

Groton Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 14, 2026, at 6:30 pm, Community Room

Approved, 8/1/2026

Attending in Person: Trustees Mark Gerath, Jennifer Petersen, Heidi Reichert-Robes, Kristen von Campe, and David Zeiler.

Also Attending: Library Director Vanessa Abraham and Assistant Director Sarah Breen.

Absent: Trustee Helena Altzman.

Call to Order

Chair Jennifer Petersen called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Vote Summary of Tonight's Meeting

- Approval of June 9, 2026, Meeting Minutes as presented. Moved by Kristen, seconded by David. 5 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.
- Motion to approve up to \$1,000 for Community Events and up to \$500 for costs associated with the annual staff workshop from State Aid. Moved by Kristen, seconded by David. 5 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.
- Motion to approve \$720.40 from the Gift Fund to replace the Custodian's prescription eyewear that broke while he was working. Moved by Kristen, seconded by David. 5 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.
- Motion to approve FY2027 Trustee Goals (see below). Moved by Kristen, seconded by David. 5 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.
- Motion to Adjourn. Moved by Kristen, seconded by David. 5 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.

Action Items from Tonight's Meeting

- Mark to update parameters on the Director's annual evaluation and share that with the evaluation committee.
- Jennifer to call Helena to notify her that she has been selected for the evaluation committee.
- Vanessa and Heidi will meet with the other Endowment Trustees on August 13.
- David and Kristen to discuss replacing the furniture in Katie's Garden.

Ongoing Action Items from Previous Meetings

May 12 Meeting

- Vanessa will work on the dissolution process for the GPL Endowment Events, Inc.
- Vanessa will continue to work on Children's Room upgrades.

June 9 Meeting

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- Vanessa to discuss Endowment management issues with other Library Directors.
- Kristen and Mark to organize a Trustees card and gift for retired staff member Nancy Dumont.

Monthly Report from the Director and Assistant Director

- Both reports were reviewed. Highlights include:
 - Record number of program participants in June;
 - Very high attendance and use by teens were seen in June. It helps when the Teen Services Librarian can get into the schools to promote the teen summer reading program. It helps especially to visit the 6th & 7th Graders to promote the Teen Summer Reading Program.
 - Staff coverage on middle school half-days: after much trial and error, we felt this was the best year yet for these special days—we seem to have found the best combination of people and routines for these extremely busy, high-energy days.
 - GPL hosted the inaugural meeting of a new birding club for Groton and the surrounding communities, drawing strong attendance and interest;
 - The Fun Fair, our Summer Reading Program Kick-Off event, was held two days after school ended, and was quite successful. The number of participants enrolled in our Summer Reading Programs as of today already exceeds last year's total!
 - A staff member fell down a few stairs. They sought medical attention and are following instructions.
- In Groton news, the Town Manager has already launched into budget preparations for FY2028 with the two towns and schools. Given the outlook, he wanted to start as early as possible.

Action Items

- Approval of the Minutes from the June 9, 2026, 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.

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Budget & Finance

- Review Monthly Bills
 - All library bills reviewed.
 - Notable was the bill for the fire suppression sprinkler inspection, which was more thorough than in recent years. The Library Director endorsed the change.
- Review Monthly Budget Tracker
 - Budget Report reviewed.
- FY2026 Fiscal Year End Final Report: Town Budgets Overview
 - FY2026 spending was reviewed relative to the budget. A wage shortfall from vacation payouts and other benefits for two retiring employees was covered by salary surplus.
 - No other important discrepancies were noted.
- Director's Request for FY2027 Budget for Community Events and Dec. Staff Workshop
 - The nature of the two requests was discussed. A motion was presented and passed; see vote summary.
- Other Budget & Finance
 - The Director requested special funding for the replacement cost of the Custodian's prescription eyeglasses because his broke at work. A motion was presented and passed; see vote summary.

Building & Equipment

- Projects Funded at Fiscal Year-End were discussed. The latter two items will be defrayed by unspent funds from the FY2026 Endowment allocation.
 - Sprinkler System Repairs (Town)
 - Scan/Fax Machine Replacement (Endowment)
 - Community Room A/V (Endowment)
- Other Building & Equipment
 - The ongoing children's room redesign was discussed.
 - Potential improvements to other parts of the facility were discussed.

Policy, Personnel, & Planning

- Review Trustees' Goals for FY2026

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- Progress on FY2026 Trustees' goals was reviewed and discussed. The group agreed that, while progress had been made and some goals were accomplished, circumstances required retaining four of the five goals; see below.
- Set New Trustees' Goals for FY2027
 - The potential new goals were discussed and approved; see vote summary. The goals are:
 - Advocate for a library budget that fully meets the needs of the community and the GPL.
 - Prioritize physical space updates and technology upgrades to accommodate 21st-century library patrons. Develop a plan to meet those needs, including thoughtful and prudent funding options.
 - Continue to define the role of the GPL in the Town of Groton as various civic groups continue to expand services.
 - Explore alternative staffing approaches to optimize services.
- Appoint Library Director Evaluation Working Group and Review Process
 - The Director's evaluation committee will consist of Jennifer and Helena. Kristen will be a backup if Helena is unavailable.
- Other Policy, Personnel, & Planning
 - Two shelveers are being sought, and 45 applications have been received.

GPL Endowment Trust

- FY2026 Year-End Budget
 - The budget and actual expenditures were reviewed. No issues were identified.
- Organizational Updates
 - The Endowment Board is reviewing current Endowment practices to ensure all current standards are met and to determine whether routine management practices could be improved.

Other Business

- None

Next Steps

- Review of Action Items from Current Meeting – see above.

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- Review Upcoming Meetings & Events: One or more Trustees will be out of town for the September 8 and October 13 scheduled meetings. A hybrid meeting may be necessary in both cases.

Adjournment at 7:53 pm – see vote summary.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Gerath, Secretary