

Bedford Free Public Library
Library Trustee Minutes
Tuesday, October 14, 2025, 7:00 PM
Hybrid Meeting

In attendance: Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Padma Choudry, Rachel Field, Renae Nichols, Emily Prince (minutes)

Other attendees: Jaclyn Powers, Library Director; Alyssa Staples, Assistant Director, Elizabeth Seibert, Bedford Citizen

Call to Order: Padma Choudry called the meeting to order at 7:14 pm

Public Comments: None

Secretary's Report

Trustees reviewed the September 9, 2025, meeting minutes. A single, non-substantive change was made. Renae Nichols moved to accept the amended meeting minutes; Gyasi Burks-Abbott seconded. The amended meeting minutes were approved. Vote: 5-0-0.

Director's Report

Jaclyn Powers provided an update on the painting and Audio Visual (AV) projects. The lobby painting was recently completed. The next painting project will include the hallways heading to the children's room, fiction and non-fiction areas. The AV project cost came in less than budget. Anticipated installation date is January 2026, before the Dan Breen series begins.

Bedford Day was a huge success. Jaclyn and Alyssa met many community members and received approximately 50 completed surveys.

The new administrative assistant, Erin Galloway, started on October 14, 2025. Jaclyn and Alyssa worked with her in Wakefield and look forward to working together in Bedford. Welcome, Erin!

Jaclyn is collaborating with the high school about how to support students while the library position is vacant. An active search is underway for a high school librarian.

Expenditure Report : FY2026 budget is at 29%, which is on target for the first quarter of the fiscal year. It was noted that the computer hardware and software line is fully expended, and the rest of the year will need to be paid out of state aid. This line item is historically underfunded and should be increased in the next fiscal year.

Finance Committee's budget guideline for FY2027 has not yet been received. As an exercise, the Finance Director asked town departments to model the impact of a 5% budget cut. The anticipated cost of living adjustment ("COLA") for FY2027 is 2.5% v. 4% in FY2026. Jaclyn anticipates \$55,000 budget shortfall this year and would like to request approximately \$67,000 above the COLA.

Jaclyn and Alyssa are developing a timeline for replacing and upgrading the computers. It was acknowledged that computer replacement will come out of state aid. There may be grants available.

Rachel Fields moved to approve the Director's Report; Emily Prince seconded. The Director's Report was approved. Vote: 5-0-0.

Unfinished Business

Strategic Plan update: Library staff completed their SORE exercise on October 8, 2025. The first advisory committee meeting is on October 21, 2025. The community and youth survey questions will be developed in the next few weeks.

Select Board update re: proposed charter and bylaw change: The proposed changes to give the Town Manager authority to hire and fire the Library Director have been rolled back because Town Counsel issued an opinion that the Town Manager already has the hiring and firing authority. This is a reinterpretation of the existing charter and inconsistent with historical practice. The Board of Trustees would need to propose an amendment to the existing town charter in order to have hiring and firing authority. Deliberations occurred and the Trustees agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair will speak to counterparts on similarly situated boards and try to arrange a meeting with Town Counsel to understand the rationale for their position.

Action Items:

- Padma and Emily to contact the Board of Health, Planning Board and School Committee to discuss Town Counsel's interpretation of the existing charter and bylaws to help inform next steps.
- Padma and Emily to contact Town Manager, Matt Hanson, to discuss counsel's interpretation and paths forward.

Solicitation, Posting, Distributing Meeting Policies

Solicitation policy: There was general discussion of the solicitation policy. Jackie clarified that tutoring services provided in the library did not violate the solicitation policy. The Board recommended clarifying tutoring services so that there is no confusion in the future. Jaclyn will draft and present a tutoring policy at a future meeting.

Renae moved to accept the new solicitations policy; Gyasi seconded. Motion passed. Vote: 5-0-0.

Bulletin board policy: There was general discussion of the bulletin board posting policy, which also includes distributed materials that are left in the library. The current policy does not allow for profit businesses to post events on the library bulletin board. There was consensus that the Board would like to broaden the policy to include free, cultural, community events. Jackie will revise the draft policy and present to the Trustees at the December meeting.

Honoring library service: to be discussed at a future meeting.

Interim Trustee vacancy: There was general discussion regarding filling the vacant seat. It was acknowledged that past perspective and experience could be helpful during strategic planning. Members of the Board will contact former Trustees and other individuals who may be interested in the position. Ideally, an interim Trustee would be appointed prior to the November strategic planning meeting.

Jackie clarified that the November 18, 2025 meeting will be short and recommended a consent agenda as the Board will participate in the SORE strategic planning session.

Rachel moved to adjourn; Renae seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm. Vote: 5-0-0.