Approved by the board on December 10, 2025

BLAKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
6:30pm, October 7, 2025
At the library

Trustees present: Rob Rinaldi, Tania Aebi, Zoe Tilley Poster, Kathryn Price, Catherine Tudish, Stuart Granoff, Shirley Montagne. Dean Packard on Zoom. Also present: Jen Spanier, Library Director, and guest Dina Dubois.

Rob calls the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Rob welcomes everyone and asks the group introduce themselves as there are a couple of new trustees. Rob goes first, then Tania, then Dean, Jen, Kathryn, Stuart, Catherine, and Shirley.

Kathryn moves to approve the agenda and Stuart seconds, approved unanimously.

Tania moves to approve minutes from August 13 meeting, Shirley seconds, approved unanimously.

Rob adds we should have had a trustee meeting after Association meeting to vote everyone into their positions. We will do it now, in one fell swoop, as a slate. Everything stays the same: Rob and Tania are co-presidents. As a community member, Carl can still serve as secretary, and Shirley is treasurer. Zoe moves to approve the slate, Stuart seconds, approved unanimously

Treasurer's report:

We are doing well, deficit is less as we've taken our payments from Northeast Investments. Electricity keeps going up. Shirley says she heard from somebody it's possible to "share solar," with non-profits, so she is looking into this with GMP. For example, if somebody is generating solar, they can say they will donate some of their credit to BML. In 2020, Rob tells everyone, there was a major renovation that brought building up to code. Oil furnace was replaced with heat pumps, which are energy hogs, and we continue to try and raise funds for a pavilion for solar panels. Shirley made a call to Efficiency VT and GMP, not much else we can do about electricity at this point.

Checking and savings are in good shape. Can't see anything that will put us out of bounds with expenses. Revenues haven't caught up with expenses, Shirley explains for Dean and Stuart, because we elected to leave money in Fund where interest rates are higher. She further explains: The Blake family established an endowment. BML doesn't own the funds, but the fund issues us money every year, about $4000/quarter. The Gendrot room was funded by the Gendrots, another extremely generous benefactor. They also established a fund, from which we get about $1000/quarter. We are fortunate to have this. Then there's the NE Investment Fund built from donations from the Holland family. They have also been generous, donating

houses that started this fund when they were sold. We own the fund, it generates an 8% return. We draw funds from it without digging into principal (except during renovation.) The rest of our money comes from grants, appeal letter, and donations. Catherine will write appeal letter this year and we will start sending it out after Thanksgiving.

Dean goes back to electric—what is the price difference between oil and electric combo and just electric? Shirley says electric and oil was quite a bit less, but we also know electric rates have gone up since those days. We went with heat pumps—not as efficient as we'd hoped—because we used the space where furnace was for elevator. We also installed LED lights, put in good windows and airlock. We got accessibility grant for handicap bathroom, entrance, stairwell, and elevator. But electricity still costs a lot.

Stuart moves to accept treasurer's report, Catherine seconds, approved unanimously.

Directors report:

Golden Dome reading challenge is being held this fall. Books are recommended and selected by a committee, kids read them, and at the end of the program, they vote for what they think is best. Prizes like gel pens and lava lamp are getting kids excited. On Wednesdays, teens hang out in library, and have requested movie nights. Halloween Town will be shown next week. There will be trick or treating on Halloween with a book giveaway.

We received a grant from Vermont Humanities Council for Vermont Reads program. Michael Tougias came and spoke last week about Extreme Survival. Another speaker will be coming, and Conservation Commission may do talk about beavers. The Vermont Reads book is The Light Pirate, and Suzanne Brown will lead discussion about it on November 21. Book displays: Spooky Stories for Halloween and a Defend Democracy collection, sponsored by Defend Democracy Indivisible group.

Stuart asked how often displays change. About once a month, Jen says, and themes are selected and arranged by staff and volunteers. We have a new website designed by Anne McKinsey. Dina asked why. Anne said it needed a refreshing, offered to do it pro bono, Jen accepted. She is continuing to work on implementing CLIF grant. Kimberly and Jen will be going to WRVS to talk about the books with Jim Arnosky. She also noted that somebody came in to ask about donating money because of sign on lawn. And Shirley added that Christine Wilson beautifully cleaned up a painting from the 1800's by someone from the Hudson River School that we have hanging in the stairwell. Shirley will send thank-you note. Jen reviewed stats, says numbers are pretty steady.

Any questions for Jen? Dean asks how we keep a patron tally. Circulation desk manages list manually. As patrons come in, they get tallied.

Shirley moves to accept director's report, Zoe seconds, approved unanimously.

Fundraising: Zoe has no news, but says the committee will meet next week. Erica Venuti might join with some art stuff ideas. Talked a little bit about the importance of fundraising to make the budget work in conjunction with endowments.

Buildings and Grounds: Rob talked about shed, how he and Carl did all the siding last time they worked on it. Oakes was expensive, so they bought $600 worth from Bargain Builders. They have enough to do everything. They are working very hard to spend as little as possible. Need to decide how to finish it—stain or paint, a project for the teenagers. There will also be solar panel array on south facing side of roof. Rob provided some more history about the solar shed's origins and its purpose as a place to charge phones and other devices during power outages as well as a much need storage space. Emergency Management Committee from Corinth working on a place where people can get water. BML was asked if water gets tested. It doesn't, so shouldn't be considered a Community Water Source. Rob doesn't want people coming with 500 gallon tanks, but it's okay for people to fill jerry cans. Don't have a way to see if it has been used more or less this summer. Shirley says well is on state list, it gets 25 gpm.

Personnel Committee: No update. Would Stuart be willing to be on personnel committee with Kathryn. Nicolas Kramer could do next meeting with them to get them up to speed. Stuart says yes and asks what they do. Kathryn says they talk separately to Jen and Kimberly, basically giving them opportunity to confide with a board member. Also a little evaluation is performed by Jen about Kimberly and she also submits a self-evaluation. The trick is to take info and reveal it to board without being specific about any issues. This review should happen soon.

New board members should get on a committee. Dean is willing to be on technology committee with Jordan Kress. He and Dean have already started talking. Shirley asked about laptops that are still over at Welch's. She wrote a letter to him saying if he didn't get them up and running, she wanted them back. Jen says he took them and is supposedly getting them up to snuff. Governance committee is back to being Tania, Shirley and Dina. Finance committee—Shirley, Carl and anyone else? Dean will do it!

Re: The Association. Supposed to meet once a year to elect trustees. Shirley will contact the State Archivist to figure out what we need to do to change the bylaws. Rob is concerned how it gets harder and harder for Association Meetings to happen, we will see if there is a way to update its structure.

No further discussion on this topic.
Any other business? Dina reads a poem by her mother called Listen.

Next trustee meeting is set December 10, 2025 at 6:30pm

Catherine moves to adjourn, Stuart seconds, approved unanimously. Meeting adjourns at 7:34pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tania Aebi (secretary for this meeting)