

Commentary for the slides for presentation for NHLTA Annual Conference – 5-27-26

Instead of you trying to make detailed notes about what I'm going to say today, I am going to provide the commentary which I will use as my guideline for my presentation. It will be posted on the NHLTA website under the 2026 conference heading. So, you can sit back and just listen if you choose.

Slide One

Welcome and Orientation

- Meet with Board Chair and Director one-on-one
- an informal meeting, just to get to know one another, especially important if the new trustee is not well known to trustee chair or director. Establishes a rapport. Learn motivation for running for election. Share a bit about one another.
 - Introduction to key staff and fellow trustees
- An informal gathering with all the trustees and staff would be ideal. Remember to post the gathering because a majority of the board would be present. A way for the trustee and staff members to get to know one another. It doesn't have to be lengthy – intros, what department of the library they work, how long employed/served as trustee.
 - Services offered (circulation, digital resources, programs, outreach)
- This could occur at the same time as the gathering to introduce the staff and trustees. It may be a bit like drinking from a firehose but let it serve as an introduction and he/she can become more familiar over time.
- Tour of facilities (physical and virtual systems)
- It should include both a physical tour and verbal discussion and demonstration of systems used in the library (the computer, Libby/Hoopla, etc.)

Slide Two

Roles and Responsibilities of a Trustee

- Governance vs. management (board sets policy; director manages operations)
- The trustees are not elected to run the day to day operations of the library. They're elected to serve as the governing body responsible for the entire custody, management and financial affairs of the library as well as establishing policies, viable budgets and generating positive goodwill in the community. The

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library board of trustees acts as one, not 3 or 4 or 5, etc. individuals with differing opinions. No one individual may speak for the board unless that authority has been given to him/her by the board.

I made one error in a comment or was misinterpreted. The trustee board hires the director, the director interviews candidates for other library positions and makes his/her recommendation to the board. The board approves the recommendation and the director then hires the new employee.

Code of Ethics

- As stated in the NHLTA Trustee Manual, "as elected or appointed public officials, trustees of New Hampshire public libraries have an obligation to meet the highest legal, moral and ethical standards in their conduct and decisions." The items which should serve as guiding principles are listed in the manual. I'm not going to go over them individually but refer you to the trustee manual. It is a good idea to have a Code of Ethics form which each board member signs.

- Participation expectations (meetings, committees, events)
 - In as much as many trustees come to the board because they "love the library," it is recommended that the chair go over expectations on meeting attendance, serving on sub-committees if applicable, availing him/her self of trainings, gatherings, etc. Additionally, cover if there are expectations of participation in activities sponsored by the library.
- Become familiar with NH RSA 202-A, library bylaws, policies
 - This is probably the MOST IMPORTANT part of any trustee's education about his/her job. One of the NHLTA board members even suggested that an entire trustee meeting be devoted to discussing RSA 202-A. These RSAs help trustees understand what they are authorized to do and what they cannot do. NHLTA also has compiled a packet of materials for the newly elected trustee, Trustee 101, found on the NHLTA website under Resources, Resource Materials, which is an introduction to understanding their position. It's a good tool to give them at the very beginning of their service before they dive into the Trustee Manual.

Slide Three

Board Structure & Operations

- Board composition and officer roles
 - Go over the composition of the board (always an odd number), term of service, who the officers are and their roles, description of any sub committees to the board. Board communication – use blind CC when emailing. Your library may

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have specific board emails rather than trustee emails going to one's personal email.

- Meeting schedule and procedures (agenda, minutes, voting)
 - Some of this may seem like a "duh" but you'd be surprised. Go over the frequency of meetings, posting of the agenda, minutes (public and non-public), voting (especially applicable for alternate trustees).
- Relationship with the Library Director
 - It is the responsibility of the board of trustees to support and respect the library director and staff. While the board of trustees hires the library director, they should look at the director-trustee relationship as a partnership rather than boss-employee. Trustees do not "run" the library – select books and programs, etc. – but to work in conjunction to develop and approve policies, the annual budget, etc.

Slide Four

Policies & Key Documents Review

This is where I say to tell the new trustee to READ – READ – READ. It is important to provide all trustees with the tools necessary to do their job. At a minimum it should include the following:

- Provide a Trustee Notebook which includes:
 - Board bylaws
 - NH RSAs pertaining to public libraries
 - Annual budget
 - Recent board minutes
 - Library policies (circulation, collection development, behavior, etc.)
 - Strategic plan
 - NHLTA Trustee Manual – *A Guide for Library Trustees*
 - Onboarding outline

If your board doesn't currently have notebooks for its members I would strongly encourage that it be done. It acts as a guide all in one place.

Slide Five

Legal & Ethical Responsibilities

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- Review of bylaws and governing documents
 - It is important that the board bylaws be reviewed periodically to ensure that the board's conduct conforms with them. If not, they should be revised. It is important that your library has valid up-to-date policies to guide and protect they library. The preparation of the libraries policies originates with the director who drafts policies (new or revision) and presents them to the Board of Trustees who review, edit if necessary, and ultimately approves them. It is important that there are policies in place to cover all eventualities to stay abreast of our ever changing world.
- Open meetings/non-public meetings; public records requirements
 - It is important for a new trustee understand the difference between open meetings and non-public meetings – procedure for entering a non-public meeting, ending it and sealing of minutes. Additionally, inform them of the requirements for posting and retention of minutes of trustee meetings.

Confidentiality expectations

- There are times when confidential information is shared – for example, the process of hiring a director, director annual review, non-public meeting discussions, etc. It is expected that any information shared during these times is not to be shared outside the circle of trustees ever.

I am not going to cover the next two slides/points in the outline. NHLTA has a webinar on its website titled "The Other Money" which deals with budgeting and periodically offers an in-person budgeting workshop.

Both the financial oversight and strategic planning can be workshops on their own.

Slide Six

Financial Oversight

- Overview of funding sources (taxes, grants, donations, fines, etc.)
- Budget structure and approval process
- Financial reports and how to read them

Slide Seven

. Strategic Planning & Impact

- Current strategic plan goals and metrics
- How trustees contribute to long-term planning
- Measuring community impact and outcomes

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- Equity, access, and inclusion priorities

Slide Eight

Advocacy & Community Engagement

- Role as a library ambassador
 - As a trustee you are the face of the library beyond the staff. It is important then that you have on your "library hat" whenever you are out in public. Additionally, it is important that trustees participate in at least some of the programs which the library provides.
- Building relationships with town government entities
 - It is very important to have a good working relationship with town government. While library employees are not town employees and the library is not a town department a good working relationship will go a long way toward cooperation on all levels.
- Communicating the library's value
 - It is important for trustees to know the library's value to the town and is especially important at budget and voting time. There are statistics the library director can access as well as data on the NHLTA website which can support a commentary on library value.

Slide Nine

- Workshops, webinars, and conferences
 - NHLTA's Mission Statement says, "*The New Hampshire Library Trustees Association (NHLTA) assists trustees to be knowledgeable and effective in order to serve, improve and promote New Hampshire public libraries.*" That's what it does through the various workshops, gatherings, conferences and webinars, all which are open and available to members and non-members alike. It is the responsibility of trustees to avail themselves of these training opportunities in order to be the best trustee they can be.
- State library resources and the trustee association
 - The New Hampshire State Library is an important asset to the local library. Among its many roles it provides the inter library loan system which transfers materials from library to library. It also serves as a resource center on New Hampshire.

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- I've previously told you about the mission of the New Hampshire Trustee Association. One becomes a member through the payment of annual dues, often a line item in the library budget. It is governed by an elected board of directors.

- Mentor/buddy with experienced trustee
 - It is a good idea to partner a new trustee with an experienced trustee who can mentor the new trustee. It could include one-on-one time to answer questions, perhaps travel together to conferences, workshops or gatherings.

Slide Ten

- Board evaluation
 - A self-evaluation is a governance best practice. Because the board does not answer to anyone directly a periodic assessment helps ensure that the board is operating efficiently, driving the long term goals of the library, meeting the expectations of the community.
- Opportunities to provide feedback on onboarding experience
 - Provide an opportunity, one-on-one with the chair, for the new trustees to provide honest feedback on his/her experience in the first months after joining the board. It will be invaluable to the ongoing process, allows "grey" areas of understanding to be clarified, gives a voice to the new trustee in a trusted environment.
- Exit interview
 - Exit interviews are an important tool for understanding the reason a person has chosen to leave the board, gives insight into board dynamics, a provides closure for the board and the trustee.