requirement. The general consensus of those required to attend is to have both directors on zoom at the same time. It is preferred that trustees submit any questions ahead of time. Time will be saved at the end for Q&A. Michelle will work on setting up this training.

New Business

None

Other Discussion

The Community Annual Report is not completed yet, as much of the data is pulled from the annual report. With the closure of Baker & Taylor, prior host of the annual reporting software, reporting is at a standstill while waiting for the new reporting system. The Community Annual Report will be compiled based on the internally collected stats and data by Michelle & Chad.

MOTION TO ADJOURN (G. Copella, L. Whitford): Meeting adjourned at 7:24P.M. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Whitford, Secretary