Approved October 7, 2025

BLAKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
6:30pm, August 13, 2025
At the library

Trustees present: Rob Rinaldi, Tania Aebi, Dina Dubois, Zoe Tilley Poster, Kathryn Price, Catherine Tudish, and Carl Demrow. Also present: Shirley Montagne, Treasurer and Jen Spanier, Library Director. Guests: Anne McKinsey, Linda Weiss, Dean Packard in person, and Stuart Granoff on zoom.

Rob called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Rob welcomed our guests. Catherine moved to approve the agenda and Kathryn seconded. Approved unanimously. Catherine moved to approve the minutes of the June 11 meeting and Kathryn seconded. Again approved unanimously. Rob noted that it was Dina's birthday- Happy Birthday Dina!

Anne and Linda talked briefly with the board regarding how the federal cuts are affecting local citizens, potentially the library, and if there is a role in the library to help inform the public about the cuts. Anne suggested a sign on the lawn about the cancellation of the Suzanne Brown discussion group. Rob said he thought this was an important discussion to have and that he would like to see the director come back to the board with any recommendations for getting the word out. Our mission statement involves promoting democracy.

The board and guests had a brief discussion about what some sample language might be. Linda suggested a themed book display about autocracy or non-violent protest such as a biography of Ghandi, or the story of what happened in Poland. Jen noted the newsletter could be used to get the word out, and we discussed the importance of including information about the effects of cuts in the annual appeal letter.

Treasurers' Report: Shirley said we are looking at a deficit of $23K because we'd decided to leave a higher amount in our investment account. She is recommending picking up the remaining two payments of the year from Northeast Investments now to reduce our deficit. She is not concerned about the rest of the expenses as they all seem in line with some seasonal overages due to snow and cold.

Carl moved that we take the third and fourth quarter payments from Northeast Investments as we had budgeted. Kathryn seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Dina asked if the small amount of revenue from books sales is worth it, and we had a discussion with Zoe and Catherine who filled in the group on how these books sales work. Bottom line, not really worth the effort. Zoe moved to accept the treasurer's report and Tania seconded. Approved unanimously.

The summer reading program has had three events with Marko the Magician, VINS, and CliF reading with Carrie Kruck. The finale is coming up at the end of the month with storyteller Michal Caduto and ice cream. Jen and Kimberly are working on planning the fall programming.

On Sept 10 there will be a workshop directed by an organization called Better Angels: how to talking with people with whom you disagree. There will be a potluck before the training. The workshop is called "Skills for Disagreeing Better". One of our patrons, Nick Milburn, attended a training in Thetford with Better Angels and suggested to Jen we have our own training at the library.

Jen is planning a volunteer party that will also involve getting all the shelves in order. Jen said there are 10 circulation desk volunteers and another 4 or 5 volunteers who do other things. Shirley said that we used to have a thank you luncheon for volunteers, and Rob agreed we come up with something for the volunteers, to build community within our community.

We will be participating in Vermont Reads program. The first speaker will be Michael Tougias and his book Extreme Survival.

Jen is working on the CLIF grant. There was an extra $500 that will cover Michael Caduto. They will also be sending us up to $2k of books for the children's collection. The school is getting $500 of books. Dina moved to approve the directors report and Zoe seconded. Unanimous.

Zoe said there will be another plant and bake sale on the 30th to coincide with the finale for the summer reading program.

Personnel Committee: No report.

Buildings and Grounds has been working on the shed. All the framing is done; it needs to be moved to the library for assembly. Rob gave a quick timeline, we expect/hope to have it done by the beginning of October.

The nominating committee reported it had a three-person slate and some future potential candidates for 2026.

Recently, someone was sleeping in the library parking lot for a couple of weeks, and we discussed how to handle this in the future. And how to talk with our neighbors about things like this happening. Lighting may be helpful to see what is on the security camera, to discourage sleeping and perhaps some signage. Rob and Jen spoke a bit about having a brochure, at the very least, that might help someone in a situation like this find resources. We do encourage 24-hour use of the wifi.

Enclosure for the generator and gas tank: Carole has expressed some concern about the generator and tanks. B&G will look into costs on a future trip to Bradford.

The Association Meeting is coming up. The date will be September 16th at 6:30. Tania and Shirley will do the planning and get the word out.

Jen asked about a technology committee. She said she would find such a committee would be helpful with picking up some of the work on the computers. Jordan Kress might be able to do this. And board candidate, Dean Packard, would also be a good choice for the committee.

The next regular meeting (after a brief meeting to choose officers following the Association Meeting) will be October 7th at 6:30 PM at the library.

Tania moved to adjourn and Kathryn seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Carl Demrow, Secretary