

**Bedford Free Public Library
Library Trustees Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 9, 2025
7:00 PM**

In Person/Zoom

Join the Zoom Webinar:

Webinar link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81639242953>

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

Other attendees: Jaclyn Powers, Library Director; Alyssa Staple, Assistant Director; Dot Bergin, Bedford Citizen.

Call to Order: Padma Choudry called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Public Comments: None

Secretary's Report from November 19, 2025

No changes or corrections were offered. Renae Nichols moved to approve the meeting minutes as submitted; Gyasi Burks-Abbott seconded. Motion passed. Vote: 6-0-0.

Director's Report

Jaclyn Powers highlighted several items in the Director's Report and noted that several topics would be addressed later under Unfinished Business.

Elevator Project

The elevator contract was recently awarded to Embry Elevator. The total cost is approximately \$78,000, consistent with expectations, and will be paid for by a reserve fund transfer. The project should be completed by April 2026. Due to anticipated accessibility issues, tax assistance services will be provided in the reference room. Jaclyn Powers will find out if it is more cost effective to replace as it frequently requires repairs.

Staffing Update

The Head of Technical Services resigned and accepted a new position in Belmont. The position has been posted with a revised job description that includes additional IT support responsibilities. Existing staff are currently covering the role. No applications have been received to date, however, the end of year is a challenging time for hiring.

Teen Advisory Group (TAG)

TAG continues to be popular. The police department's new service dog is planning to visit students during TAG Wednesdays.

Lif Books

Jaclyn Powers met with Valerie Arvidson, owner of Lif Books, and discussed potential collaboration on author talks and events.

Update on Town Counsel / Charter Interpretation

Padma Choudry provided a brief update regarding the Select Board's proposed changes to the town charter and bylaws. She clarified that the Board of Trustees can meet with town counsel during office hours if prearranged. It was reported that a second opinion is being sought, but no additional details were available.

The Board discussed the possibility of seeking an independent legal opinion and noted that legal fees could be paid by the Library Corporation. A pro bono firm specializing in municipal law could also be an option.

Trustees requested access to the current Town Counsel opinion for review. Padma Choudry will reach out to Terrence for an update and the Town Manager to request a copy of the second opinion.

It was suggested that the Library Corporation Board meet prior to the next Board of Trustees meeting.

Budget Update

Jaclyn Powers presented the FY2027 budget. She compared Bedford's budget to Wakefield and Weston public library budgets, highlighting staffing, hours open, square footage and salaries. Based on the information presented, it was clear that Bedford operates with fewer staff and stays open significantly longer during the week than Weston, Wakefield and other neighboring communities. Jaclyn explained that the library has a skeleton staff and cannot absorb absences. There are very few employees to rely on or fill in for vacations or illness. This limits staff's ability to pursue professional development opportunities, community outreach and attend meetings. Five staff members must be available to work, otherwise the building must close. The library cannot expand programming considering the staffing shortage. Custodial staffing levels and scheduling gaps were also discussed.

Proposed Reduction in Library Hours:

Jaclyn Powers proposed reducing weekly hours from 69 to 60 beginning July 1, 2026. In order to maintain its certification, a Massachusetts public library in our population bracket (10,000-14,999) must be open 40 hours a week. The proposal was based on library traffic and occupancy data which showed consistently low usage during certain early morning and late evening hours, particularly on Mondays. It was acknowledged that remote work has changed patron routines.

The rationale for the proposed reduction included: increasing staff overlap; reducing vulnerability to absences, thereby minimizing closures; making the budget more predictable.

The proposed hours beginning FY2027 were as follows:

Monday: 9:30 am – 6 pm

Tuesday – Thursday: 9:30 am – 8 pm

Friday: 9:30 am – 6 pm

Saturday: 9:30 am – 5 pm

Sunday: 1 pm – 5 pm

Trustees discussed the importance of maintaining Sunday hours for accessibility and expressed support for keeping the library open seven days per week. Alternative hour configurations and the value of consistent daily schedules were discussed.

It was clarified that the proposed changes would not reduce staff pay. Savings would primarily come from custodial scheduling adjustments and operational efficiencies rather than reductions in staff positions or hours.

Technology and Operating Budget Needs

Jaclyn Powers reported that most of the computers in the building need to be replaced. She investigated grants to cover the cost of new computers, but did not find any viable options. The proposed operating budget increases would support technology upgrades. Jaclyn requested a budget increase of 2.8%, which exceeded the 2.5% town guideline by approximately \$6,000. It was noted that Library Corporation funds could be used to purchase computers, if needed.

Budget Approval Timeline

The budget must be submitted to the Town Manager and Finance Director by December 18, 2025. Jaclyn Powers is presenting the FY2027 budget to the Finance Committee on January 15, 2026.

Rachel Field moved to approve the FY2027 budget as presented; Renae Nichols seconded. FY2027 budget was approved. Vote: 6-0-0.

Action Item: Jaclyn Powers will provide an alternative schedule of reduced hours in January. The Board should vote on the reduced hours proposal in January or February.

Posting/Distributing Materials Policy

The Board discussed the proposed posting and materials distribution policy (attached herein). A couple of suggestions were made that will be incorporated into the policy and presented in January.

Action Item: Jaclyn Powers will update the policy with the changes discussed and present to the Board at the January meeting.

Security Camera Policy

Jaclyn Powers reported that the library recently installed 13 security cameras that were purchased with state aid. The cameras are strategically placed in places where there is no expectation of privacy and will not compromise patrons' reasonable expectations of privacy. Jaclyn Powers explained that this installation prompted a review and update of the security camera policy. The Board discussed the proposed security camera policy (attached herein) and provided comments. Jaclyn Powers will incorporate the comments into a revised version of the policy and present a revised draft in January.

Action Item: Jaclyn Powers will update the policy with the changes discussed and present to the Board at the January meeting.

Adjournment

Renae Nichols moved to adjourn. Emily Prince seconded. Motion passed. Vote: 6-0-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 7:00 pm.