Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees
Wed. March 5, 2025 at 7 pm
Thornton Room, Brooks Free Library
739 Main St., Harwich MA 02645

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Attendance
2. Public Comment
3. Vote to Approve Regular Session Minutes of Feb. 5, 2025 Board of Trustees Meeting
4. Reports
   A. Chair
   B. Library Director
   C. Review of Staff Reports and Other Information in Meeting Packet
   D. Building & Grounds Committee
   E. Personnel Committee
7. Correspondence
8. Old Business
   A. Updates on FY26 Budget - discussion and possible vote
9. New Business
   A. Vote to Accept Donations
10. Trustee Reports and Requests for Next Meeting's Agenda
11. Upcoming Meetings/Events
    A. Library Board of Trustees – March 5, 2025 – 7 pm
    B. Library Board of Trustees – April 2, 2025 – 7 pm
    C. Library Budget Meeting(s) with Select Board and Finance Committee - TBD
12. Executive Session

    Pursuant to MGL c.30A section 21 (a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the Town's bargaining or litigating position: Harwich Employees Association (HEA) - discussion and possible votes

Authorized posting officer	Posted by
Virginia A. Hewitt	________________________
Brooks Free Library	Town Clerk's Office

Agenda submitted for electronic posting to Town website.

** Per the Attorney General's Office: Boards/Commissions may hold an open session for topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting following "New Business." If you are deaf or hard of hearing or are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation, contact the Library at 508-430-7562 or brooksfreelibrary@clamsnet.org.*

Brooks Free Library
Board of Trustees Meeting
739 Main Street, Harwich, MA 02645
Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 7pm

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm. Members present:J. Wheeler, J. McCarty, L. Cebula, B. Waystack, W. Crowell Members absent: J. Brown, P Murray, Also present: V. Hewitt, Director
2. Vote to Approve Regular Session Minutes of January 8, 2025 Board of Trustees Meeting Motion: McCarty V. 4 0 1
3. Public Comment None

4. ***Reports:***

A. Chair: The chair reminded members to complete the Conflict of Interest program by the April deadline
B. Library Director as submitted
C. Staff Reports as submitted
D. Building & Grounds: no report
E. Personnel Committee: no report

5. ***Correspondence:***

None

6. ***Old Business:***

A. Updates on FY26 Budget no further updates at this time

7. ***New Business:***

A. Vote to accept donations: there were no donations this month

8. Trustees Reports and Requests for next meeting's agenda

9 Upcoming meetings and events
Library Board of Trustees Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 7 pm
Library Board of Trustees Wednesday, April 2, 2025 at 7 pm

Motion to adjourn at 7:23pm
M. Crowell 2nd. Wheeler V. Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,
Bernadette Waystack,
Secretary, BFL Board of Trustees

Library Director's Report
for the March 5, 2025 Meeting of the
Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees

Prepared 2.28.25

BUILDING TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES

Assistive Listening/PA System in Meeting Room

This month I've worked with the Reference Librarian on procurement issues. We expect to finalize the contract for the assistive listening and public address system in the meeting room in the next week or so.

FY26 Technology Infrastructure Upgrades

This month the Deputy Director, Reference Librarian and I met with the Town's IT Director and a contractor working with her to review technology infrastructure needs at the Library. This is for FY26 projects to be paid for from the Town's IT budget. Most Town buildings received these upgrades this fiscal year. This is for the next round of Town buildings to have this work done.

The contractor is most interested in providing wireless solutions but we stressed our critical need is to upgrade the wired network – new cabling throughout the building as well as adding data jacks in staff work areas where there are none or the number is insufficient.

RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS

This month I responded to several complaints, which you should be aware have occurred.

1. Allegation that a staff member physically removed a child from a program

   This week I received and responded to an allegation from a patron that a staff member had physically removed their child from a program. This was unfounded. The patron themselves physically picked the child up and forcefully removed their child from the room when they became disruptive. Fortunately, multiple staff members and others witnessed the events and confirmed this did not occur.

   Once the child was removed from the room by the parent, a staff member assisted in resolving the situation by offering an alternative activity. The kindness and thoughtfulness of the staff member resolved the situation, immediately helping the child calm down, and the child happily played with Legos in the Children's Room for more than an hour until the Library closed. At no time did the staff member use physical force on the child.

2. Failure to Provide Accessible Programs and Accommodations

   The same complaint also stated the Library does not provide accessible programs. This is not the case. More than half of the special vacation week programs are accessible or could easily be modified to provide accommodations for neuro-divergent children.

   The needs of neuro-divergent children vary, however, based on the individual. Some are sensory-seeking where others may be sensory-avoiding. Library staff can not anticipate what an individual child needs for an accommodation so clear communication from the parents about their child's needs is required in advance so we can determine if we are able to provide the requested accommodation.

   We must also balance the needs of all children and may not be able to modify the fundamental nature of the program to suit all neuro-divergent children, however, so it may not always be possible to provide the requested accommodations. Under the ADA, libraries are not required to make an accommodation that changes the fundamental nature of the program or that presents an undue burden, but we do carefully plan program offerings to ensure a variety of programs are provided.

Some of the conditions the parent stated were necessary for their child to successfully participate, such as communication about the structure of the programs and expectations for the children's behavior, were provided at the start of the Animal Ambassadors program, but the family arrived 10-15 minutes after the program began. The expectations were communicated to the children but this family was not present for it. The parent then ignored the staff member who told them the program was full and they could not participate, and entered the program anyway.

The complaint also stated the room was overcrowded. You should know we reduce the number of attendees in the meeting room for children's programs, so it did not exceed occupancy standards.

I have responded to the patron, advising them that my investigation found the allegation that a staff member physically removed their child from a program is not true. He was also advised to contact the Youth Services staff in advance for more information about upcoming programs and to request any accommodations.

Following this complaint, we are reviewing procedures for children's programs, and will likely reduce the number of tickets given out even further below the room occupancy amount. It is unlikely the number of attendees would be reduced to a level that would feel comfortable for all neuro-divergent children, but it should result in a better experience for all attendees and be easier for staff to manage the program if the number of attendees is reduced. This will mean, however, more people will be turned away from the larger, more popular programs. We also need to provide more support to the staff member coordinating large programs. Another staff member may need to be stationed in the room to help deal with families who ignore the instructions of staff members.

3. Complaints About Library Technology

   A patron has been expressing concerns about the security of personal data when using Library technology in the building as well as for borrowed Chromebooks and Internet hotspots. They are misunderstanding security features of the systems, insisting they are proof that our technology is compromised, her online activity is being tracked by a predator, etc. I have provided her with detailed and specific responses to her concerns in writing, but her fears are not allayed. I am including this information in my report as this patron has been contacting Town officials urging an investigation into our compromised technology. You should know our Internet workstations are safe and secure, as are the devices we loan to the public. I would be happy to provide additional information if you would like to known more about how patron privacy, data and activity are protected.

   This patron is also asserting her rights under the ADA to be provided with technology assistance and circulation services at her car in the parking lot due to her limited mobility. The patron enters the Community Center without staff assistance, however, every weekday and independently navigates throughout that building. The Library is also a fully accessible building and can be navigated as easily as the Community Center. The patron has been informed we cannot provide services in the parking lot.

FINANCIAL

Year-to-Date Budget:

- A spreadsheet is included in your packets.
- This month I did an in-depth review of the Electric and Gas lines. Use is consistent with prior years but costs are much higher. Using year-to-date costs and estimated costs for the remaining months of the fiscal year, I project costs in the Electric line could be $6000-$8000 over budget and the Gas line could be $2500 over budget, for a total budget shortfall of approximately $10,500 in the Expense line.
- We cannot absorb these costs in the overall Expense budget, but we should be able to request the Select Board approve a year-end transfer from the Salary and Wages budget to the Expense lines.
- I have analyzed year-to-date and projected Salary and Wages costs for the remaining pay periods in the fiscal year to ensure the funds are available. We will have unspent Salary and Wages funds this year due to the 6-month delay in filling the full-time Circulation Librarian as well as some unspent funds due to part-time vacancies earlier in the year.
- Included in your packet is the letter I sent to the Town Administrator, Finance Director and Chair of the Finance Committee advising them of the projected need for this year-end transfer. They need to be aware of this for planning purposes as state law restricts this kind of year-end transfers to certain percentages of budgets.

FY26 Budget

- Budget Hearings/Meetings
  - The Select Board decided not to hold the customary all-day budget hearings with the Finance Committee this year.
  - The two boards meet in joint session to review several of the larger department's budgets, but the Select Board does not intend to meet with all departments.
  - The Finance Committee may decide to schedule meetings with individual departments.
- FY26 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)
  - On Feb. 19th departments were instructed to add a 2% cost-of-living increase to FY26 Salary and Wages.
  - This adjustment increased the Library FY26 Salary and Wages line by $17,873.
  - Negotiations for FY26 union contracts are now underway so this may not be the final cost-of-living-adjustment rate and other wage adjustments (reclassifications, changes to the pay plan, etc.) could still occur.

- Adjustments to FY26 Budgets
    - In the same Feb. 25th I sent to the Town Administrator, Finance Director and Finance Committee I requested other adjustments to the FY26 budget.
    - The 2% COLA resulted in an increase need of $3320 to the Library Materials line (books, audiobooks, etc.) in order to meet state certification standards.
    - Based on my review of Electric expenses, I also requested an increase of $7000 in the FY26 Electric Utility line.
    - The FY26 request for Gas already included a sizeable increase, which at this time appears sufficient so additional funds were not requested in that line.
    - A summary spreadsheet showing the FY26 budget is included in your packet. The first block shows the budget with the 2% COLA and the bottom one shows the FY26 budget if the budget adjustments requested on 2.25.25 are approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Hewitt
Library Director

BROOKS FREE LIBRARY
739 Main St., Harwich MA
508-430-7562
vhewitt@clamsnet.org

Ginny Hewitt
From: Ginny Hewitt, Library Director

To: Joseph F. Powers, Town Administrator
Ed Spellman, Finance Director

CC: Megan Green, Assistant Town Accountant
Meggan Eldredge, Assistant Town Administrator
Linda Cebula, Chair, Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees
Peter Hughes, Chair, Finance Committee

Subj: FY26 Budget Adjustments & projected FY25 Budget Transfer Needed

Date: Feb. 25, 2025

I'm writing to request two FY26 budget adjustments and to advise you of projected FY25 shortfalls in the Electric and Gas lines.

FY26 Budget Adjustment Requests

1. Library Materials Expense line (016102 551000) - needs $3320 increase to $195,615

   Explanation: Adding the 2% COLA to Salary and Wages means the amount needed for Library Materials is now $3,320 below the amount needed for state library certification.

2. Electric Utility line (016102 521100) - needs a $7000 increase to $42,000

   Explanation: the original request of $35,000 was a $3000 increase (9.4%) over FY25. It is now apparent, however, that the FY25 budget is insufficient. A current analysis projects the full FY25 expense as $38,000- $40,000 ($6000-$8000 over budget.) Adding 5% to FY25 actual and projected expenses means the FY26 request should be $42000.

Please advise if the Library is authorized to make these adjustments to the FY26 budget in MUNIS. I'd be happy to provide additional information or meet with you to discuss these requests.

FY25 Expense Line Shortfalls

Line 016102 521100 Electric Utility projected to be overspent by	$6000 - $8000
Line 016102 521200 Gas Utility projected to be overspent by	$2500
Total Projected Shortfall	$8500 -$10500

We cannot absorb those additional costs in the FY25 Expense budget, but because a full-time vacancy was not filled until January, we should have sufficient funds to request the Select Board approve a transfer from Salaries and Wages to the Electric and Gas lines at the end of the fiscal year.

Please advise if such a transfer would fall within the guidelines/limits for this, or if there is another mechanism such as a Reserve Fund Transfer we should plan to utilize to pay these utility costs.

Thank you for your assistance.

BROOKS FREE LIBRARY FY26 REQUEST SUMMARY **2.28.25**

FY26 budget with 2% COLA - 2.20.25

	FY25 voted	FY26 Request	increase	%
Salary & Wages	$853,138	$886,876	$33,738	4.0%
Expenses	$319,258	$332,401	$13,143	4.1%
TOTAL	$1,172,396	$1,219,277	$46,881	4.0%

FY26 budget if 2.25.25 Budget Adjustments Approved

	FY25 voted	FY26 Request	increase	%
Salary & Wages	$853,138	$886,876	$33,738	4.0%
Expenses	$319,258	$342,720	$23,462	7.3%
TOTAL	$1,172,396	$1,229,596	$57,200	4.9%

MUNICIPAL APPROPRIATION REQUIREMENT

Projected FY25 Municipal Appropriation Requirement	$1,167,359
With 2.20.25 COLA, budget exceeds projected MAR by:	$51,918
With 2.25.25 Adjustments will exceeds projected MAR by:	$62,237

Deputy Director's Report
For the March 5, 2025 meeting of the
Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees

Staff training, assistance, and back up:
This past month I spent more time filling in at public desks for staff who were out. We had several staff out on medical leave or on vacations this month. Although this on-desk time can take me away from other tasks, I want to continue working directly with the public on a regular basis as it gives me the direct feedback from the public that I value and it gives me a better perspective on the workflow and challenges our staff are facing.

In this past month, I provided guidance for staff who are preparing for Clams network committee meetings (Alan Caughey for the Bibliographic Services Advisory group and Kelly Depin for the Public Services Advisory group) and I provided background information to our director for the Clams Membership meeting. There were several issues on the agenda for the Membership meeting this month that I had strong, informed, opinions about and there are always Koha/Clams related issues that should be addressed at the other two committee meetings.

I worked with Kelly last week to set up ordering functions in our Ingram system and she placed her first Fiction order successfully before going out on medical leave. As the account administrator, I am still working with Ingram to implement changes in our spine labels (they are starting to come in now- they are noticeably different). All the staff unanimously approved of these changes at our recent all-staff meeting. Working with this large company is frustrating but will ultimately save us a lot of staff time and provide better service. I continue to spend time mentoring and training our professional staff who are still new in their positions.

Furniture purchases and clean outs:
After gathering a significant amount of information about 'flip-top tables', I came to the conclusion that a long term solution was going to be very expensive (ultimately, we need to replace or fix 15+ flip top tables and most quality tables cost more than $1,000 each). After consulting with our director, we decided to proceed with the purchase of 4 new tables - the same model and from the same vendor we used for the tables in Vital (local company where delivery and install is included and service has been excellent in the past). These tables will be used for the public computers on the second floor. The flip top tables that those computers are currently sitting on (that are less damaged) can then be brought downstairs to replace the most damaged tables in the meeting room.

After offering a list of excess furniture and other items to all town departments, the 2 independent libraries in Harwich, and all of the Clams libraries (I am still working with one library who indicated they wanted several items), I intend to put a work order in for these items to be disposed of by the town. These items include empty units still on the library floor, and the meeting room as well as items from the Friends that are in the hallways. There is more 'cleaning out' to do and I hope to do a second round of this soon and to try to prevent this from happening more in the future by disposing of items promptly when we know they no longer have a use for us.

Technology Programming:
I ran a successful program on February 27th with the invaluable assistance of Reference Librarian, Jamie Thornton on Email management. I used a format where I spoke and presented information for the first part of the program and then the second hour+ involved a lot of individualized hands-on help. Managing overflowing inboxes and ever-changing email platforms is clearly a struggle for many folks and we might do a part 2 or second session of this program. We got a lot of positive feedback and ideas and we will likely try to continue to do other technology focused programs in the near future. I am trying to focus these programs on common issues that we are most frequently asked about or are helping patrons with at the Reference desk here in the library. These programs might be staff led or run by other professionals with expertise on a particular topic and I am actively accepting feedback and suggestions.

Respectfully submitted.,

Jennifer Pickett, Deputy Director

Youth Services Report
2/26/25

Mock Stonewall Book Group
I am starting a new book group for teens and adults on March 8th. It will meet monthly on the first or second Saturday of each month at 10:30. The focus of the book group will be to read and discuss books that are eligible for the youth Stonewall Book Awards given to books for youth that showcase excellence in literature and the depiction of the LGBTQIA experience. In January of next year we will hold a Mock Stonewall vote before the announcement of the real Stonewall Book Award at the Youth Media Awards ceremony.

February Vacation
We had a successful week of February vacation special programs. The vacation week started off with a Black History Art Program run by Shift Supervisor Shanaz Petty. On Tuesday we had a Pirate Party, part of a collaboration with the Harwich Junior Theater whose current production is based on the picture book How I Became a Pirate. We had 57 people attend the Pirate Party, which was perfect number of people without becoming too overwhelming. Wednesday was a passive program of Legos. Thursday was Cookie Decorating, with 37 attendees, a reasonable amount but slightly less than last year. On Friday we had Animal Ambassadors come with live animals. There were a lot of people at that event, and we have discussed ways to try to mitigate the need to turn people away from our events as a result. On Saturday we had the Family Sheet Fort Night, with a maximum capacity crowd of 50 people. It is one of the events for which we receive the most positive feedback all year.

Winter Vacation
I did not have a chance to report on our Winter Vacation programming last month because I was out on bereavement leave. We had Joys of Nature present live animals to an audience of 35. Shanaz Petty set up a passive art program themed around snowflakes that had 48 participants. I ran a DIY Bouncy Ball program that had 37 participants. Our most popular Winter Vacation program was the annual Noon Year's Eve with 88 people. This was almost double our previous recent attendance. We had 45 people on the eve of 2024 and 53 people in 2023.

Collection Development
In December we completed an inventory of the children's fiction and paperback books, ran a missing report for youth items, weeded the children's graphic novels. In January we weeded the picture books. In February we did an inventory of the biography section and weeded the board games, kits, and biographies and began weeding the children's fiction.

Destination Imagination
We have two Destination Imagination teams that will be competing on March 16th in Beverly. These teams have been meeting weekly under my facilitation.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Carpenter, Youth Services Librarian

Staff Librarian - Programming
February 2025 Report for
March 5th, 2025 Trustees of Brooks Free Library Meeting

Programming

I moved into my second month as the Staff Librarian for programming, adult services, and outreach and am still in the process of getting up-to-speed on my role. I met with Jamie Thornton in January to review social media feeds (Facebook and Instagram), use of Constant Contact (newsletter), event calendar management, and other related topics. I will continue to meet with Jamie for some further training, including with the BFL website management. Throughout February, I worked on placing posts on our social media feeds and also put together the newsletter for patrons - a March newsletter is being finalized and will be sent out by 2/28. I am also working on coordination of monthly Cape Cod Chronicle library columns (and communication to the Chronicle about events, along with other BFL staff) and of the bimonthly column for the Harwich COA newsletter. I wrote a column for the March 6th Chronicle about our drop-in sessions available to patrons (including tech services, Harwich Housing Advocate for affordable housing, blood pressure, and jigsaw puzzling). I am also working on getting programming planned for March (and future months) - currently have an interesting musical program lined up for May with an indigenous musician and composer who received a Cultural Council grant to compose a piece to be performed for free; also working on other music options, possible authors panel, and other drop-in sessions (with BFL staff).

Circulation Transition

I carried out Circulation transition training and review with Kelly Depin (primarily in January) and will carry out some additional meetings with her on remaining items when she returns in March.

Personal Development

I am currently finishing a one-month course on Change Management for my MLIS (San Jose State Univ) and will be starting a two-month course on Adult Services in March, which I felt would be relevant and useful to my current work at BFL. I also continue to plan on taking advantage of any other relevant online trainings offered by CLAMS, MBLC and other organizations, as time permits.

Respectfully submitted,
Gavin Williams, Staff Librarian - Programming

FY25 Budget Balances

As of 2.28.25

AREA OF EXPENDITURE	Appropriated Amt	Spent	Remaining Balance	Percent Spent
Advertising	$180.00	$0.00	$180.00	0%
Dues, Subs & Travel	$3,400.00	$885.00	$2,515.00	26%
Library Materials	$185,935.00	$118,891.15	$67,043.85	64%
Electric	$32,000.00	$27,063.98	$4,936.02	85%
Employee Fringe Benefits	$756.00	$0.00	$756.00	0%
Gas	$10,550.00	$6,844.58	$3,705.42	65%
Library Supplies	$13,300.00	$7,484.37	$5,815.63	56%
Other Purchased Services	$6,500.00	$4,711.12	$1,788.88	72%
Maintenance & Repair	$5,962.00	$1,430.24	$4,531.76	24%
Office Supplies	$7,850.00	$4,675.15	$3,174.85	60%
Professional & Tech	$51,655.00	$47,688.69	$3,966.31	92%
Water	$1,170.00	$936.89	$233.11	80%
Total Library Expenses	$319,258.00	$220,611.17	$98,646.83	69%
Wages & Salaries	$853,139.00	$501,142.45	$351,996.55	59%
TOTAL	**$1,172,397.00**	**$721,753.62**	**$450,643.38**	**62%**