

NHLTA Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the New Hampshire Library Trustees Association

www.NHLTA.org

Join Us for the 2026 Spring Conference on May 27

Live Free & Grow: How the New Hampshire Library Community Will Survive & Thrive

This year's conference is designed to ground us in the realities facing public libraries in New Hampshire and teach us how to not only survive, but thrive despite them. Mindy Atwood, Administrator of Library Operations and Assistant State Librarian at the NH State Library, our keynote speaker, will offer up-to-date information on how current events are affecting NH public libraries, as well as how state and federal funds are used to support them. She'll also be leading a Q&A workshop session highlighting the good initiatives happening in libraries in our State. The conference brochure was emailed in March. If you didn't receive it, it's available on the NHLTA website.

The workshops include talks on fund-raising, grant writing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), policies, legislative updates, caring for your historic library building, writing an RFP and the NH Library RSAs. We'll have 26 exhibitors this year for you to visit, and we've also increased the number of Passport card winners to six – four will receive \$50 for their library and two will receive a free print or digital subscription to Bookmarks Magazine.

But that's not all – the League of Women Voters is offering three civics books, two adult titles and one children's, at no cost to interested libraries. The Wadleigh Memorial Library in Milford is donating tchotchkes made with their 3-D printer to attendees! Last, but certainly not least, thanks to workshop sponsor The Library Supply, there will be drawings for three book repair kits of Neschen products and the latest version of the Kindle Paperwhite (16GB)!

The conference will be held at DoubleTree by Hilton Manchester Downtown, Manchester, NH again this year. A parking garage is located adjacent to the hotel. With ticket validation, parking is paid for by the Conference. Attendees staying overnight at the hotel may park overnight. To validate your parking ticket, you must bring your parking ticket with you into the hotel to be validated at the conference registration area.

The cost is \$75 for NHLTA members, \$90 for non-members. The registration deadline is May 8. No walk-in registrations will be accepted on the day of the conference.

INSIDE

- 2** From the President
NHLTA Survey Responses
- 3** Libraries are Community Treasures
- 4** Lee's Library Leading with Solar
- 6** Legal Q&A
- 7** The Importance of Networking

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Letter from the President . . .



Marcia McLaughlin
NHLTA President

Spring 2026

I want to say a big thank you to those who took the time to complete the recent NHLTA member survey. (Results are below.) Just over 20% of the membership replied, which is considered to be a very good response. Many respondents offered thoughtful input and shared a wide range of ideas. The board has begun digesting the responses, and at our March board meeting we agreed to create an Instagram account in addition to our presence on Facebook, a decision driven in part by feedback we received.

My personal response to the survey begins with this issue of the newsletter: I am inaugurating *Tips for Trustees*. This issue's tip focus is on the frequently asked question – how do we find people to run for library trustee? My response comes from my personal experience. Your library director

should be a good source about patrons who she/he has firsthand knowledge. When I moved to Greenland, I shared with our director how much I loved libraries and that getting my library card was one of my first stops when I moved to a new town. Coincidentally, a few years later the director approached me about becoming an alternate trustee. The rest of my journey brought me to the NHLTA board. Give it a try – reach out to your director.

If you were one of those who responded to the survey, do you want to have a voice in what NHLTA does? Joining the NHLTA board would give you that voice and allow you to share your knowledge and interest with other trustees in the state. If you might be interested, contact me at m.mclaughlin@nhlta.org.

Now, grab your favorite beverage, find a cozy spot and read on!

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

NHLTA Survey Responses

Thanks to all those who responded to our survey! Here are some highlights.

NEWSLETTER

68% read every issue, 18% read it frequently with 12% reading it occasionally. 51% find the articles relevant and 49% find them sometimes relevant.

Regarding going digital, 46% said they would read it online, 47% said they might read it online. 7% stated they would definitely not read it online, citing too many emails and the need to get away from the computer.

LISTSERV

55% subscribe to the ListServ, 45% do not. When it comes to posting, only 21% have ever posted.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Respondents were split fairly evenly between wanting more or wanting less emails. The majority feel that email messages should be sent as needed, monthly at most.

WEBSITE

48% visit the website occasionally, 46% visit it rarely. Most of the visitors found the information either very or somewhat easy to access.

FACEBOOK

Of those who use Facebook, 74% did not know that NHLTA had a Facebook page.

CONFERENCE

76% have attended the conference, with 25% attending more than five times!

Most of the reasons given for not attending were that the conference was too far away or there was a conflict with the date.

48% prefer the Concord location, 23% prefer Manchester, and 24% stated no preference. Those who had a preference overwhelmingly based it on the site being closer to where they lived.

When asked about helping with costs, more than half agreed with cutting back on printed handouts, 44% agreed with increasing the cost, 41% with having the conference every other year, and 31% with cutting back on food.

WORKSHOPS

57% have attended a workshop, with most finding them helpful. 82% would still attend if there was a \$10 fee, 58% would attend if there was a \$25 fee and with food provided. 59% said no to a \$35 fee.

REGIONAL GATHERINGS

41% have attended a gathering with over half indicating they found them helpful.

76% said they would attend a future gathering.

ANNUAL AWARDS

62% would prefer a donation be given to their library instead of a plaque.

We received many good comments and suggestions about topics and events to cover on the website, social media, and in the newsletter. We'll follow up on as many as we can, but good ideas are not enough – we need help! Let us know if you would like to write an article, or are familiar with WordPress and can help with the website, or if you would like to be involved with conference or workshop planning, email Marcia at m.mclaughlin@nhlta.org

Libraries are Community Treasures

Libraries are special. We all know that. The grand opening of a library? That's especially special.

I had the privilege of attending the grand opening of the Daland Memorial Library in Mont Vernon on February 22, and what a privilege it was to be there! The care that went into every detail was immediately clear – from the thoughtful color choices and design elements that harken to the original building to the sleek, inviting teen room and truly enchanting children's room.

In her remarks, Mont Vernon Library Charitable Foundation and trustee chair Cindy Raspillier reminded us that this project truly took a village. The library trustees, building committee, staff, Sophia G. Daland Trust, Charitable Foundation board, studioDKS, Turnstone Corporation, donors, and the supermajority of voters who approved the municipal bond all contributed to this beautiful new library. Their work has created a community treasure that will serve Mont Vernon for years to come.

A recent report from the Government Accountability Office, a non-partisan, independent federal agency that works for Congress, underscored why projects like this matter. The report states, "Public libraries serve as cornerstones of many communities. But aging and outdated buildings can make it hard for libraries to meet increasing expectations to provide access to programming, technology, emergency services, and voting sites – in addition to books."

It goes on to say, "About 6,000 libraries nationwide (nearly 40%) say that part of their building is in poor condition, and about 7,000 report having a physical barrier to access for people with disabilities." The full report can be found at www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-107262.

It's a reminder that if the library is the heart of a community, that heart needs a strong, welcoming home.

New Hampshire has seen many successful library building projects, remarkable examples of multi-million dollar public/private partnership. The Daland Memorial Library team will be presenting at the NHLTA spring conference, and if you're considering a building project, this is a terrific chance to learn from their experience. If you'd like information about other recent projects, I'm always happy to help.

Think spring!



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



The new Daland Memorial Library in Mont Vernon.

NH Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the
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POSTMASTER:

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How Lee's Library Is Leading with Solar and Storage

By Kyana Burges
and Sarah Brock,
Clean Energy NH

For years, Lee Public Library Director Hayley Van-Gils has been used to juggling big dreams with small-town realities. The process of renovating the library building has spanned decades – beginning with considering entirely new building designs and capital campaigns to remodeling attempts, with significant efforts from library staff and trustees to complete the additions and basement remodeling. Every improvement required back-and-forth meetings with the Select Board, working within tight budgets, and advocating for the ways modern libraries help small communities.

As Hayley and library patrons can tell you, a library is not just a place for books. It's a community living room. A safe after-school hangout. A warm place during winter storms. A space where someone new to the area can spend long days with young children and feel less alone. "If we had no books in the building," Hayley says, "we would still be a community space." Now, the library has taken on its most ambitious project yet: a municipal

solar and battery storage system that will transform it into a true resilience hub for Lee.

From Complicated Process to Community Model

For towns like Lee, energy projects can feel daunting. Katrin Kasper, Clean Energy NH's Seacoast Energy Circuit Rider, who lives in Lee, first connected with the library years ago. Through that early involvement, she saw firsthand how complicated it can be to move energy projects forward in small towns.

"There really wasn't anyone who knew what we needed to do to make sure projects got done," she explains. When she joined Clean Energy NH, she was excited to become that person: someone towns could call to understand funding opportunities, navigate paperwork, and learn what had worked elsewhere. Working with the Lee Public Library became a proving ground. Together, they explored what once felt out of reach – solar panels, battery

Putting the roof to work: the library's new solar array.



Photo courtesy of Clean Energy NH

backup, long-term savings – and turned possibilities into a plan.

Why Solar and Batteries?

Lee experiences two to six power outages each year. Some last days. One cold February in 2023, there was a generator failure at the public safety complex. Another day, the old town hall, which resides next to the library, lost power and battled bursting pipes. The library has never had a generator. When the power goes out, it simply closes. Sometimes it could be closed for up to a week.

And yet, when the lights go out, access to books, information, and community support is exactly what people need most.

As a parent who once brought her children to the town's emergency warming center, which was warm but featured cold concrete floors, folding tables, and plastic chairs, Katrin has seen firsthand the benefits of the library serving in this role instead. Renovated, welcoming, filled with light, it already felt like home. Why not make it resilient, too?

The answer became a 17.835 kW solar array (41 high-efficiency 435W panels paired with Enphase microinverters) and three Enphase 10C battery units. The system is designed to generate 110% of the library's electricity load, with room for future upgrades like heat pumps. Battery storage will maintain critical systems for at least 48 hours during an outage, until the sun returns, and then the system can run indefinitely. That means heating controls, cooling, lights, water pump, refrigerator, microwave, and essential computers will continue running. In winter, it provides warmth. In summer, it cools the building down, perfect for community members to enjoy the space on a hot summer day.

The Budget Reality

For a small library running on a tight annual budget, electricity isn't just a line item, it's a stressor. When utility costs spike, the money has to come from somewhere else. Programming. Books. Digital subscriptions. The Friends of the Library often step in to fundraise and soften the blow, but the tradeoffs are becoming overwhelmingly real. Katrin worked with the town and the library on funding as well – a 30% total project tax credit and

a 50% Eversource grant reduced the cost of the project to the town by more than two-thirds. The voters approved a warrant article for the project in 2025, RFPs went out in July, the town chose 603 Solar for the project, and the installation was completed and online before the grant deadline of December 30, 2025.

Solar stabilizes operating costs and frees up dollars for what matters most: community services. The library plans to install a public display so visitors can watch energy production in real time. In a building devoted to learning, the solar array becomes a teaching tool.

Building Access, Building Resilience

This project builds on a track record of thoughtful investment. In recent years, the library secured three American Library Association grants focused on accessibility, including funding dual-height sinks, automatic door openers, and improvements to the wheelchair ramp. Every change reinforced a simple principle: everyone belongs here. Solar and battery storage help make that happen.

In the midst of all this, Lee's library even worked with Clean Energy NH and fellow libraries in Seabrook and Hampton to supply at-home energy saving kits and information to residents heading into last year's heating season. The libraries in Wolfeboro, Stratford, Whitefield, and Barrington are also great examples, with each completing multiple energy projects, including heat pumps, electric vehicle charging, weatherization, solar, and batteries.

When the next storm knocks out power in town, the Lee Public Library won't go dark. It will glow. Lights on. Heat running. Doors open for the community. And that feels perfectly aligned with what librarians have said all along: a library isn't just a place to borrow books. It's where a community gathers, learns, and takes care of one another, even when the grid goes down.



Photo courtesy of Clean Energy NH

The batteries are stored in the library's basement.

Katrin Kaspar and Sarah Brock will discuss this project and others in the **EmPOWERing Your Library** workshop at the **NHLTA Conference**.

They will also have an exhibit table.



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

Meeting Minutes & The Right to Know Law (RSA 91-A)

All meetings of public bodies must have proper notice and be open to the public. Minutes must be kept for all public meetings and made available to the public upon request within five business days after the meeting (whether or not approved). They must include the full names of members present, others participating, and a brief description of subjects discussed and final decisions made. RSA 91-A:2

Given that RSA 91-A does not provide much detail on what must be included in meeting minutes, many public bodies can struggle with determining what adequate minutes should entail. This article will provide some practical considerations on what should, and maybe shouldn't, go into your meeting minutes.

It is important to understand when minutes are required to be taken. To start, all public bodies must take minutes during their meetings. The term public body includes: Any legislative body, governing body, board, commission, committee, agency, or authority of any county, town, municipal corporation, school district, school administrative unit, chartered public school, or other political subdivision, or any committee, subcommittee, or subordinate body thereof, or advisory committee thereto. RSA 91-A:1-a. Pay special attention to the term advisory committee, which is included in the definition of a public body. Advisory committee means any committee, council, commission, or other like body whose primary purpose is to consider an issue or issues designated by the appointing authority so as to provide such authority with advice or recommendations concerning the formulation of any public policy or legislation that may be promoted, modified, or opposed by such authority. RSA 91-A:1-a.

All public bodies must produce minutes when they have a meeting. What constitutes a meeting? The convening of a quorum (majority) of any public body to discuss or act on any of that body's business, including work sessions. It is a "meeting" whether the members convene in person, by telephone, or electronic communication, or in any

other way in which all members may communicate with each other at the same time. Legal meetings may never be conducted by email or any other format which does not comply with notice and public accessibility requirements, or which does not allow the public to hear, read or discern the discussion contemporaneously at the noticed meeting location.

Once you have established that a public body is conducting a meeting, minutes must be taken. While RSA 91-A does not provide great detail on what should be included in meeting minutes, the following items should always be included:

- ◆ The start time and end time of the meeting, and the first and last name of the person who produced the minutes. 91-A:2, II.
- ◆ The first and last names of board members, and any other person who speaks during the meeting.
- ◆ The first and last names of board members who made or seconded each motion must be recorded in the minutes. 91-A:2, II.
- ◆ If one or more board members are attending remotely or virtually, all votes must be made by roll call [first & last name] and be recorded that way in the minutes per RSA 91-A:2, III (e).
- ◆ If one or more board members are attending remotely, the minutes must include a description of why it was not reasonably practical for them to appear in person.
- ◆ A roll call [first & last name] vote is required to go into non-public session, along with a notation of the proper reason under RSA 91-A:3 for entering into non-public session. RSA 91-A:3, I (b).
- ◆ A recorded vote [first & last name] is required to seal the minutes of a non-public session RSA 91-A:3, III.
- ◆ A description of what was discussed, including any actions taken, votes and motions made, and other decisions entered into by the board.

2026 Annual Awards

The submission
deadline is
**Friday,
July 10, 2026.**

Visit nhlta.org
for instructions,
all criteria and a
description of the
awards.

Draft Minutes

The Right to Know Law requires minutes to be prepared and be made available to the public upon request within five business days after the meeting. There is no legal requirement for boards to approve their minutes, only to have draft minutes available. This version, whether approved or not, becomes a “governmental record” under RSA 91-A:1-a, III and must be made available upon request. If draft minutes are not available within five business days of the meeting, and the board receives a Right to Know request for the minutes, any notes or other materials which will be used to create the draft minutes must be provided.

While there is no requirement in the Right to Know Law that any board act to approve its draft

minutes, it is a common practice for all boards to review the draft minutes at their next meeting. If a board wishes to amend the draft minutes, it may do so, but the discussion and vote must take place at a duly-noticed public meeting with a quorum of the board and documented in the minutes of that subsequent meeting.

It is recommended that whenever minutes are created, they are marked “draft.” This will let anyone who reads them know that the minutes have not been approved. If the board does amend them at its next meeting, the minutes of that next meeting should refer to the old minutes and detail the changes made. The board may also wish to produce a new document of the amended minutes labeled “as amended and approved by board” or something of that nature.

The Importance of Networking

By Linda Verge, PhD/MLIS, Director,
James E. Nichols Memorial Library, Center Harbor

You may have read about the Community Challenge grant award our library received from AARP in the winter issue of this newsletter. Thanks to the award, we were able to purchase outdoor furniture and enhanced security cameras valued at over \$14,500. Since receiving the award, our association with AARP has blossomed into so much more than we could have imagined.

Center Harbor is a small town in the Lakes Region. There are many retirees who call the town home because of its beauty, proximity to Lake Winnepesaukee, and its low tax rate. About 63% of our residents are age 50+. Therefore, many of our programs are created with this age group in mind.

As a result of winning the national Community Challenge grant (administered by each state), our library and town became better known. After AARP featured our story in their online newsletter, we learned about other opportunities from AARP such as the “Bridging the Digital Divide for Older Granite Staters” program through which we received upgraded internet services for a year, a value of over \$1,000! Next, we learned

about the *free* presentations offered by the AARP NH Speakers Bureau. This speakers bureau offers a wide range of topics to choose from. As a result, we are planning our first ever hybrid presentation in late March. My trustees chose HomeFit; an AARP program which gives people helpful tips for aging in place. It’s already generating buzz and sign-ups in our community. More information about these programs may be found the AARP website.

Our original Community Challenge grant continues to make patrons smile. We had a surplus of grant funds so we chose to make an innovative purchase: Stay Sharp Kits from Penworthy. These kits are specifically designed collections of activities for anyone who wants to improve their short-term memory and overall mental speed. They are also beneficial to people who are experiencing memory loss or other cognitive issues related to dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, and other memory disorders. The kits can be checked out just like a book. Our patrons and adult caregivers are really enjoying the Stay Sharp Kits.

In short, our association with AARP NH has opened up some new opportunities, and has inspired other libraries and organizations to network and to advance their programming, too. We wish you similar successes in your networking endeavors. You just never know where they will lead!



The Nichols Memorial Library’s collection of Stay Sharp Kits



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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 2026

May 27, 9:00 am 2026 Spring Conference & Annual Meeting

Breakfast and Registration
open at 7:30 am
DoubleTree Downtown,
700 Elm Street, Manchester

June 24, 10:00 am–12 pm NHLTA Regional Gathering

Hosted by the James E.
Nichols Memorial Library
35 Plymouth St,
Center Harbor, NH 03226

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