

# Keene Public Library Trustee Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2026

Board Present: Bill Stroup, Paul Henkel, Jane Pitts, Kathleen Packard, Donald Caruso, Justin Somma, Jennifer Friedman, Sam Temple, Susan Mathews

Board Joining Remotely: Karthik Gowda

Staff Present: Marti Fiske, Library Director; Jay Fee, Library Systems Administrator

Guests: Andy Bohannon, Michael Petrovick, Ashley Marino

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Stroup at 5:04PM

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Jennifer Friedman made a motion to accept the April minutes. The motion was seconded by Don Gorman. The Board unanimously approved the April minutes as written.

## **REVIEW OF KPL LIGHTING PROJECT**

Michael Petrovick advised that today's presentation is a repeat of the initial presentation but modified to reflect updated costs.

Andy Bohannon advised that he will distribute copies of the presentation to Trustees on May 27th.

Michael Petrovick reiterated the project basics, adding that Hamblet Electrical walked the project site and advised on concrete pricing based on having firsthand review. He reviewed the fixtures that his team and the Hamblet team selected for the project. He reviewed the total scope of work and how his team split the work into "phases". Phase one, which represents the "stacks" would cost \$130,000; phase 2, representing the upstairs rooms and reading rooms, would cost \$90,000; and phase 3, representing the lobby, would cost \$50,000. The 5% contingency fees and design fees (\$25,000) would be in addition to that. The city would also require bonding insurance (1.5% of project cost). There would be the possibility of recouping a portion of the cost through Eversource grants,

NHSaves, and other grant opportunities. He advised that cost increases are averaging 5-10% and advises that waiting will likely not bring down cost.

Andy Bohannon brought us up to speed the city's perspective. He noted that the project size has increased from the initial scope and that the city was using estimated numbers that don't accurately reflect the current cost of the project. The city used \$150,000 as the initial cost estimate. The city would cover the \$25,000 design cost and \$87,500 of the project cost.

Michael Petrovick advised that if we seek to economize by breaking up the project, each phase could effectively be its own project, which would spread the cost. He clarified that the city perceived the stacks phase of the project as the most essential phase of the project.

Sam Temple asked if it would be possible to split up the project and ask the city separately for each job. Andy Bohannon replied that the city can revisit if the project is broken up and said that there would need to be some follow up with the city council to review. Marti Fiske advised that in her opinion the phase 2 portion of the project is the most urgent need. Paul Henkel reported that part of the lobby phase of the project would include acoustic modifications that would solve auditory issues in the lobby as well. Andy Bohannon informed the group that the acoustic "cloud" fixture would need to be quoted separately as it may be more expensive.

Susan Mathews advised that the Friends of KPL felt they could contribute \$80,000 to this project.

Kathleen Packard expressed concern about the level of the request that this project entails and is not comfortable with that large an ask of the Friends of KPL. Jane Pitts feels like we are in striking distance of being able to afford phases 1 and 2 with funds available to the trustees, if the ratio of funding between the city and the Trustees is held stable, with phase 3 funded by all three groups. The group discussed the structure of fees and the bidding process, and the uncertainty around what the final cost of the project will actually be.

Andy Bohannon suggested that, knowing the project needs to happen, and since the city has funding set aside based on the initial bid specifications, it can at least put the project out to bid, knowing that we can reject all bids if the amount is not acceptable. We will not know the "real" cost until the bids come back. We can request bids for the three phases separately. Rebates from Eversource and other entities typically total a miniscule amount.

Paul Henkel advised against changing the phase prior, because the largest impact to users will come from improving the stacks, and that it will be a challenge to have to go back to city council to change the priority.

The group discussed the logistics of moving this ahead and what the motion needs to be.

Motion was made by Bill Stroup, seconded by Jennifer Mathews, to have the city move ahead with the bidding process. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

### **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Jane Pitts introduced one donation for approval by the Trustees. \$60 from Leonard and Frances Himmelberg for the purchase of a specific text. Motion by Jennifer Mathews, seconded by Don Gorman, passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Jane Pitts introduced the Trustees to a draft proposal for the budget to be reviewed today for a vote at June's meeting.

### Notes on year-over-year deviations in Expenses

- Building and Grounds Committee decrease reflects the removal of the lighting project from the B&G Committee budget.
- Fine Arts Committee features an increase in their budget; this is due to expenses related to a project to purchase items for hanging new art.
- Other Trustee Projects –
  - Jane Pitts added amounts that seemed appropriate to address the lighting project. These don't reflect the numbers discussed earlier in this meeting.
  - The website project is another new addition with a placeholder of \$25,000. Marti Fiske advised that the team would like to redo the web site to bring it off the city platform and onto its own platform. This number is based on feedback from other libraries. The next step would be to get a quote, so this number is just a placeholder. This project budget falls below the requirement for a formal RFP. There would be an ongoing support and hosting fee that will be incurred as a result of this project, Marti roughly estimates that this will be in the neighborhood of \$5,000 per year.
- Outreach and Programming were reduced to zero. This is because enough funds are already in the pipeline for this purpose and no new funds are needed.

### Notes on year-over-year deviations of Income

- Increases in funds pulled from the checking and restricted accounts addresses the need on the expense side.

### **BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE**

Paul Henkel reported a \$1700 commitment to soil improvement related to trees. Bartlett Tree Services submitted soil test results and a plan for optimizing the chemical content of the soil.

The floor has been refurbished in Heberton Hall at the city expense.

The uneven concrete at the Winter Street entrance has been ground down for safety.

A forthcoming issue is that in the Menard Courtyard there is loose masonry work. The committee expects to hear more on this issue at their next meeting.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE** - no report

**LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE** - no report

### **FINE ARTS COMMITTEE**

Justin Somma outlined the materials needed to install a gallery-style rail system for the purposes of hanging art in exhibits and advised the estimate for materials comes in at approximately \$2,500. Andy Bohannon will visit the next committee meeting to determine if city staff can handle the labor at no additional expense.

### **POLICY COMMITTEE**

Kathleen Packard will present a copy of amendments to the bylaws at the next meeting. She also said that they have a meeting scheduled June 2nd at 5:15pm to review new prospective changes.

### **FRIENDS OF KEENE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Susan Mathews updated the Trustees on the activities of the Friends of Keene Public Library including the funding of activities around the region. FKPL is also looking for a new facilitator to run the newsletter.

**HORATIO COLONY MUSEUM** - no report

**CHESHIRE LITERACY COALITION** - no report

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Marti Fiske updated the Trustees on the statistics from the Makerspace. Last year there were 252 machine uses in all of 2025, compared with 116 uses year-to-date in 2026. This put us on track to exceed prior year usage. There were also only 27 new users in all of last year compared to 35 new users year-to-date. The user split is 75/25 between Keene residents and non-Keene residents. All non-resident users purchased library cards. An overwhelming majority of users report a positive experience with the service. She deferred to the written report for other information.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Bill Stroup advised that we will meet in June, skip July, and meet in August for the Annual Meeting which will include summary reports from the Committees. Susan Bloom will advise on the due date for these reports.

**NEW BUSINESS** - none.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:01pm

Meeting Minutes by: Justin Somma

# Director's Report

May 2026

## Lighting Improvements

The initial estimates from the lighting studying are in. (See attached.) The architect and City Facilities staff will be at the Board meeting to discuss how we might move forward. Estimates are higher than expected and were broken into phases to make bidding more flexible.

Phase 1: Adult collections floor estimate: \$128,854

Phase 2: Thayer mansion, first and second floor estimate: \$80,998

Total estimated cost: \$209,852

After reviewing the lighting at night, improvements to the circulation lobby were made as well.

Phase 3: Circulation lobby estimate: \$59,938

Grand total of all phases: \$269,790

At this point the City has approved the CIP and proposed the project for next fiscal year at \$175,000 which includes \$87,500 from the City and \$43,750 from the Friends and \$43,750 from the Trustees.

## Home-bound Delivery

We now have one volunteer and one patron with signed Agreements for the Homebound program. A second volunteer is expected to join soon. The Circ Supervisor has a list of possible patrons who might benefit from the program.

## New Employee

Carrie Perry, will join us next week as a new Aide at the Circ desk. She had volunteered in the Atrium.

## Library of Things

The Library of Things now includes specialty cake pans. Pans include multiple tiers (e.g. wedding cakes) and specialty shapes for children like unicorn, train, dump truck, etc.

## Grant Award

KPL won the Community Building grant through the New Hampshire Humanities with funding from the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority. The City Council approved the grant of federal pass-through funds of up to \$3,800. We are waiting to hear next steps from New Hampshire Humanities.

## Outreach

*ESL class:* Susan and Tossie attended the High Beginner ESL Class at Jonathon Daniels School. They gave intro to our website and digital resources.

*Youth Council:* Marti will be wrapping up the year with the Mayor's Youth Council. It was interesting to work with the students and see the topics that the Mayor is exposing them to. Because of the amount of time needed for the bi-weekly meetings, Library staff will only attend future meetings for discreet topics and projects that are within the Library's mission.

*Volunteer Fair:* Susan represented the Library at the Volunteer Fair held in Cohen. Three people were identified as possible new volunteers for the Atrium and Homebound Deliveries.

*Summer reading:* officially starts on June 1<sup>st</sup>! The youth department staff will be visiting the public elementary, middle and high schools as well as the charter schools in Keene to promote the summer reading program. We will also attend the swamp bats game on June 9<sup>th</sup>. As usual, everyone who signs up gets to choose a free book. We have amazing support from our business community who are supplying milestone prizes and grand prizes for participants. Little Zoe Pizza, the Monadnock Food Co Op, The Works, Life is Sweet, Brewbakers, Keene Cinema, YOLO, Ye Goodie Shop, Prime Roast, Enterprize Comics, Shadow and Soul and Toadstool continue to provide support. New businesses that are helping this year include Badger Balm, Keene on Cookies, Eat More Cake, Banh Me OK sandwich shop, The Stage restaurant and Cheshire Pizza. If you shop or dine at these businesses, please let them know how much their support is appreciated.

*Juneteenth:* We are collaborating with the Juneteenth Committee and will have a table at the Juneteenth festival on June 19<sup>th</sup> where we will be highlighting our resources and giving out books. We are hosting two film showings: Billy Preston on Thursday evening June 18<sup>th</sup> and Arco, a family film on Saturday June 20<sup>th</sup>.

*Pollinator Palooza:* We will have a table at the festival and will be promoting our citizen science kits and our Library of Things as well as distributing flower seeds for pollinators.

## **Programming --Lots and lots of programming:**

### *Recent and Ongoing:*

- We had a lively group of 50 people show up for the Hamilton Sing Along hosted by us facilitated by Jay Fee and in collaboration with the Historical Society.
- Our ongoing book groups: Romance, Sci Fi and Mystery book groups are going well.
- The new monthly Tech Talk Program has launched and is gaining a following. Last month we had Andrew Mueller from the City IT department present about passwords. June's topic is how to bring a critical eye to social media.
- Mahjong continues to grow. We purchased an additional game kit for increased attendance.
- The Friday afternoon Film Forum is popular and much appreciated. The Wednesday evening film series has steady attendance.
- Adult Craft: In the past couple months. we have had Samantha from Stonewall Farm and Pria Alair from Wak-A-Doodles present crafting programs for adults. They are excellent presenters and will be back to do more programs.
- Makerspace: We have continued to develop new programs for adults in the makerspace including making rubber stamps, bookplates, night lights in addition to the coaster and rotary glass workshops. Inviting people in to do specific making programs has increased interest and usage.
- Comic Club continues to grow with an average of 12 – 16 kids participating. Our STEM program for early elementary kids is very popular and will continue throughout the summer.

### *Upcoming:*

- Kim Wallach will be presenting two special musical story times in the month of June
- Upcoming adult craft programs include our own Katie Montgomery presenting “Ikebana(ish) Flower arranging” on June 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Summer Reading: Beginning in July we will be having Story times in Ashuelot Park again. Our first story time will have a special guest Virgil the Therapy Dog. Virgil will then visit several times over the summer to help reluctant readers become more confident in their reading skills.

### **Community collaborations:**

- We are collaborating with Peterborough Players
  - with a book display highlighting literature about theatre in general and some specific titles to promote their new season that starts with Baskerville. We will continue to highlight books that coincide with a few of their plays presented this summer.
  - Playwright Colette Mazunik ("A Danger to Yourself and Others") and artistic director Brenden Fox, will give a presentation “From the Page to the Stage” at the library on June 30th.
- We are working with the Colonial to help launch their Fall season with book displays in the lobby.
- Both the Colonial and the Peterborough Players are providing tickets for us to raffle to our patrons.
- We have purchased a new display unit for the lobby to help us in our efforts to collaborate with local arts organizations with complimentary book displays.

### **Marti away in June**

Marti will be on vacation June 10-28. Susan will act as Director in my absence.