

Groton Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 11, 2026, at 7 pm, Community Room

Approved, 9/15/2026

Attending in Person: Library Trustees Helena Altsman, Mark Gerath, Jennifer Petersen, and Heidi Reichert-Robes.

Attending via Zoom: Trustee David Zeiler

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

Absent: Trustee Kristen von Campe

Call to Order

Chair Jennifer Petersen called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Vote Summary of Tonight's Meeting

- Approval of July 14, 2026, Meeting Minutes. Moved by Mark, seconded by Heidi. 5 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.
- A vote to adjust holiday-related hours as follows: 1) Close at 5 PM the day before Thanksgiving; and 2) Close the day after both Thanksgiving and Christmas if staff does not volunteer to work on those days. Moved by Mark, seconded by Heidi. 5 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.
- Motion to Adjourn at 8:40 pm. Moved by Mark, seconded by Heidi. 5 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions.

Action Items from Tonight's Meeting

- Vanessa and Heidi will meet with Endowment Trustees and their attorney on Thursday.
- Vanessa and the Budget Committee to meet with the Town Manager to discuss municipal budget outlook. Vanessa is to arrange the meeting.
- Vanessa to add potential parking lot re-configuration to project tracker.
- Vanessa to meet with the State resource person on Children's Room re-configuration.
- Mark to provide Vanessa with information on the remote camera the GCT uses for potential use in the parking lot.
- Helena and Jennifer to solicit input for the Director's annual evaluation.
- Vanessa to poll the Trustees regarding meeting times to review the draft Director's annual evaluation.

Monthly Report from the Director and Assistant Director

- Reports were reviewed and highlights discussed.

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- The ARIS report to the state is still pending but will be filed on time.
- Usage is up for several parameters, including: 1) Materials checkout; 2) Visits by teens, including their checking out books; and 3) Attendance for both children's and adult programs.

Action Items

- Approval of the Minutes from the July 14, 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.

Budget & Finance

- Review Monthly Bills
 - All library bills reviewed.
- Review Monthly Budget Tracker
 - Budget Report reviewed.
- Other Budget & Finance
 - The anticipated FY28 budget was discussed. Shortfalls are expected, and the Town Manager is already working with town and school representatives to address them. Without an override, additional school and municipal cuts will be needed.

Building & Equipment

Building, Project, & Equipment Updates

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- Two pieces of equipment (updated scanner/fax/copier and revamped AV system for the community room) were ordered at the end of the fiscal year with the unspent funds from the GPL Endowment grant to the library. Because delivery and installation could not be done by early August (when it's time to close the books for the accountant to review), the board discussed the best way to handle temporarily encumbered funds.
- The Trustees discussed the application of year-end Endowment grant balances toward equipment purchases and agreed to coordinate with the Endowment Board and their accountant on establishing a formal year-to-year encumbrance mechanism.
- Redesign of the Children's Room is proceeding. This will likely include a layout and storage redesign of the Children's Librarian's Office. Another State resource person will visit to offer ideas.
- The library's gardens both in front and back needs additional weeding. Ideas to get the task done were discussed.
- **Parking Lot: Security Camera and Other Potential Improvements**
 - Issues with the parking lot were presented including relatively frequent fender benders and other damage that are frequently unreported. A recent hit-and-run incident involving a vehicle parked after hours was noted and reported to the police.
 - Vanessa proposed that, with the increasing size and expense of vehicles these days, reducing the total number of spaces to make them all a bit larger might better serve the Town, removing one space from each row so each parking space is at least 10 feet wide (the current standard is 9 feet wide). Vanessa reviewed the town by-laws on parking dimensions and their potential flexibility. The potential to reduce the number of spaces but make the lot more "comfortable" was discussed.
 - Options for expanding outdoor security camera coverage to the parking lot were discussed, including cellular and solar-powered options.
 - The Trustees asked that Vanessa add this to the project tracker. The Trustees also suggested that the Children's Room reconfiguration should be completed prior to any effort on the parking lot. They also suggested that any such effort should include an expert consultant.

Policy, Personnel, & Planning

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- Director's Self-Evaluation
 - The self-evaluation has been provided to the Evaluation Committee.
 - Logistics regarding preparing the draft evaluation were discussed (see action items).
- Staff Requesting Changes to the Holiday Hours around Thanksgiving & Christmas
 - Staff requested adjustments to holiday operating hours around Thanksgiving and Christmas. After discussing staff coverage needs and reviewing door count data, the Trustees voted to close at 5:00 PM on Thanksgiving Eve instead of 6:00 PM.
 - The Trustees further agreed that the library will open on the days after Thanksgiving and Christmas only if a sufficient number of staff members volunteer to work; otherwise, the facility will close. This aligns with Town Hall decisions about these particular days. (See vote summary.)

GPL Endowment Trust

- Discussion continued regarding establishing a formal year-to-year encumbrance process with the Endowment trustees and their accountant for grant balances.
- Trustee representatives will attend the upcoming Endowment Board meeting on Thursday.

Tarbell Charitable Trust (TCT)

- Preview the new TCT website
 - The TCT website was reviewed and its contents discussed.
- Exhibition Updates
 - The planned 2030 exhibit of the Tarbell paintings and newly created works will occur at the Prescott Community Center.
 - The TCT is interested in having a "home base" and display at the Library and Historical Center for the duration of the exhibition. More details to come.

Other Business

- No other business was considered.

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Next Steps

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

Adjournment at 8:40 pm – see vote summary.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Gerath, Secretary