

# NH Library Trustee

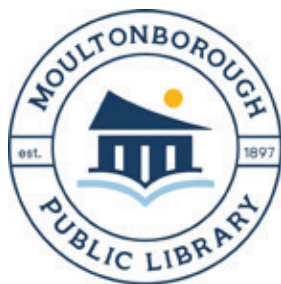
FALL 2025  
Volume 41 Number 3

The Newsletter of the New Hampshire Library Trustees Association

[www.NHLTA.org](http://www.NHLTA.org)

## Congratulations to the 2025 NHLTA Annual Award Winners!

New Hampshire is indeed fortunate to have such fine public libraries, library employees and dedicated volunteers. Honoring their achievements not only celebrates them, but helps NHLTA highlight the important work libraries do in their communities. After lengthy consideration, the NHLTA Board of Directors is happy to announce the award winners for this year. Presentations will be made at local celebrations this fall.



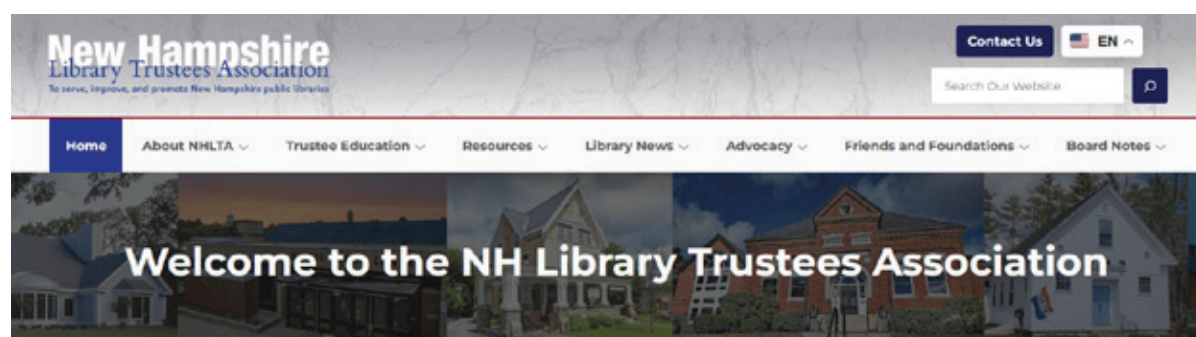
### Library Director of the Year (Two Winners)

Brittany Durgin, Moultonborough Public Library  
Caitlin Frost, New Durham Public Library



**The Sue Palmatier Award for Outstanding Support by a "Friends of the Library" Group**  
Friends of the Chesterfield Library

## New design, same great resources!



For the past several months, we've been working to update the NHLTA website – we have a new look with the information you need.

### Need to write a director job description or evaluation?

Examples can be found under Resource Materials.

### Need help developing a Policy?

Sample Library Policies are available under Resources.

### Missed a Conference Session?

Handouts are available for up to a year after the Annual Conferences under Trustee Education/Conference Resources.

### Want to know (almost) everything there is to know about being a library trustee?

The Trustee Manual is available under Resources and there's also a direct link on the home page.

### Have a Question about Finances?

Terry Knowles' *The Other Money* webinar is under Trustee Education. Watch it!

### Need help with a legal issue?

Legal Q&A columns are archived under Resources.

### Want to Apply for a Scholarship?

Applications are available under About NHLTA.

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# Letter from the President . . .



Marcia McLaughlin  
NHLTA President

## Fall 2025

It's the change of season time once again. As the days become cooler and shorter, the calendar of events/tasks for trustees and our libraries tends to hold to a pattern.

After Labor Day, the library often sees a shift in programming for children and teens as schedules return to the demands of another school year. Are you aware of the new or ongoing programs which are being offered at your library? Is your trustee board supporting the creative individuals who work with the children and teens?

The advent of Fall also signals another budget cycle. It is the trustees' duty to prepare an annual budget sufficient for the needs of the library and submit it to town officials. Your budget may still be in the draft stage or already submitted to those who

review it. In addition, it is the trustees' responsibility to advocate for the budget – to know how it meets the needs of the town in the context of the library's mission, goals and objectives. Be the public face of the library whenever you are out in the community. Speak up and speak out for your library!

For NHLTA, Fall means selecting and announcing the recipients of our annual awards. Their accomplishments will be highlighted in the winter edition after they've been presented with their well-deserved awards.

Now, get that beverage of choice, find a comfy spot to sit and read on.

My best to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcia".

Marcia

## A Little Free Library for Banned Books

Little Free Libraries are commonplace, but in August Nottingham resident Karen Lacharite installed one that is solely devoted to books that have been historically or currently banned. It started being used immediately with books being taken out and others added in. One patron even left a donation!

Karen places a bookmark in each book that contains a short synopsis and as well as the reason it was banned. She first posted on the Little Free Libraries of NH Facebook page – now her LFL has its own page: Little Free Library of Banned Books!

Response has been positive – Karen reports that so far there's only been one "snarky comment" on the town's Facebook page.



**Save the Date**  
for the 2026 NHLTA  
Annual Conference:  
**May 27, 2026!**

Planning is already underway for the 2026 NHLTA Annual Conference scheduled for Wednesday, May 27th at the DoubleTree Downtown Manchester. We're excited to announce that our keynote speaker will be Mindy Atwood, NH State Library.

Feedback on the new venue was positive overall; we're working to improve food service and tech for 2026.

We're looking forward to another great event – we hope to see you there!

# Library Funding Update

Several library professionals and trustees have inquired about the impact of H.R.1 – One Big Beautiful Bill Act on federal library funding and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The primary focus of this bill is mandatory spending.

- Mandatory spending includes programs like Social Security, defense, the national debt, and Medicare/Medicaid.
- Discretionary spending covers areas such as the FBI, Coast Guard, housing, education, space exploration and federal funding for libraries through IMLS.

The One Big Beautiful Bill sets the overall framework for the federal budget. The details of the 2026 budget (covering October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026), including IMLS funding, are determined by the subcommittees responsible for those portions, specifically the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies.

On July 31, the full Senate Appropriations Committee approved a recommendation from its subcommittee to provide nearly level funding for IMLS and the Grants to States Program. The House Subcommittee has approved the Senate's version of IMLS funding, with only a small reduction in the proposed increase for the Grants to States Program. The next step is for the full House Appropriations Committee to finalize the budget in a markup scheduled for September 9, 2025.

How can you advocate for your library during this time? Connect with members of Congress to share how IMLS funding supports libraries and the communities they serve. For example, the recently-released 2024 New Hampshire Public Library Statistics, a program supported and funded by IMLS, provides essential data that many libraries will rely on for operational decisions.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions. I can be reached at [mindy.atwood@dncr.nh.gov](mailto:mindy.atwood@dncr.nh.gov).



By Mindy Atwood,  
Administrator of Library  
Operations and  
Assistant State Librarian,  
New Hampshire  
State Library

All my best, Mindy

## Stay in touch with NHLTA and stay informed!

There are more than 1200 trustees in NH.

Scan the QR code to sign up for the  
NHLTA LISTSERV® and get connected!

Questions? email: [listserv@nhlta.org](mailto:listserv@nhlta.org)



## NH Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the  
New Hampshire Library Trustees  
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# Long Story with a Happy Ending: Barrington's New Public Library

by Susan Young  
Gaudiello, BPL Chair



Like many small-town libraries in New Hampshire, Barrington's public library has had many homes over the 230 years since its formation in 1795 as a social library. It began in a private home, moved to a church, then the Grange Hall, later to a school and ultimately to a room in the town office building in 1972. When the town offices and Police Department moved out in 2000, the library took over the old office space and shared the building with the new Recreation Department.

Even then the trustees knew that the 3,700 SF space would be inadequate to meet the needs of the fast-growing town. A consultant's 2006 needs assessment concluded that the town would need a 17,000 SF facility to serve a population projected to approach 10,000 by 2020. (in 2025, the population is about 9,700 and still growing.) Between 2007 and 2011, the trustees formed a building committee, arrived at a more realistic size for a new building, searched out possible sites and hired SMP Architecture to design a building. While the economic downturn of 2008 led trustees

to delay proposing a new library, work continued. A foundation was formed in 2016 to initiate a capital campaign.

In 2019 the trustees proposed a \$4 million bond to build a new 13,000 SF library on town-owned land adjacent to the old library. The Select Board voted to support the library bond, but they also put on the warrant a proposal to spend \$1.9 million for a new Town Hall. While the library bond received a majority "yes" vote, it did not reach the needed 60% (the Town Hall article passed). The trustees made some modest changes to the design and returned in 2020 asking again for a \$4 million bond, which was defeated.

Finally, in 2023 the trustees prepared to advance a third proposal, trimming the building size to 10,000 SF. But when the architect estimated the cost would likely run \$5.5-6 million due to the dramatic escalation of construction costs, the project seemed doomed. And this, dear reader, is when fate intervened on our behalf.

Days before a public input session on the draft design, a medical office building in the "downtown" area came on the market. The 22-year-old building on almost four acres had a large parking lot but

The quilt hanging in the adult area was donated by town resident Karen Hagen.



was smaller in size (8,500 SF) than the trustees had desired. However, the architect told us that the building offered great design possibilities and would cost substantially less than building new. The residents that came to the input session and the Select Board agreed and we were on our way.

The Select Board voted to negotiate a purchase and sale agreement for \$1 million, and the Barrington Library Foundation provided the deposit. The Library Building Committee and project managers from Bauen Corporation, the construction management firm selected by the trustees, worked with SMP on a redesign and renovation plan, and a bond request of \$3.6 million (of which \$300,000 was earmarked to renovate the old library for the Rec Dept use) received the support of the Select Board, the Advisory Budget Committee and ultimately over 62% of the voters in March 2024. The foundation contributed over \$405,000 which brought the library share of the bond down to \$2.9 million!

In the 18 months since the bond passed, the work has proceeded without a hitch. Since sustainability was a top priority voiced by residents, Resilient Building Group (RBG) of Concord was retained to assess energy goals and potential costs. Eckhardt and Johnson, the mechanical contractor, designed a completely new HVAC system (the single largest expense in the renovation); an all-electric system was the result. Having emptied their coffers to lower the bond, the foundation renewed their fund-raising efforts to cover the cost of a solar energy system. By May of 2025, the foundation had raised \$139,000 toward the solar project, and the trustees used other donated funds for the balance. Barrington Power won the bid by discounting

their price significantly enabling the library to have both roof and ground-mount arrays.

Bauen was a careful steward of project funds, reusing materials from the old building whenever possible and minimizing the need to dip into contingency funds. Several of the subcontractors also offered discounts, allowing us to order new shelving and furniture and even commission local artist Melissa Morin to paint a beautiful mural in the children's wing. Volunteers also assisted, including trustee and NH Master Gardener Lydia Cupp who assumed responsibility for the landscaping. She recruited a team to tackle the spring clean-up, solicited donations of compost and mulch, and installed native perennials funded by the Friends.

At the July 10 ribbon-cutting, Select Board Chair Tracy Hardkopf spoke of the steps needed for a complex project such as the new library. "Most important is the incentive for the project which can be found in the sense of community that people crave and find in Barrington. We recognize that libraries are the last free space for all people and that the written word is an invitation to free thought and exposure to a broader world than our own circle allows us."

The library hosted a Family Day on July 12, with special activities and crafts for children coordinated by the Friends of the Library. According to Library Director Lydia Goodwin, almost 800 people came through the doors on July 11 and 12. "Everyone has a big smile on their face as soon as they enter," she said. "We are all so grateful to the townspeople and the donors for supporting this wonderful addition to the Barrington community."

*Photos by John Cafasso and Susan Young Gaudiello*



PHOTOS FROM TOP: The new circulation desk; the Barrington History Room; children's area mural painted by local artist Melissa Morin; installation of solar panels on the roof.





By Jonathan Cowal,  
Municipal Services  
Counsel, NH Municipal  
Association (NHMA)

If a public board is going to choose to allow public comment, it is vital to first establish clear and written rules of procedure.

## A Guide for Managing Public Comment

Public boards can sometimes find themselves in situations where they are struggling to manage public comments. Whether it is the result of a particularly contentious issue, comments running too long and extending meetings to an unreasonable length, or simply a lack of organization, public comment can place a burden on a public bodies' ability to conduct business. Knowing the tools you have at your disposal, and when public comment is necessary versus optional can help you manage this issue.

### Q. Is public comment required at all gatherings of a public board or body?

No. Public comment is only legally required during public hearings, not public meetings (with a few possible exceptions). This is not to say that boards or bodies can't allow the public to be heard at meetings; it can be a good idea to allow some level of public comment. But knowing the legal limits and requirements is your first tool in understanding your options if things start to get out of hand. Under RSA 91-A, the public has a legal right to attend public meetings. They have a right to watch, listen, take notes or record. But they do not have a right to provide written or verbal comment unless you choose to give it to them. If a public board is going to choose to allow public comment, it is vital to first establish clear and written rules of procedure.

### Q. How do I know if public comment is required versus optional?

The first, and most important, authority for determining the answer to this question is the New Hampshire RSAs, or statutes. Whenever a board or body seeks to accomplish something, it is important to check the RSAs to see what type of action is needed. For example, if the library trustees wanted to accept unanticipated funds they would need to refer to RSA 202-A:4-c. If the amount is less than \$5,000, the statute says that the trustees may accept this money in public session

of any regular library trustee *meeting*. However, if the funds are in the amount of \$5,000 or more, the library trustees must hold a prior public *hearing*. So, what is the difference? The answer is public comment. While the library trustees could choose to allow public comment during a meeting to accept less than \$5,000, they are not legally required to do so. However, for \$5,000 or more, the law requires the trustees to hold a hearing and inherent in that requirement is the public's right to speak and be heard.

The second consideration for determining the answer to this question outside of the strict statutory requirements is personal preference, or to put it another way, common sense. There are certain powers vested in public boards or bodies that do not require a public hearing. However, if a decision would have a significant impact on the residents of a municipality, it may make good sense to open the meeting up to public comment, essentially turning it into a public hearing, so that the public feels that their input was considered.

### Q. How can a board or body best manage public comment?

Having clear, written, rules of procedure governing public comment is the single best tool available! These rules will apply to comments during public hearings, where the public must be heard, as well as public meetings should you choose to allow a public comment period. Whenever public comment is allowed, or required, there are First Amendment concerns to be aware of, but there are still many restrictions which can be implemented. Boards can implement specific sign-up procedures, time limits on how long one person can speak, limit comments to a specific topic that is being discussed, restrict duplicative comments, allowing everyone who signed up to speak to get a turn before anyone gets a second turn, and limit public comment periods to a specific length of time. The restrictions that you want to avoid are rules that restrict the content of what people are saying. It would be improper, for example, to implement rules like positive comments only, no swearing or obscenity, preventing a specific person or group from speaking, or preventing a

specific viewpoint from being discussed. These types of restrictions potentially run afoul of the First Amendment. It is also important to remember that while the board may be required to hear the public's comments, they are not required to respond. It should be made clear in your policy that board members will not be expected to answer questions or engage in discussion during public comment periods

unless required as part of a public hearing process.

### **Q. How can public comment rules of procedure be enforced?**

**A** The first steps in being able to enforce public comment rules of procedure are to: 1. Establish the rules, 2. Write them down, and 3. Make them available and known to any member of the public who may wish to speak. It is a good idea to have a copy of your rules available on your

website, posted on the wall somewhere in your regular meeting place, and to have printed copies available. If someone is not adhering to your rules, remind them of the rules and give them the opportunity to comply. It is commonly suggested to use at least a three strikes approach. What this means is that you should give someone at least three chances to follow the rules before you consider having them removed from the meeting or cutting off their right to speak.

## **Summer Dreamin': How James E. Nichols Library Secured an AARP Livable Communities Grant**

By Linda Verge, Library Director,  
James E. Nichols Memorial Library

**T**he James E. Nichols Memorial Library is a very small library in the beautiful lake town of Center Harbor. The population of Center Harbor is only about 1,000 people year round, and 63% of residents are age 50 and above. In summertime, our population swells as we welcome summer visitors to the region. This grant story began on a chilly day in January of this year when I attended an AARP 2025 Community Challenge Q&A Webinar. Two past awardees spoke about how their grants transformed outdoor areas of their towns. That got me to daydreaming about sunny summer days and the library's wonderful outdoor potential. Our historic library sits high on a knoll and overlooks Lake Winnepesaukee. I wondered how I could expand the library's outdoor space for more programming and also foster a greater sense of community for our residents.

Shortly thereafter, I attended another online seminar, *Library GreenScapes: Cultivating Climate Resilience, Community, and Learning Outdoors*, and that's when plans really began to gel. These webinars were the genesis for making Center Harbor a more livable community, especially for those age 50 and above.

I worked with Select Board member Harry Viens before applying for the grant. My vision was to add four picnic tables to the library grounds, two of which would be ADA compliant and could accommodate a wheelchair. I also envisioned four Adirondack chairs so that people could congregate, converse, and enjoy the beauty of Center Harbor.

Fast forward: in May of 2025, AARP notified me that I was awarded the grant. Out of 3,460 applicants, little Nichols Library made the cut! Only 9%, or 383 applicants, were awarded grants. I promptly set to work ordering the furni-

ture and calling for volunteers to help assemble it.

One of the conditions of the grant was that half of the volunteers should be age 50 plus. A crew of ten hardy volunteers came together on a hot August morning to assemble the furniture. All of us easily met the age criteria of "older" adults. The Adirondack chairs are located in Dr. Morrill Memorial Park, also in the process of being reimagined, adjacent to the library grounds. The picnic tables are installed on the side lawn of the library facing Lake Winnepesaukee.

The end result: two beautiful new welcoming spots for patrons, residents, and visitors to gather – all because of a little summer dreamin'!



Library Director Linda Verge (wearing hat) celebrates at the ribbon cutting with the trustees and volunteers.



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Trustees Association**  
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NH Library Association

## MISSION

The NHLTA assists Trustees to be knowledgeable and effective in order to serve, improve and promote New Hampshire Public Libraries.

## Calendar 2025

**Sept. 27 10:00 am–12 pm**

**Friends of the Library Gathering**

Hookset Public Library,

31 Mount St Mary's Way, Hooksett

**Oct. 25 10:30 am–12:30 pm**

**Regional Trustee Gathering**

Barrington Public Library,

426 Calef Hwy, Barrington

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