

NH Library Trustee

WINTER 2025-26

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The Newsletter of the New Hampshire Library Trustees Association

www.NHLTA.org

Meet the 2025 NHLTA Award Winners!

This year there are two recipients of the Library Director of the Year Award: Brittany Durgin, library director at Moultonborough Public Library and Caitlin Frost, library director at the New Durham Public Library.

It is no surprise that the Moultonborough Public Library Board of Trustees unanimously nominated **Brittany Durgin** for the 2025 NHLTA Library Director of the Year award. They led off their nomination by citing Brittany's professionalism and community-oriented leadership which enhances the quality of services to library patrons and thoughtfully positions the library for continued success in the future.

Brittany has served as the library director at Moultonborough Public Library for two years. Previously, she served as Director of the Minot-Sleeper Library in Bristol, NH, for more than six years before going to the Hooksett Library as Adult Services Librarian. She earned her Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from Simmons University's School of Library and Information Science.

The trustees appreciate Brittany's conscientious and effective leadership style. She displays a calm professional demeanor when working through challenges, keeps an open mind, and displays poise in her many interpersonal dealings. Staff morale is very high, a reflection of Brittany's warmth, empathy, and approachability. She has worked tirelessly to build strong relationships with key constituencies, and maintains solid working relationships with key town officials and the Library's Friends group. Her willingness to regularly work at the front desk has created an upbeat and helpful impression with patrons.



NHLTA board member Ann Xavier and Brittany Durgin (holding award).

Brittany has had many accomplishments over her library career, but some notable ones include her collaboration with trustees and staff to field a community-wide survey, lead resident focus groups, and meet with key town leaders to assess community views of the library and potential enhancement opportunities. She led the group effort to create a new Strategic Plan to position the library to best meet community needs and interests, and shared the plan with residents. (Both the survey and the Strategic Plan are posted on the library's website.) She has proactively secured nearly \$40,000 in various grants including a \$20,000 ALA Accessibility Grant to update the library's restrooms, a \$15,000 Sustainable & Resilient New England Libraries Grant to replace an aging air handler (the second consecutive year the library has received this grant) as well as grants for a technology class, materials funding, and conference

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Letter from the President . . .



Marcia McLaughlin
NHLTA President

Winter 2025-26

Again this year, thoughts for my Winter newsletter column have turned to the needs of the NHLTA board. Thus, I begin.

Volunteerism, what is it?

One definition is: "volunteerism is the practice of offering one's time, skills, and talents to support a cause, community or organization without expecting payment. . . . It involves giving back and contributing to the greater good through activities. . . . A free-will choice that benefits both the community and volunteer by fostering social skills, empathy and a sense of purpose."

Each of you is a volunteer in your library, whether elected or appointed. As such you have the desire and vision to support your local library. Now, think about expanding your vision to include the greater good of New Hampshire libraries overall by becoming involved in NHLTA directly by serving on its board of directors.

The board meets monthly and has a number of committees, all meet via Zoom. We are a working board, not merely place holders. Each member is expected to serve on at least one committee and be a contributing member. Overall time commitment during the month depends upon the activities taking place but generally requires the meeting times and any outside activities a member takes on personally.

I will repeat myself from last winter and state "in order for NHLTA to continue as a viable entity to assist you in your job as a trustee people need to step up and come onboard." Won't you please consider doing so?

You may contact me at m.mclaughlin@nhlta.org so that we may talk about your interest and how it might meld with the board.

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

Marcia

NHLTA Board of Directors 2025-2026

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Summerville, SC •
m.mclaughlin@nhlta.org

Cathy Harvey, Vice President

Spofford • c.harvey@nhlta.org

Kathryn Parenti, Secretary

Milford • k.parenti@nhlta.org

Jeanne Palleiko, Treasurer

Newbury • j.palleiko@nhlta.org

Tammy Hooker, Assistant Treasurer

Hooksett • t.hooker@nhlta.org

Katrinka Pellecchia, Past President

Lee • k.pellecchia@nhlta.org

Cliff Blake

Dover • c.blake@nhlta.org

Mark Branoff

Windham • m.branoff@nhlta.org

Connie Kirwin

Antrim • c.kirwin@nhlta.org

Renee Mallett

Windham • r.mallett@nhlta.org

Sue Nieman

Bristol • s.neiman@nhlta.org

Sue Whitbeck

Pembroke • s.whitbeck@nhlta.org

Ann B. Xavier

Center Harbor • a.xavier@nhlta.org

LIAISON TO THE BOARD

**Mindy Atwood, Administrator of Library
Operations and Assistant State Librarian**
NH State Library

Denise van Zanten,
Director, Manchester City Library
NH Library Association

MISSION

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

Updating policies to comply with HB 273

House Bill 273 (2025), “relative to a parent’s access to their minor child’s library records,” was introduced on January 8, 2025. It moved through the New Hampshire House and Senate, with several amendments and a Committee of Conference. The final report passed the House 201–165. Governor Ayotte signed the bill on August 1, 2025, and it will take effect on January 1, 2026.

The law adds a new paragraph to NH RSA 201-D:11 that states:

All library records related to a minor’s current borrowing of printed library materials and audio-visual materials, such as DVDs and CDs, shall be available to either parent or the legal guardian of the minor when requested by either parent or the legal guardian of the minor, or the parent or legal guardian of the minor whose address matches that on the library account or who is listed on the library account.”

In a LibGuide published by the New Hampshire State Library on September 30, 2025, it is suggested that libraries and their boards consider the following when updating their policies to comply with the additional paragraph:

1. How “library records” are defined in RSA 201-D:11, I.
2. That “minor,” “parent,” and “legal guardian” are not defined in current library laws.
3. That how to provide “proof of address” is also not defined in current library laws.

The LibGuide includes references to other areas of New Hampshire statute that define and offer guidance about minors, parents or legal guardians, and proof of address. It also provides a legislative history of RSA: 201-D:11 and offers a list of questions to consider when writing/editing library policies and procedures.

Library directors and trustees are strongly encouraged to work with their town attorney when updating any policy. Additional insight may be gained by viewing the video of the committee of conference. A link is provided in the “Additional Resources” section of the document titled, “HB 273 NHSL Memorandum” on the LibGuide.

This and many other helpful LibGuides can be found at: <https://nhsl.libguides.com/home>. As always, please feel free to reach out to me at mindy.atwood@dncr.nh.gov with any questions you may have.

Warmly, Mindy



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

NH Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the
New Hampshire Library Trustees
Association

EDITOR

Katrinka Pellecchia

DESIGN & PAGE LAYOUT
Jill Shaffer Hammond

CONTRIBUTORS

Mindy Atwood
Carol Boynton
Jonathan Cowal
Susan Frankel
Lee Joyce
Renee Mallett
Marcia McLaughlin

Email submissions and
inquiries to the Editor

k.pellecchia@nhlta.org

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POSTMASTER:
Return Service Requested



Have a great idea for an article for the NHLTA newsletter?

We encourage you to submit articles and photos to us
for consideration. Topics could include events, programs,
announcements or a recent success.

Please e-mail all submissions to the editor, Katrinka Pellecchia,
at k.pellecchia@nhlta.org.

NHLTA Award Winners *continued from page 1*

grants that enabled two staff members to attend a recent ARSL Conference. Brittany spearheaded the implementation of Square payment technology, so that the library can now accept credit card payments from patrons, initiated a website redesign project which is currently underway, oversaw the installation of a new electronic sign on the library lawn to better highlight upcoming events, and recognized the need to offer diverse programs for adults and children. She foresaw the need to re-examine several library policies and initiated thoughtful discussion with staff and trustees regarding sensitive topics relating to patron privacy and security, then implemented policy updates. In addition, Brittany initiated the development of a three-year technology plan, currently underway, and created a Cyber Incident Response Plan with Primex that will guide library leadership in the event of a cyber incident.

A trustee described why Brittany is so valuable to the library "...frankly she is a spectacular director. I love how she leads by example and no request is ever considered too small or too big."

NHLTA board member Ann Xavier presented Brittany with her well-deserved award during a luncheon organized by the Moultonborough trustees on October 8, 2025.

New Durham is a small town (c. 2800) with a small library that serves the town well

Above right: Caitlin Frost with the New Durham library trustees.

Below: The award ceremony outside the library.



despite its size. This is due in large part to **Caitlin Frost**, who has served as the New Durham library director for four years. Caitlin's previous experience has been in education; New Durham is her first library job! She earned her MLS from Louisiana State University in May 2024.

The New Durham trustees describe Caitlin as being "voracious" when it comes to grants. In her four years as director, she has brought in an impressive \$118,000 in grant money. Caitlin has used grants to supplement the library's book

budget through a Dollar General Literacy Foundation Youth Literacy Grant, a CLiF Rural Library Grant, and a YouthWell New Hampshire Grant which enables the library to create a "Healing Library" of books intended for children and young adults with mental health issues. Other grants have enabled upgrading the children's room, a Whole Kids Garden Grant to install an edible community garden at the library, and summer concerts – thanks to a NH State Arts Council Arts for Community Engagement



grant. Most recently, she obtained a \$10,000 ALA Libraries Transforming Communities Grant and a \$15,000 ARSL 2025 Sustainable & Resilient New England Libraries Grant to improve the circulation desk and front area for all patrons.

In addition, Caitlin has built a staff of employees whose different strengths are essential for library development. She has also advocated for better pay (closer to a living wage) and better work hours (summer Saturdays off for two months) for her employees. She collaborates during staff meetings, asking how her staff thinks the library programs are going, and looks for improvements she can make at the library. The trustees feel that her focus on a strong staff culture builds a better work environment which helps the library thrive.

On October 28, in conjunction with the ribbon-cutting for the new entrance to the library, NHLTA board member Katrinka Pellecchia presented Caitlin with her award in front of an enthusiastic crowd of library patrons, trustees, town officials and family members (in addition to their own children, Caitlin and her husband are foster parents).

Approximately 25 library supporters in Chesterfield gathered on October 23 to celebrate the **Friends of the Chesterfield Library** as NHLTA board member Cathy Harvey presented them with the **Sue Palmatier Award for Outstanding Support by a “Friends of the Library” Group**. This honor recognizes Friends organizations that demonstrate exceptional dedication, sustained collaboration, and lasting community impact.

Around twenty-five people attended the ceremony, held in honor of a group whose contributions have shaped the life of the Chesterfield Library for decades. Cathy spoke about the significance of the award and why the Friends of the Chesterfield Library stood out among nominees, highlighting the breadth of programming support, fundraising and volunteerism that the Friends have offered the library year after year. “The award recognizes the Friends who go above and beyond in service to their library and community,” Harvey explained. “The Friends of the Chesterfield Library certainly meet that standard.”

The Friends’ efforts are visible throughout the library’s calendar of events and services. The



Friends founded a Spice Club which meets (and tastes) monthly; they fund access to Kanopy, a movie and educational streaming service; support the annual summer reading program and the BBQ dinner that kicks it off; they help make the spring egg hunt an anticipated annual event; they purchased musical sculptures for the library’s Children’s Garden, and pay for the landscaping, lawn mowing, and upkeep of this dynamic, exploratory space. In addition to financial support, the Friends are known for their hands-on assistance – organizing, setting up and breaking down community events whenever needed.

Library Director Clai Lasher-Sommers praises the Friends for their unwavering commitment, noting that the group has never failed to support the library’s initiatives. “The Friends never say no,” she quipped. During the celebration, each member of the Friends group was invited to speak, reflecting on their history of involvement with the group and the pride they feel in serving as ambassadors for the Chesterfield Library.

The Chesterfield Friends have a long history of supporting the library – more than 30 years ago they played a major role in helping secure funding to build a new library structure, ensuring that the building matched the town’s historic stone architecture. Their continued presence and passion demonstrate how a dedicated community can enrich a library in lasting and meaningful ways.

Members of the Friends of the Chesterfield Library celebrate their award, from left: Denise Buckley, Jay Gaudry, Donna Dumont, Leda Stanley-Fidrych, Fran Shippee.

NHLTA Fall Regional Gatherings

Minot-Sleeper Library Regional Trustee Gathering, Bristol, NH

On September 9, 43 trustees and library directors gathered at the Minot-Sleeper Library in Bristol, NH. Trustee and NHLTA board member Sue Nieman welcomed the attendees and thanked the Friends of Minot-Sleeper, the trustees and Library Director Patty Hayward for their help in planning the event. Rosemary D'Arcy, former Trustee Chair and former NHLTA board member facilitated.



Above: Minot-Sleeper Library, Bristol.

During a lively, two-hour discussion the following topics were discussed. First up was **Policy Development**, even though some trustees admitted to “policy phobia.” Concerns were shared about Artificial Intelligence (AI) – trustees felt that it was difficult to create an AI policy since the field is changing so rapidly. There was a suggestion of using ChatGPT to proofread minutes and perhaps if library directors were trained in AI, they could train other members of the staff.

Legislative Update. Attendees discussed HB 273 – relative to a parent’s access to their minor child’s library records, saying that there were issues developing a policy where the town and school library are the same. It was felt that having family library cards could place the responsibility on the family, not the library. HB 488 was also mentioned. This bill states that no person can hold two elected town positions at the same time. (At this time, it

is unlikely to affect library trustees, but the bill is in the early stages and could be amended.) It was recommended that trustees learn who their legislators are, and contact them regularly with concerns. Regarding patron challenges, a variety of books and library displays had been targeted.

Friends Groups and Fundraising were discussed. There was discussion of how to start a Friends group (needs to be a 501c3 organization) as well as the differences between trustees and Friends. While the town usually owns the library building itself, the trustees are responsible for its maintenance and operation. The town approves the library budget; the trustees determine how each line item is spent. Fundraising, however, is usually done by a foundation or the Friends group, which raises money for various library programs. Trustees can be members of the Friends group, but should not serve on the Friends board or have a vote, due to conflicts of interest.

Attendees shared some successful fundraising ideas such as Book and Author Luncheons, Election Day Bake Sales, Basket Raffles, signing up for the state’s various casino programs and holding book sales. Sales by donation were more successful than selling books at a fixed price or selling books by the bag. It was recommended that Friends check their liability insurance.

Lastly, **Personnel/Hiring issues** were discussed. Small, rural libraries are at a disadvantage when attracting qualified candidates because of the low salaries. The idea of sharing a director was mentioned. It was suggested that trustees establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the town that library employees will have the same benefits as town employees. When discussing offering a Library of Things, it was mentioned that smaller libraries often lack the space to store items.

Friends of the Library Gathering, Hooksett

On Saturday, September 27, 45 Friends of the Library (FOL) and library trustees gathered at the Hooksett Public Library for a discussion moderated by NHLTA board members Jeanne Palleiko and Tammy Hooker.

Fundraising proved to be a lively, diverse topic. As one might guess, book sales are a mainstay even though as one attendee stated: “half the donations



Left: A lively discussion during the Friends Gathering in Hooksett.

are junk!” The group agreed that doing sales by donation brought in more money than pricing books. Selling books by the bag works. Several libraries mentioned working with companies that place recycling bins at the library; for example, the Wadleigh Library in Milford earns \$200-300 a month. Since so few people pay with cash these days, a couple of libraries mentioned they felt they had lost sales because they didn’t offer payment by Venmo or something similar. This led to a discussion of Venmo, which some said can be confusing to set up. Stripe and Square were also mentioned.

Other fundraising ideas mentioned: Plant sales (Barrington’s annual sale has raised \$5000 in the past); partnering with local restaurants for a percentage of sales; charity gambling, although there is a long waiting list, the group needs to be a 501c3 organization and the treasurer needs to pass a background check; photos with Santa and the Easter Bunny (Hooksett) by donation; the Chesley Library in Northwood had author Rebecca Rule speak – she did not charge, the suggested donation was \$10 and they made \$1000; the Hampstead Library maintains a thrift shop which brings in \$25,000 a year; Claremont does a pie sale before Thanksgiving; several libraries in the Seacoast area have benefited from The Fabulous Find’s program of donating to non-profits; having an Amazon ‘Wish List’ is helpful; and Dunbar sent an appeal letter and brochure to previous donors and raised \$13,000. The general feeling about sending a mailer to everyone in town was that it may not be worth the expense.

The next topic was how to recruit Friends. Suggestions included attending toddler story times

at the library in order to meet parents and offering child care at library events. One library noted that having a library thrift shop can bring in families.

Concerning the role that the Friends have in the running of the library, it was noted that while library trustees may be members of their Friends group, they cannot be a voting member due to a conflict of interest. For more information, visit www.ala.org/sites/default/files/united/content/The%20Role%20of%20Library%20Trustees.pdf.

The Friends contribute to library programs, movie licenses, Hoopla, museum passes, summer reading, etc. It is common for the FOL to reimburse the library for expenses instead of paying directly to a vendor. This allows the library to account for sources that supplement the library’s budget. Several FOLs mentioned that they offer scholarships as they help draw kids in as volunteers. It was agreed that the Friends need to be upfront so people know where donations are going as donors may prefer their donations to go directly to their library or library-related programs. It is recommended that FOLs should have insurance/general liability policy.

For those that want to continue sharing ideas, Samantha Murch (Elkins Public Library FOL, Canterbury) has set up a private Facebook page: NH Friends’ Collaborative.

Barrington Regional Trustee Gathering

On Saturday, October 25, 2025, nearly 45 library trustees came together at the Barrington Public Library for a discussion moderated by Susan Young Gaudiello, Chair of the Barrington Trustees, and Katrinka Pellecchia, NHLTA board member.

Susan Gaudiello started the meeting showing a 4-minute video highlighting the library building renovation process starting with the building as an urgent care center, through the demolition and reconstruction progression, and ending with the installation of solar panels. Fittingly, the video, compiled by a member of the Friends group and building committee, was set to Beethoven’s Ode to Joy, from his Symphony No. 9. After the video, Barrington Library Trustee Karolina Bodner honored Susan with a bouquet of flowers and special thanks from the trustee board.

Continued on next page

Fall Regional Gatherings *continued from previous page*

Right: Barrington Public Library

Policies. A question was asked about HB 273 and its implications for libraries. The bill, effective 1/1/2026, amends RSA 201-D:11 to give parents and legal guardians the right to access library records related to their minor child's borrowing materials. Katrinka used the opportunity to highlight the new NHLTA website, showing where trustees can find information related to HB 273 and other legislative issues. She also noted that the Manchester City Library has done a lot of work creating policies and forms to meet the needs of HB 273, and that those materials can be found on the website. NHLTA will send out more information about HB 273 on the NHLTA listserv and Facebook.

Policies about AI (artificial intelligence) and censorship were also brought up. A few attendees shared information they heard about challenges facing authors or certain books. But for the most part, the attendees did not have any concerns. One person asked whether any library had adopted an anti-book ban resolution or freedom to read statement. Katrinka encouraged everyone to keep their book challenge forms and policies up to date.

Working with Friends Groups. There was a lively discussion about the relationship between Friends' members and trustees. Katrinka stated that no RSA addresses the relationship. However, it is good practice for trustees not to serve as officers for their Friends group. Barrington indicated that the trustees who attend Friends' meetings abstain from voting on spending money that will benefit the library. Other topics included writing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Friends and the library to clarify the relationship, accepting donations from the Friends group and whether a formal vote is needed by trustees, and the extent of oversight on how the money from the Friends is used. Several libraries shared their experiences with establishing a foundation to help raise funds for capital campaigns and with casinos as source of fundraising for the Friends and foundations (organizations that work with casinos must be 501c3 organizations).

Building Expansion. A few libraries indicated they are going forward with funding for a new library or renovations to an existing building.



Several questions were asked of Barrington about their recent experiences. Wolfeboro recently installed solar panels; their expansion was completed 5-6 years ago. Wakefield, a private library, raised \$7 million for their building, taking out a mortgage to help finance it. Libraries also reported different experiences in closing the library during renovations. Some moved items several times within the building and others closed for short periods of time.

Personnel Management and Hiring. Trustees shared current experiences in recruiting and hiring library directors. Many stated that they are placing more emphasis on a candidate with strong 'people skills' versus traditional library-related education and skills. Several trustees mentioned the importance of having candidates meet with staff and/or explore the library. As usual, the challenges of salary and benefits were discussed as well as the difficulties with recruiting someone from out-of-state because of the high cost of living in the area. Trustees acknowledged that their job is tough; they do not want to micromanage the director yet they need to know what is going on in the library and between staff and director.

The meeting ended with a discussion about allowing staff to work from home. Some indicated that staff often can get more work done, such as prep work and planning, when working away from the library. One library trustee said they allow staff to work from home for a small percentage of time and have included it in the library's policy.

Upcoming Legislation

This legislative session promises to be another busy one for library supporters. The following is a partial list of bills and LSRs to keep an eye on as they move through the legislative process. Bills can be tracked at gc.nh.gov and www.nhmunicipal.org/nhma-bill-tracker-fastdemocracy.

HB1214. This bill allows a municipality's governing body to assume governance of a public library. A municipality may, according to the provisions of RSA 39:3, elect to have the municipality's governing body assume control of the governance of the library. If a municipality's governing body assumes control of the public library, the library trustees shall serve in an advisory role to the governing body.

Sponsor: Rep Kristine Perez

HB1256. Removing the authority of the State Librarian to award scholarships to students attending ALA accredited library graduate schools.

Sponsor: Rep Mike Drago

HB1184. Relative to issuance of no trespass orders on municipal and or school district property. I. Establishes the process for issuing, extending, and appealing no trespass orders for municipal and school properties. II. Establishes procedural safeguards for individuals affected by these orders, including the right to a hearing and appeal.

Sponsor: Rep Juliet Harvey-Bolia

HB1244. Relative to exceptions to the charge of criminal threatening involving responses to trespass and threats of harm. This bill adds an additional exception to when a person shall not have been deemed to commit the offense of criminal threatening to include certain actions in response to a person criminally trespassing that may result in property damage or threat of serious bodily injury or death.

Sponsor: Rep Samuel Farrington

HB1233. This bill modifies the right-to-know law by requiring that the only minutes or decisions withheld from public disclosure are those portions covered by the motion to enter nonpublic session. The bill also adds start times and end times in the list of nonpublic session minutes available under the right-to-know law.

Sponsor: Rep Calvin Beaulier

LSR2401. Increasing the enforcement of the prohibition of DEI in public entities and establishing a right of private action for citizens where the prohibition of DEI in public schools is violated.

Sponsor: Rep Rich Valevanko

LSR3005. Relative to parental consent and age verification for digital application platforms.

Sponsor: Rep Margaret Drye

Initial legislative proposals are called "Legislative Service Requests"(LSR). All LSRs must be finalized and changed into bills by the beginning of January.

Plan Now to Attend!

NHLTA Annual Conference

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

DoubleTree Downtown, Manchester

Workshop topics will include:

- ◆ Trustee basics
- ◆ Legislative tracking & policy advocacy
- ◆ Library RSAs

And much, much more!

Join us as we welcome **Mindy Atwood** as keynote speaker!

Mindy is the Administrator of Library Operations and Assistant State Librarian at the NH State Library. She holds a Master's in Library Science and has more than 12 years of experience as a public library director in New Hampshire. Her "State of the State" presentation will address how state and federal funds are used in NH libraries and how current events are impacting public library services.

SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE.

Application deadline is January 27, 2026.



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

It is legally required for a municipality to raise and appropriate a “sufficient” sum of money to keep the library operational.

Library Budgets

Every year, when budget season rolls around, there tends to be a lot of questions surrounding the library budget. Understandably, this is likely due to the fact that the library trustees and control of the library budget are separate from other departments as stated in RSA 202-A. As a result, there are many common questions that pop up year after year relating to how library trustees create an operating budget, how funds are raised and appropriated for the library at town meeting, and to what extent library budgets can be amended or reduced. This article will address some of the most common questions.

Q. Who prepares the library budget?

Under RSA 202-A:11, the statute gives the library trustees the power and authority to, “Prepare an annual budget indicating what support and maintenance of the free public library will be required out of public funds for submission to the appropriate agency of the municipality.” Therefore, it is the trustees who come up with the proposed budget to be submitted. Now, who they submit their proposed budget to depends on how your town is structured. If your municipality has an official budget committee under RSA Chapter 32, the trustees could submit their budget directly to the budget committee for consideration. If there is no official budget committee, then the proposal would go to the Select Board.

Q. Can the Select Board de-fund the library?

Yes and no. Remember, just like any other department, the library’s proposed budget can still be modified by the Select Board or official budget committee. This means that the budget request presented by the trustees could be reduced by the appropriate entity before it is presented to the town meeting for a vote. However, there are certain limitations. RSA 202-A:4 states as follows: “Any city or town having a public library shall annually raise and appropriate a sum of money sufficient to provide and maintain adequate public

library service therein or to supplement funds otherwise provided.” Based on the language of this statute, it is legally required for a municipality to raise and appropriate a “sufficient” sum of money to keep the library operational. What is “sufficient” is not defined and is up for debate. What it does mean, however, is that the town could not offer \$0, as that would not meet any definition of the word sufficient. This would also protect the library against other extreme reductions in proposed appropriations. However, there will come a point where one could reasonably argue that a proposed reduction in the library’s budget still provides the library with enough funds to operate, and at that point a dissatisfied board of library trustees would either need to reach a compromise with the Select Board (or budget committee) or seek judicial intervention.

Q. Can the town meeting reduce the amount appropriated to the library?

Well, that is the million-dollar question (especially if you are a lawyer). The answer is that it depends, and it depends on several different circumstances. First, it depends on how the library budget was presented to the voters, either as a separate warrant article, or as a line within the town’s overall operating budget. Second, it depends on how much the town is seeking to reduce the appropriation and the manner in which the motion is made.

Let’s start with the easier scenario, the library budget being presented as a separate warrant article. This creates a much cleaner set of circumstances. Separate warrant articles can be amended at town meeting, just like the operating budget. If the library’s proposed budget was presented as a separate warrant article, someone at town meeting could stand up and move to amend that proposed appropriation. In this instance, RSA 202-A:4 would still apply. Remember the statute does not say, “The Select Board must provide sufficient funds”, it says “Any city or town”. This wording suggests that the responsibility for funding the

library falls on the voters as well. Therefore, while the voters could still reduce a proposed appropriation by a reasonable amount, they could not zero out the library budget, nor reduce it below our previously discussed “sufficient” threshold. Ultimately, the final call on this question may come down to the moderator’s decision regarding how large a reduction they are willing to allow.

Now for the harder question. Any voter may move to amend a proposed operating budget. This motion may seek to amend the overall, bottom line of the budget, or it may be targeted at a specific line in the budget. Normally, if someone moved to amend a specific line in the budget, as long as they didn’t zero out that entire line (triggering the no means no rule), the Select Board would treat this as a reduction to the overall bottom line of the budget. This is because the Select Board has the authority to move funds around throughout the year within the budget, from line to line, as long as the “no means no” rule wasn’t triggered. This authority does not extend, however, to the library budget. RSA 202-A:11 states that the library trustees have the authority to “expend all moneys raised and appropriated by the town or city for library purposes and shall direct that such moneys be paid over by the town or city treasurer pursuant to a payment schedule as agreed to by the library trustees and the selectmen or city council.” Therefore, whatever number remains in the library’s line of the operating budget is what must be provided. So, what happens if the voters move to amend the specific line of the operating budget related to the

library? In this instance I think we are right back in the same situation as stated above where the amendment must still provide the library with a sufficient amount of funds to operate. The moderator will need to keep this in mind before allowing any large reduction to the library’s budget line within the operating budget.

Q. How does the library account for donations they may receive throughout the year?

A Donations are considered unanticipated revenue and operate outside of the general operating budget. These funds are accepted under the authority granted to the library by the town meeting in RSA 202-A:4-c. However, remember that RSA 202-A:4 says: “Any city or town having a public library shall annually raise and appropriate a sum of money sufficient to provide and maintain adequate public library service therein **or to supplement funds otherwise provided.**” Therefore, these donations, to the extent that they have accumulated within a trust fund or other accounts available to the trustees, may be used to offset future budget appropriations and would be used as part of your analysis of what constitutes a “sufficient” budget. It is important to remember to account for these funds to the extent that they are available when you are creating your budget proposal. You are not required to rely on future donations that you may or may not receive throughout the year.

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