

**Topsham Public Library Board of Trustees**  
**Business Meeting Minutes**  
**January 21, 2026**

**Present:** Philip Dostie, James Doyle, Barbara Swiderski, Erin Arneson, Stephen Diamond, Laura Miller, Pamela Mott, Brian Alexander, Heather Helenora, Miles Dailey, Director Katherine Webber

**Absent:** Don Stein, Mike Snow

**Members of the Public Present:** None

1. **Call to Order:** 7:00 PM by President Philip Dostie
2. **Approval of Agenda:** Stephen moved to accept the Agenda as presented, seconded by Heather. Motion carried by unanimous consent.
3. **Consent Agenda:** Pamela moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Stephen. Motion carried by unanimous consent.
4. **Treasurer's Report:** The Finance Committee reviewed the financial documents. They are still monitoring the CD rates and have made no further decision currently. They discussed how to manage the situation once pennies were no longer minted but no decision was made. There is expected to be a \$3,100 shortfall in this year's budget for health benefits as new employees require more coverage than the couple who left the Library this year.
5. **Annual Appeal Update:** \$30,000 has been raised thus far. \$73,795.95 has been raised from July 1, 2025, through January 5, 2026, which includes individual donors, in-kind donations, and our endowment. It was noted that the signature on the automatic reply thank you letter from Stripe still has the former bookkeeper's name. Katherine is aware and said this is due to a computer glitch that they are trying to figure out how to fix.
6. **Director's Report:**
  - a. The Friends did not meet this month. Joy of Art reception was well attended despite the inclement weather. Pamela Mott won first place in fiber arts.
  - b. Maine Women's Giving Tree Grant held a grant writing workshop that Katherine attended and found informative. She and Mariah are developing the budget and evaluation method for this grant and hope to have the final grant written prior to the February 27<sup>th</sup> deadline.
  - c. State of Maine Libraries: At their January 12<sup>th</sup> meeting the Maine Library Commission discussed the potential new Maine regional Library System (MRLS) agreement. After considering concerns addressed in public comments, they voted to move forward with the current standards rather than the proposed new ones. The Benchmarks of Excellence document is meant to be an internal assessment by each library. The Federal Government has filed an appeal of the decision to fund the Museum and Library Science (IMLS) so that is still up in the air until settled.
  - d. Staff/General: The Circulation Supervisor position has been posted and over thirty applications have been received thus far. Posting will close on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. School outreach is ramping up, and Lindsey represented the Library at Mt. Ararat's Poetry Out Loud competition. The knitting group that meets in the library donated hats and mittens to the teens, and a donation of ramen was also received. The library is still

experiencing growing pains with Ingram but have been receiving materials more regularly. AARP will again be hosting income tax filing assistance from February through mid-April. Our cataloguer Carrie Hawks' husband builds custom guitars and is giving a presentation tomorrow evening at 5 PM. Bling Date with a Book is full with thirty participants. The Library will close at noon on Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup> for carpet cleaning. Our updated Children's Museum passes will allow entry for up to six people for free. The protocol should ICE appear at the Library is that they are allowed in all public spaces but not employee only spaces.

- e. December Staff Check-ins mostly mirrored last month's except for how to cover the Circulation Supervisor's tasks until the new hire is onboarded.

**7. Unfinished Business:**

- a. **Officer Roles:** Barbara explained that the Governance Committee did not feel comfortable allowing the four elected officers to have the same authority as the full Board to act in between meetings, as is typical in Executive Committees, but rather should serve in an advisory capacity. The following language was proposed following discussion: *"There shall be an Executive Committee of the Topsham Public Library consisting of the elected officers of the Board. The purpose of the Executive Committee shall be to provide advice sought by the Director on matters that arise between Board meetings and to secure immediate action by the Board. The Executive Committee may advise the Director on whether an action contemplated by the Director falls within the Director's existing authority or requires Board approval. If the Executive Committee determines that an urgent issue exists that requires action by the Board before an in-person meeting can be held, the President may request a vote via email to the full Board. A majority of Board members eligible to vote must concur if an email vote takes place. The full Board will be briefed at its next business meeting on any actions taken by the Executive Committee."* Barbara moved to adopt the above language to define the Executive Committee, seconded by Pamela. Motion passed unanimously.

8. **New Business:** Katherine learned that the Library no longer had an agreement with the attorney that had been used in the past. She obtained a letter of engagement to continue using their services. Since this happened shortly after the December Board meeting, an email vote would be required to allow Katherine to sign the letter of engagement. On January 9<sup>th</sup> via email, Phil moved to authorize the Director of the Topsham Public Library to enter into and sign a letter of engagement with Bernstein & Shur for advice and counsel related to employment and labor matters involving Library employees, and to require that the Director report to the Trustees on the results of such matters as appropriate and keep the Trustees informed, in a timely manner, of any fees or costs accrued from Bernstein & Shur. Heather seconded this, and a period of discussion was opened. Voting commenced via email on January 10<sup>th</sup> and concluded at the end of the day on January 11<sup>th</sup>, with ten votes in favor and one person did not vote.

9. **Public Comment:** none. Katherine requested Trustee presence at the February 5 and February 11 budget meetings at the Town Hall.

10. **Adjournment:** Laura moved to adjourn the regular business meeting seconded by Pamela. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara Swiderski, Board Secretary