

Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees
Wed. August 6, 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 July 2, 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
9. New Business
 - A. FY26 Goals and Project Timing – Strategic Plan, Interior Modifications Project
 - B. Draft Policy on Reciprocal Borrowing Privileges – discussion and possible vote
 - C. Vote to Accept Donations
10. Trustee Reports and Requests for Next Meeting's Agenda
11. Upcoming Meetings/Events
 - A. Library Board of Trustees - Sept. 3, 2025 – 7 pm
 - B. Library Board of Trustees - Oct. 1, 2025 – 7 pm
12. Executive Session
 - A. 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
 - B. Pursuant to MGL c. 30A §21(a)(7) to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements, the Open Meeting Law, MGL c. 30A §22(f), (g) to review, approve and or discuss the possible release of executive session meeting minutes dated August 6, 2025.

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**

July 2 2025

Members present: J. Brown, J. Wheeler, J. McCarty, L. Cebula, B. Waystack,
T. Murray, W. Crowell

Others present V. Hewitt, Director

Meeting called to order at 7.01 pm.

Public Comment no members of public present

Motion to approve the regular session minutes for June 4, 2025

M McCarty S Crowell unanimous approval

Reports

Chair

- *thanks to all for the evaluations for Director Hewitt

- *ordered copies of trustee Pocket Guide from MLA

- *new select board liaison is Don Howell

- *noted community engagement meeting on 8/5 at town hall for the draft Local Comprehensive Plan

Library Director no additional comments or questions on report included in packet

Review of Staff Reports- no questions or comments on reports included in packet.

Building & Grounds

- *will be purchasing a new refrigerator for staff room as this one is about to stop functioning, dates from 1997. Will be charged to repairs and maintenance budget line.

- *may ask the Friends to consider updating the staff room in the fall

- *DPW/Libby will make sure that the grass in back section is kept mowed

- *has been 6 years since the entire building was painted, some peeling noticed. Should there be funds added to the library budget for the painting of a side a year (in rotation).

Or should there be a separate article at town meeting requesting the funding? Brown and Wheeler will talk to Sean Libby about best approach.

Personnel Committee

- *met on June 20 with Hewitt, report will be in executive session

Correspondence none

Old Business none

New Business

- *no donations this month for consideration
- *non resident taxpayers meeting scheduled for August 8 by Select Board, trustees and/or Director may want to attend in case of questions.
- *question concerning any new information on any funding cuts for MA libraries in current State and Federal budgets. Hewitt noted that some low usage databases have been removed by the CLAMS network.

Trustee reports and requests for next meeting agenda none noted

Motion to adjourn and move into exec session and not return to public session at 7.27pm

M Wheeler S McCarty roll call vote unanimous

Minutes by Linda Cebula Secretary

approved _____

Library Director's Report
for the August 6, 2025 Meeting of the
Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees

Prepared 7.29.25/VH

Personnel News

- The vacant Circulation Librarian position is now open to the public. It is currently posted on the Library and Town websites, has been advertised in CLAMS and is listed on state-wide library job boards. Applications have been steadily coming in. We will finalize the screening tool and crediting plan and begin a review of initial applicants in early August.
- There was a delay of several weeks in obtaining approval for the internal job posting for the part-time Senior Library Technician but it was signed on July 17th, with an opening date of July 18th and a closing date of July 29th.

ARIS Report

- Deputy Director Jennifer Pickett and I are each working on compiling data to complete sections of the Annual Report and Information Survey, one of the two annual report required by the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners for the Town to maintain state library certification. The due date is August 15th.

Draft Policy on Reciprocal Borrowing

I have prepared a draft policy on reciprocal borrowing for your consideration and it's included in your packet. In anticipation of a difficult budget year ahead for many communities, the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners is recommending libraries adopt formal policies in advance. It is very helpful for all Library Directors and Board of Trustees to know in advance what the impact of loss of certification would mean for their community members as it helps them make their case to Town officials and prevent the loss of certification.

Background information on Reciprocal Borrowing is provided below:

- State law and regulations set standards for minimum library services in order for municipalities to receive library certification. These standards can be found on the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) website, <https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-arls/regs-standards.php>.
- Municipalities that don't meet minimum standards can lose their certification.
 - Generally, the MBLC will grant a waiver if the municipality did not cut the Library budget disproportionately and it can show a documented commitment and plan to ensure minimum standards are met in future years. If a municipality does not receive a waiver it is because the library was targeted for larger cuts and/or the municipality does not demonstrate a commitment to meeting minimum standards going forward.
 - The MBLC does not remove library certification mid-year when an unusual hardship occurs, such as a fire, flood or other natural disaster results in reduced hours or the

closure of the library. (See the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners Policy on the Closure of a Public Library, which is included in your packet.)

- To municipal funding authorities the most visible benefit of state certification is the award of State Aid to Libraries funds, but that is not the benefit that has the biggest impact on residents.
- The biggest benefit of library certification for residents is called “reciprocal borrowing.” This term is used for the requirement that libraries in certified municipalities freely loan materials to residents of other certified municipalities, both in-person and through inter-library loan. Reciprocal borrowing means patrons are not limited to the collections of the library in their home town.
 - Residents on any certified municipality can walk into the library in any other certified municipality in Mass., and check out books, movies, audiobooks, etc., just as if they were residents of that municipality.
 - Every certified library is also required to send items to other certified libraries to fill their patron’s requests.
 - This is not the case in many states. The free sharing of materials with residents of other certified municipalities is the most important benefit of state certification.
- The reciprocal borrowing requirement is based on the concept that libraries in certified municipalities are contributing their fair share when lending and borrowing materials. A municipality that underfunded their library by, for example, pausing purchases of new books, which would place an undue burden on the taxpayers of neighboring municipalities as the under-funded library’s patrons would borrow more items from other libraries.
- If a municipality loses its library certification, libraries in other certified municipalities are no longer required to lend materials to residents of that municipality.
- While it is difficult for librarians to stop lending to patrons from de-certified municipalities on a personal level it is not fair for taxpayers in one municipality to, in effect, subsidize another municipality that is not providing the appropriate amount of support to its library (i.e. is not meeting minimum standards.)
- In addition, the potential loss of reciprocal borrowing is often the most effective tool for ensuring a municipality does not target the library for disproportionate cuts when finances are tight.

Promotion of Library services

- Staff Librarian Gavin Williams coordinates the submission of Library columns to the Cape Cod Chronicle and the COA Newsletter, preparing the majority of the columns himself. He also prepares the monthly Brooks Free Library e-newsletter and coordinates our social media posts, again preparing many of them. This month Gavin and Jennifer also revamped our main brochures on Library Services. (more info in their reports.)

- This month I submitted two Community News article to the Cape Cod Chronicle. The first was published last week, in the July 24th edition. It highlighted our new subscription to Transparent Languages, one of the state-wide electronic resources that was discontinued to the loss of federal IMLS funding. It also promoted the ability to read the Cape Cod Times, Boston Globe, Herald, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post and many more national and international papers online, just as they appear in print. It also informed readers that they do not need to be here year-round or be residents of the town to get a library card and encouraged them to get a library card.
- The second Community News article highlighted the 17 passes for museums and attractions we provide, thanks to the Friends of Brooks Free Library, and it promoted use of the Friends Book Store, which helps to fund their activities. This article appeared in the July 31st edition of the Cape Cod Chronicle.
- On August 4th I will attend the Select Board's Non-Resident Taxpayers meeting to talk about library services for everyone – residents, non-resident taxpayers, and visitors. I prepared a flyer specifically for this meeting, which should be included in the Select Board's packet, and will have some to hand out to attendees. It can be modified for future use by removing the text applicable to non-residents.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia A. Hewitt
Library Director

BROOKS FREE LIBRARY INFORMATION FOR NON-RESIDENTS

WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR NON-RESIDENTS?

All library services are available to non-residents! You don't have to own property or live here year round to get a library card. In addition to using other services, many seasonal residents & visitors use the designated quiet area on the 2nd floor to do remote work, away from activity at home.



CHECK OUT BOOKS, AUDIOBOOKS, VIDEOS, MAGAZINES & MORE

We have two floors full of materials for all ages and interests. Company coming? Stock up on books, movies, board games and puzzles to keep everyone entertained. Lawn games, craft kits, DVD players, star gazing and bird watching kits & more are also available, and you can find great bargains on gently used books in the Book Store run by the Friends of Brooks Free Library.



E-BOOKS, AUDIOBOOKS, MAGAZINES & STREAMING MOVIES

Use your Brooks Free Library card to borrow e-books, audiobooks, movies & magazines through Overdrive/Libby, Hoopla and Kanopy. We also offer online resources such as Transparent Languages, Consumer Reports and digitized Town Reports back to 1866.



READ NEWSPAPERS ONLINE

Your Brooks Free Library card gives you free access to read the Cape Cod Times, Boston Globe, Boston Herald, Wall Street Journal, NY Times, Washington Post, USA Today and many more national & international newspapers. Stay informed without running into paywalls.



GOT QUESTIONS? WE'VE GOT INFORMATION

Wondering where beach stickers will be sold, need consumer information before buying a fridge, computer or car, directions to walking trails, language learning, medical or legal information, or want to fact check what you read online about issues in the news? Our Reference staff is happy to help find answers and direct you to the right department, agency or non-biased information source.



PROGRAMS & PASSES FOR MUSEUMS & ATTRACTIONS

Special programs for children and teens are offered almost every day in the summer, and we have year-round programs for all ages. We also offer passes for discounted or free admission to many museums and attractions. The Friends of Brooks Free Library assist us by funding many of our programs and they purchase the museum passes for our patrons to enjoy.



COMPUTERS, PRINTING & TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE

Need access to technology while here? We have fast, reliable Internet, computers, scanners and printers, and we offer Chromebooks & Internet hotspots to check out. We also offer drop-in tech help for computers, phones, and electronic resources. Assistive technology for people with sight loss and one-on-one instruction is available through our VITAL program.



Library Deputy Director's Report
For the August 2025 meeting of the
Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees

Circulation:

Over the past month I revised and edited the majority of our general handouts for the public. I consolidated 3 handouts that had been done on colored paper into one 'general services' trifold that can be printed on white paper. I created a new Library of Things/Adaptive Living Collection handout that highlights those collections and directs people to the pages I updated on our website. Gavin Williams was key to helping me complete the format of these projects using his Canva skills. Library card forms were also edited and I found that there may be a need for a policy/procedure change in the near future related to this. I am doing a more in-depth look at the various duties and responsibilities of the circulation department and trying to get tasks simplified and clarified to assist with a smooth transition for the next circulation supervisor.

I have gone through the applications for the Circulation Librarian and indicated which candidates should be interviewed. I am confident that we will find a qualified candidate in this pool of applicants and I hope we can start interviews very soon. The circulation desks have been very busy this summer and I have been keeping my door open and jumping in wherever I am asked and/or when I can hear it is busy.

Management:

I worked together with our Youth Services Librarian Ann Carpenter before the start of the summer to change the procedures for our larger programs. Generally, we wanted to make things more manageable and less chaotic. I have been very pleased with how these events have gone so far. We may have slightly less attendance numbers overall, but the programs we are having are more manageable and enjoyable for those who are attending.

I am once again doing all the orders of all the physical non-youth materials for the library. I recently updated our Large Print standing order programs and have reached out to all the other Clams libraries looking for help dealing with the newer 'print-on-demand' policies that these publishers seem to be adopting. We are all struggling with the decisions these publishers are making and delays and longer waiting lists might be the result seen on the patron end. I am doing all I can to get the books that our patrons want into their hands in a timely manner. Individual requests for purchases are being responded to promptly and I run reports at least weekly to catch any sudden surges of popularity on any particular titles.

The ARIS report will consume a lot of my time over the next few weeks, but each year I continue to refine my information gathering strategies and data management making it slightly easier.

Respectfully submitted,

Jenifer Pickett, Deputy Director

Youth Services Report
July 31, 2025

Summer Reading Program

As of July 30th we had 329 children signed up for the summer reading program. Together they have read 1,559 hours so far. This is slightly behind the same point of the summer as last year, but still significantly better than any other post-COVID year, with an entire month left to catch up.

Special Summer Programs

Thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the Brooks Free Library we have had six performers at the library so far, with another four planned for August. We have also had five librarian led special programs, with four planned in August, alongside regular programs such as Teen Art, Middle School Food and Fun, Friday Crafts, and our regular Tuesday and Thursday storytimes. Attendance at programs is up slightly from July of last year.

New Registration System

We have instituted a new registration process this summer for special programs. The automated registrations are integrated with the LibCal Events Calendar program we are already using. Patrons can register starting two weeks before an event. When the program cap is reached patrons can join the waitlist. If someone cancels their registration the system automatically adds people from the waitlist. The implementation has been surprisingly smooth, though we needed to fine-tune some aspects - for instance, we added a box patrons needed to check to ensure that they had signed up the correct number of people (a lot families didn't realize that we were counting bodies to comply with fire codes and they needed to register adults). We also realized that we need to monitor the waiting list and add placeholder names, as the system does not recognize that a name on the waitlist might represent an entire family.

While it took a few weeks for our patrons to internalize the need to sign up ahead of time, we front-loaded the summer with programs that were unlikely to reach the 80 person limit so that the public would have time to adjust. By the end of July, when the very popular animal and magic programs started running, all of the participants knew that they needed to register and we did not have anyone come in and be surprised. We are averaging a 25% no-show rate, which is very high, but the number of people who were on the waiting list and came to the library "just in case" has mostly equaled the number of no-shows.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Carpenter
Youth Services Librarian

Staff Librarian - Programming
July 2025 Report for
August 6th, 2025 Trustees of Brooks Free Library Meeting

Programming

Throughout July, I worked on placing posts on our social media feeds and am working on putting together the newsletter for patrons - the July newsletter will be sent out on July 31th. 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 submitted columns to the Chronicle and COA this month on the new hearing assistive technology (Williams Sound) in the Thornton Meeting Room (along with information on the VITAL program, as a reminder to readers in the Chronicle) . I am also continuing to work on getting programming planned, now for after the summer months. I am planning a fall gardening program, cooperative programs with the Harwich Historical Society (possibly with an American Revolution theme leading into next year's Semiquincentennial in July), along with other informational and music programs. Jamie Thornton and I are still planning to continue my training on BFL website management and other functions I will be carrying out in coordinating programming and outreach.

Circulation and Other Activities

Given staffing changes in Circulation, I have spent more time assisting in covering the desk and also worked on making some needed updates to the Museum Passes (and will continue to manage the passes for the time being).

Personal Development

I have registered for a Reference and Information Services course for my MLIS (San Jose State University), which will be relevant to my current work at BFL. The course will start in August. 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

Brooks Free Library

Policy on Reciprocal Borrowing Privileges

DRAFT - 7.25.25

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has set Minimum Standards for Public Library Service which a municipality must meet to receive certification by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

As part of the certification program, public libraries in certified municipalities are required to extend reciprocal borrowing privileges to residents of other certified Massachusetts municipalities. This includes direct borrowing where a resident of another certified Massachusetts municipality is permitted to visit in-person and check out materials as well as the inter-library loan of materials where items loaned to another certified library to fulfill their patrons' requests.

It is the policy of Brooks Free Library to discontinue borrowing privileges to residents of Massachusetts municipalities who fail to obtain or to maintain state library certification. Consistent with state certification standards, all residents of Massachusetts may continue to visit Brooks Free Library and use library services in-person, but residents of non-certified Massachusetts municipalities will not be permitted to check materials out. Similarly, Brooks Free Library will not send materials through inter-library loan to public libraries in municipalities that have not received certification. This restriction on borrowing does not apply to Massachusetts residents of non-certified municipalities who are own property in Harwich as their property taxes support public library services in Harwich.

The Library Director and/or his designee is authorized to establish additional guidelines interpreting and applying this policy.

Citations:

- MGL c.78, s. 19A
- MGL c.78, s.19B,
- 605 CMR 4.0
- Massachusetts Minimum Standards for Public Library Services

(Note: these standards are updated annually by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC.) Applicable state regulations and current certification standards may be found on the MBLC website, <https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-arls/regs-standards.php>.

Approved by the Brooks Free Library Board of Trustees on _____.

MBLC Certification Standards related to Reciprocal Borrowing

<https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-arls/regs-standards.php>

Open to all residents of the Commonwealth

All residents of the Commonwealth can access reading and reference rooms under the same conditions as residents of the community (605 CMR 4.01[1]).

Make no charge for normal library services

This requirement means that no charges can be levied on residents of the local community for the withdrawal of library books in the regular circulating collections of the community's public library or libraries.

A charge may be made, however, for

- duplicate pay and/or rental collections
- reserving books
- lending of special media of communication such as recordings, films, or pictures
- special reference or research services such as preparation of bibliographies, photocopying, or abstracting

Lend books and other materials to other libraries in the Commonwealth

Certified libraries must "lend books and other materials to other libraries in the Commonwealth and extend privileges to holders of cards issued by other public libraries in the Commonwealth on a reciprocal basis (605 CMR 4.01[6])."

Nonresident borrowing annual report requirement

Massachusetts General Laws require that libraries must "lend books to other libraries in the commonwealth and extend privileges to the holders of cards issued by other public libraries in the commonwealth on a reciprocal basis."

The Code of Massachusetts Regulations states that libraries accepting State Aid to Public Libraries awards must lend (via interlibrary loan) to other public libraries that are also receiving State Aid. They must also lend to residents of communities whose libraries receive State Aid.

However:

- Materials purchased with trust fund monies are exempt from this requirement if lending to nonresidents or via interlibrary loan would violate the terms of the trust fund.

- Local libraries have the right to refuse to negotiate an interlibrary loan for registered borrowers who are flagrantly delinquent.

Annual compliance with this requirement is assured by the signature of the Chair of the Board of Trustees on the State Aid to Public Libraries Compliance Form.

Massachusetts General Laws also require that libraries shall "include in their annual report the total number of nonresident loans and nonresident circulation as a percentage of the library's total circulation, as certified by the librarian and subject to an audit by the state auditor."

Definitions

Nonresident is a Massachusetts resident who is not a resident of the reporting municipality. Nonresident status is defined by the local municipality but cannot be more restrictive than the U.S. Bureau of the Census definition of resident in effect at the beginning of the reporting period.

Nonresident circulation is the direct, over-the-counter loan of library materials, including renewals of these items, to nonresidents.

Total number of nonresident loans is the actual total count, either using a manual or an automated system, of direct, over-the-counter loans of library materials, including renewals of these items, to all nonresidents.

Total number of eligible nonresident loans is the actual count, either using a manual or an automated system, of direct, over-the-counter loans of library materials, including renewals of these items, to all nonresidents who are residents of municipalities certified to receive State Aid to Public Libraries during the reporting period.

(Citations: MGL c.78 s.19A(4); 19B(6) and 19B(7) and 605 CMR 4.01(6) and (7); 605 CMR 4.02)

FY26 Budget Balances

as of 7.31.25

AREA OF EXPENDITURE	Appropriated Amt	Spent	Remaining Balance	Percent Spent
Advertising	\$180.00	\$0.00	\$180.00	0%
Dues, Subs & Travel	\$3,400.00	\$446.00	\$2,954.00	13%
Library Materials	\$195,615.00	\$15,797.33	\$179,817.67	8%
Electric	\$42,000.00	\$4,179.33	\$37,820.67	10%
Employee Fringe Benefits	\$750.00	\$0.00	\$750.00	0%
Gas	\$14,000.00	\$7.62	\$13,992.38	0%
Library Supplies	\$13,300.00	\$43.18	\$13,256.82	0%
Other Purchased Services	\$6,500.00	\$333.92	\$6,166.08	5%
Maintenance & Repair	\$5,962.00	\$749.00	\$5,213.00	13%
Office Supplies	\$7,850.00	\$271.50	\$7,578.50	3%
Professional & Tech	\$51,453.00	\$0.00	\$7,154.84	0%
Water	\$1,710.00	\$0.00	\$1,710.00	0%
Total Library Expenses	\$342,720.00	\$21,827.88	\$320,892.12	6%
Wages & Salaries	\$886,875.00	\$65,163.36	\$821,711.64	7%
TOTAL	\$1,229,595.00	\$86,991.24	\$1,142,603.76	7%
