

## **Regional Gathering – James E. Nichols Memorial Library, June 24, 2026**

On Wednesday, June 24, 2026, a group of 22 library trustees and directors came together at the James E. Nichols Memorial Library in Center Harbor. The discussion was moderated by Ann Xavier, Nichols Library trustee and Katrinka Pellecchia, NHLTA Board member and Lee Public Library trustee. Ann started the meeting with a brief history of the library and its benefactor, which explained the presence of the trophy animals displayed on the library's walls: Mr. Nichols was a big game hunter.

The discussion started with a focus on **freedom to read issues and policies**. Katrinka used the opportunity to introduce NHLTA before asking whether those present have encountered book bans and challenges. None of the attending trustees and directors have been explicitly targeted but knew of book bans at other libraries. The discussion led to brief comments about privacy issues, especially privacy of teens since they are old enough to have their own card.

Katrinka reminded the group that all libraries should have an updated Collection Policy, Reconsideration Policy and Challenges Form. It's also important to make sure library staff are informed of the policies and how to handle book challenges. For example, the Lee Library has a packet of the policies and form. Should a patron question a book, the staff member gives the patron a packet of the policies. She also reminded the group of NHLTA's stand: we trust our directors to make determination of what is appropriate.

Other libraries commented that they have challenge forms available. Some libraries post the list of 100 most banned books from ALA; other libraries have a section on all books banned. The library director at the Nichols Library said she contacted the middle school librarian to find out the best way to draw young adults to the library. He suggested listing banned books which tends to draw their attention.

Katrinka shared that during Banned Books Week, some libraries display frequently banned books. See the NHLTA website for sample policies and more information about book bans (<https://nhlta.org/national-issues/>) and censorship ([nhlta.org/resource-materials/](https://nhlta.org/resource-materials/))

Another topic of interest was **Friends of the Library groups** and the relationship with the library and trustees. Ann stated that the Nichols Library will be starting a Friends group and is in the process getting the 501(c)(3) materials together. The purpose of the Friends group would be to initiate fundraising for the library's expansion project.

A follow-up discussion addressed designated funds for building projects, including keeping track of them as well as the pros and cons of designated funds during capital campaigns and building construction. Some libraries have separate banking accounts for general operations funds versus designated donations. One person suggested that the fundraising phase can also be used to educate supporters about different types of donations.

The discussion also addressed trustees versus Friends and their respective roles. There was a strong recommendation for trustees and Friends to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between the two groups. See the NHLTA website for a MOU example ([nhlta.org/resources/](http://nhlta.org/resources/)). One trustee noted that it is important to make clear what happens to the money raised by the Friends group should the group disband. Technically, the money raised by Friends groups is private. However, it is advised to state clearly that the funds would go to the library should the Friends disband.

In Meredith, the Friends of the Library run a book store to support library programming and the foundation raises money for the library building. Several others in the audience gave examples of how the Friends group and Foundation work to support the library. In many instances, library foundations support capital campaigns.

Another issue raised concentrated on non-monetary donations such as art work and whether the Friends/library/trustees can refuse items. Most in the group agreed that items can be refused. Again, it is helpful for libraries to have written policies that specifically address donations, including a statement that trustees have a right to refuse gifts. It also was recommended not to put in timing about gifts. Many felt that it was important for the policy to stipulate that the Library/Trustees/Friends would have the final say in what to do with the donation.

Book donations were also talked about. If donations to the Lee Library don't go into the library's collection, they will go into the Friends's book sale, or the director sells them to Better World Books, which buy books from libraries. Like many libraries, space to store books for a potential sale is limited. Another suggestion included housing a Little Free Library in front of the library.

The discussion about Friends groups and donations moved into a discussion about **building projects**. Katrinka noted that two libraries – Lee and Barrington – started as new building projects which then became renovations with Lee expanding space in the basement and Barrington renovating a building purchased by the town.

Ann described the Nichols Library renovation. The program room at the Nichols Library is limited to 6 people. Consequently, they have to hold programs in the library when it is closed in order to accommodate more people (such as the regional gathering). SPA Architects has submitted a plan for expansion. Since the town said the trustees can't touch their historic building, the plan is to add an exterior atrium entrance that will provide access to the building and a renovated basement. The trustees will know more about costs by the end of July. Ann gave a ballpark figure of \$1-1.5 million. The trustees are looking to raise the money via the Friends group and to try not asking the Town for funds.

A representative from the Ashland Public Library asked about naming policies and how to sunset naming rights. They wondered if a policy could state that naming opportunities would last a limited amount of time, such as 3-5 years. Children's areas are especially tricky, since so many people prefer to donate to those areas. Lee Library, as an example, has one sign with all names of donors rather than specific naming rights. Another idea suggested was to have one plaque in which names could be added: *This area made possible by....* Meredith has a donor tree graphic which honors donors.

Katrinka said their thank-you sign listed contributors alphabetically rather than by amount donated. Thanking people is important, including thanking town voters. One person reminded the group to be careful with who chooses the plaques. Donors may have very different preferences from trustees.

The meeting ended with a discussion about the age at which minors can be in the library without parents. Ages ranged from 10-12 years. One trustee mentioned a minor needed to be a certain age to babysit siblings in the library without a parent. The conversation moved to what other libraries do if a parent doesn't pick up their child, especially by the time the library closes. Several trustees referred to their policies which spell out the responsibility of parents as well as behavior policies.

Katrinka reminded the group that the NHLTA Board is looking for board members and volunteers for its committees. A volunteer form is available on [nhlta.org](http://nhlta.org).