

Groton Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at 7 pm, Community Room

Approved, 6/10/2025

Attending in Person: Library Trustees Helena Altsman, Mark Gerath, Jennifer Petersen, Heidi Robes, Kristen von Campe, and David Zeiler. Library Director Vanessa Abraham and Assistant Director Sarah Breen were also present.

Absent: None.

Call to Order

Chair Helena Altsman called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Vote Summary

- Approval of April 8, 2025, Meeting Minutes (as amended). Moved by Kristen, seconded by Mark. 4 ayes, 0 nays, 2 abstentions.
- Vote to approve grant request for FY2026 to the Endowment Trustees. Moved by Helena, seconded by Mark; 6 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.
- Adjourn. Moved by Mark, seconded by Helena. 6 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.

Action Items

- Vanessa will reach out again to Greenwood regarding leaking skylights.
- Vanessa will reach out to Northeast Digital for a ballpark quote on A/V upgrades for Sibley Hall.
- Vanessa will draft a procurement proposal for graphic design services.
- Vanessa will move forward with the purchase of Mary Minifie's oil painting, "Diedre" and will coordinate paperwork.

Monthly Report from the Director and Assistant Director

- Circulation is up, traffic is up, program attendance is down slightly (but up with recorded program views and take-away activity kits).
- GPL has started cognitive care kits with activity workbooks, etc., for memory care.
- Preparations are nearly complete for GrotonFest and the Summer Reading Program.
- Groton's Annual Report was released and includes the dedication to Geri Perry, the increased program statistics, and the 25th anniversary of the building expansion.
- Vanessa attended the membership meeting for Library Directors in the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium (MVLV) today, and heard many towns are facing overrides and are concerned about budgets.
- A group photo of library staff was posted on Instagram during National Library Week and received many likes.
- A new 10 x 10 canopy customized with the library name on each valance was ordered and received in time for GrotonFest Spring.

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- “ClearGov” budgeting software will be used by the Town for FY2027 budgeting starting in November (cleargov.com), but the Town Dept. Heads are being introduced to it now to build familiarity.

Report on Spring Town Meeting

- Nothing negatively affected the library.
- Town overrides passed at Spring Town Meeting, but they also have to pass at the polls.

Action Items

- Approval of the Minutes from April 8, 2025 Meeting
 - Completed, see vote summary.
- Review Trustees’ Calendar for Current Month
 - All calendar items reviewed.
- Review Trustees’ Action Items for Current Month
 - All action items reviewed.
- Report on Action Items from Previous Meetings
 - All action items reviewed.

Budget & Finance

- Review Monthly Bills
 - All library bills reviewed.
- Review Monthly Budget Report & YTD General Expenses Budget vs. Actual
 - Monthly budget report reviewed.
 - General expenses YTD report reviewed.
- Other Budget & Finance
 - Discuss Funding for the Upcoming Children’s Room Space Redesign.

Building & Equipment

- Monthly Project Tracker
 - Three of four skylights are leaking. Greg from Greenwood has been contacted about it and needs to be contacted again. The skylight covers will likely need to be removed and fully resealed.
- Carpeting Project Updates
 - Carpeting procurement is nearly complete. The final paperwork is being assembled, including the standard Town Contractors Contract. Once complete, it will all be brought to the Town Manager for his review, approval, and signature.

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- The Building & Equipment Committee met and has decided that the central tile transition strips can be removed, but all other tiles in the lobby and vestibule will remain.
- It was also decided that the taller shelving units would remain in place, and carpeting tiles would be laid around them. Once the new arrangement in the space redesign project is established, we can relocate the shelves, install the carpet underneath, and reattach them to the floor with bolts per current building codes.
- Other Building & Equipment
 - Updates on Water Fountains (or “Bubblers” in local vernacular)
 - Drinking fountains on all three floors are original back to the 1999 building renovation and will be replaced with combination bubbler and water bottle-filler units.
 - The double water fountain on the first floor will be replaced with a single all-in-one, space-saving, ADA-compliant bottle-filler and drinking fountain combined unit by Elkay.

Policy, Personnel, & Planning

- Discuss Staff Appreciation Breakfast
 - Staff enjoyed it very much and were most appreciative!
- Collins Center Study Updates
 - Town Manager to meet with the Select Board regarding results and guidance on opening union contracts, after which the report will be released.
- Other Policy, Personnel, & Planning
 - Procurement Process for Graphic Design Services
 - What particular services are desired need to be determined, and a process laid out before we start speaking with individual companies or graphic designers.

GPL Endowment Trust

- Review Current YTD Budget vs. Spending Report
 - Spending on target for FY2025.
- FY2026 Endowment Grant Request
 - Vote to approve the grant request for FY2026 to the Endowment Trustees. See vote summary above.

Art

- Abel Spaulding Portrait Ownership

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- The Groton Historical Society has unearthed letters from the Library Trustees asking for the loan of the Abel Spaulding painting in 1940.
- The Groton Historical Society was housed in the Library until they moved into the Boutwell House in 1940 – and took their items with them.
- The Library Trustee official minutes make it clear we asked the GHS for the loan of the Spaulding portrait, including sending a thank you letter for the loan. To the best of our knowledge, the painting has hung in the same spot since 1940.
- Notable that the Abel Spaulding Trust Fund for the ongoing care of the painting was left to the Library at the 1940 Town Meeting.
- We will work with the GHS on what they would like to do going forward.
- Discuss Possible Art Acquisition
 - Trustees support the acquisition of Mary Minifie’s original oil painting, “Diedre,” for the Historical Room using funds remaining in this fiscal year’s endowment grant.
 - Mary asked if she would be able to borrow the painting occasionally for an exhibition of her work, and the Trustees agreed.
 - The Trustees were in general agreement of the drafted contract Vanessa wrote with Mary Minifie’s approval. It specifies a few basics for the interest and protection of both the artist and the library, such as that the artist holds the copyright to the image, but that the library can use the image in promotional materials with full credit given to the artist, etc. As the Abel Spaulding painting shows, it is important to maintain documentation of agreements made.

Other Business

- Other
 - None

Next Steps

- Review of Action Items from Current Meeting – see above
- Review Upcoming Meetings & Events

Adjournment at 8:41 pm – see vote summary.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Petersen, Secretary