

Portland Library Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
Van Beynum Room
August 21, 2025

Board Members Present: Olenka Castelli, Don Eiler, Myra Finkelstein, Betsy Graziano, Melissa Kelley, Laurel Steinhauser

Absent: Jade Richardson

Others Present: Jennifer Billingsley (Library Director), Tim Lavoy (BOS Liaison), Ralph Zampano

Laurel Steinhauser called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. Public & Staff Comment

2. Additions and Approval of the Agenda

A motion was made by Betsy Graziano to approve the agenda, seconded by Don Eiler, all were in favor, motion carried.

3. Review Minutes:

a. Action on the Minutes of the June 12, 2025 Meeting

Olenka Castelli made a motion to approve the minutes of June 12, 2025, seconded by Melissa Kelley, all were in favor, none opposed, no abstentions, motion carried.

4. Corresponding Secretary's Report – Nothing to Report

5. New Business

a. New Display Policy

Jenn said due to the state requirements for Library Policy changes in PA 25-168 – in sections 322-323 we need specific language in our policies to remain eligible for state grant funding. We were required to “create” a new display policy using the template provided. The highlighted items are the ones that must stay. On Page 4, you will see in bright green wording and then also in bright green an alternate wording. It has been sent to the town attorney but Jenn has not heard back yet. This will not be voted on tonight. This is the first read of it. Jenn will send it to the State and will verify compliance and then this Board will approve it. Everything will be in 16pt font.

b. Revision to Program Policy (previously Materials Policy)

The name is not being changed. Jenn took the State boilerplate and added our language. There are a lot of specific little sections in it. Jenn pointed out on Page 5,

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the part that is struck through in the second paragraph, which would be a substantial change. It would require software that would be much more expensive. There is a waitlist. It becomes very difficult to enforce. She prefers to strike it but when looking at additional software, they will consider it again. Laurel commented that if language is there that can't be accommodated, it is good that it isn't in there at all. Jenn explained difficulty in trying to accommodate people. It is a first-come, first-serve program per Melissa. It is not tied to a State statutory change. Jenn explained how the waitlist people are managed. All four of these policies will need to be looked at every five years.

c. New Collection Development and Maintenance Policy

There is a red-lined version and then a clean draft that is the final couple of pages. Jenn took as much from the existing policy as she could, and the Material Review portion needed to be broken out as a separate policy, and portions had to be reworked to comply with the state statute. Laurel commented that the language and intention of the policy is still there but is just relocated.

d. New Material Review and Reconsideration Policy

This includes the process by which Portland residents can voice a complaint. The new form is included. The big changes are that these requests are limited to Portland residents only and residents who live outside the town are not able to submit this form. Jenn called attention to bulleted paragraph about reconsideration requests and Section 11-25 of the CT General Statutes. They can appeal it if they like. The last three pages is the new form. The reason for it is because some libraries receive request-after-request from people who don't even live in their towns or in some cases were objecting to books that weren't even in the library. PA 25-168 – in sections 322 requires that these requests be from Portland residents. Jenn appreciates these updates and explained how people are entitled to register a complaint and appeal to the library board. It also allows for the board to refer back to previous decisions. Some of the statutory requirements are probably overkill for Portland, but do follow best practice.

Laurel said she appreciates all the work Jenn and her staff have done on this project. It is much, much work. The Board members have a month to re-read it and to come up with questions. If the Board wants to make changes, they can as long as those changes do not interfere with the must-keep portions of the policies from PA 25-168, highlighted in yellow. Discussion will continue in September. If anyone wants to talk personally with Jenn, that can be arranged.

6. Old Business

a. Bylaws Review:

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Laurel said there were no concerns expressed. Don Eiler made a motion reaffirming the bylaws review, seconded by Myra Finkelstein, all were in favor, none opposed, no abstentions, motion carried.

b. Update on BOS Meetings Moving to Mary Flood Room:

It is anticipated that the move will take place in October. Jenn mentioned that the chairs used for the BOS meetings are large and can't be stored at the Library. She was asked to look at alternate chair options that are stackable and had one available for all to try out. The orange chairs will be kept as well. Library funds were not offered up for the chairs. Jenn had to turn away a request for the Mary Flood Room when it will be used for the BOS meeting.

c. America 250 Portland CT Committee

Jennifer said Michele Grzejszczak, the library's Head of Adult Services has booked two programs:

- "Tories, Spies, and Traitors: Divided Loyalty in Revolutionary Connecticut" by the Connecticut Museum of Culture and History for Tuesday, May 19, 2026 starting at 6:30 p.m.
- "From Liberty to Legacy—Exploring American Ideals in the Musicals 1776 and Hamilton" - This lecture from Michael Langlois looks at these revolutionary musicals and their contrasting visions of an American society at a crossroads will take place on Thursday March 26, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

And since the Culper spy ring was based in CT and Long Island Michele is planning on running a book discussion of "George Washington's Secret Six: the spy ring that saved the American revolution" by Brian Kilmeade & Don Yaeger!

Sharon Hoy gave an update on the Portland Committee's plans as follows:

- Michael Pelton met with Middletown to learn what they are planning.
- They will attempt to get State support to light up the bridge.
- Middletown is also planning for a parade.
- The next meeting of Portland's committee is Monday, August 25.
- They plan to sell t-shirts at the Portland Fair and possibly have fireworks during the Fair as well.

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7. Friends of the Portland Library

- The Friends have not met since June 5. Their next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 25.
- The book donation day will take place on September 13 from 10-12.
- The Friends September meeting is scheduled for the 29th at 7:00 p.m.
- The Friends annual book sale is scheduled for October 17-19.

8. Chair's Report

Laurel said the terms for four Library Board seats are up in December. She asks for you to consider what your long-term plans are.

9. Director's Report

Jenn pointed out some of the items in her report as follows:

- Three little girls, Victoria, Adeline and Nora Rumpf, set up a lemonade stand raising \$48 that they donated to the library.
- Repair work began on the roof.
- The town has a new Director of Public Works, Jason Morrocco. Accolades to Michael Lastrina who has been phenomenal in filling in for the director.
- Chris was promoted from part-time to full-time at the library.
- Library Posting: No internal applicants; had 46 outside applicants. About 11 applicants will be interviewed by a panel.
- The Monthly Report format was slightly changed to allow for easier reading.
- The Library Card Month proclamation was read and accepted at the last BOS meeting.
- This is Michele G's second summer working full time as our head of adult services and she has done great job.
- The sea glass programs have been completely full. Lot of adults coming in for crafting programs.
- The Library has had a great summer program for kids and teens as well; the Library has been buzzing.

10. Other Discussion:

11. Executive Session: For the Purpose of Library Security

At 8:17 p.m., Melissa Kelley made a motion to enter the Executive Session, inviting Tim Lavoy and Jennifer Billingsley to join the session, seconded by Betsy Graziano. All were in favor, none opposed, no abstentions, motion carried.

The board exited executive session at 8:31 p.m.

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12. Adjournment

Myra Finkelstein made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Don Eiler, all were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Hoy

Sharon R. Hoy
Recording Clerk