

# NHLTA Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the New Hampshire Library Trustees Association

www.NHLTA.org

## Congratulations to the 2023 NHLTA Award Winners!

As always, NHLTA received a number of impressive nominations. New Hampshire is indeed fortunate to have such fine public libraries, library employees and dedicated volunteers. After lengthy consideration, the NHLTA Board of Directors is happy to announce the following list of award winners for this year. Presentations will be made at local celebrations this fall.

### Library of the Year

Fuller Public Library, Hillsborough

### Library Director of the Year

Susan Sinnott, Madbury Public Library

### Lillian Edelmann Trustee of the Year (tie)

Eula Kozma, Tracy Memorial Library,  
New London

Liz McConnell, Mary E. Bartlett Memorial  
Library, Brentwood

### Sue Palmatier Award for Outstanding Support by a Friends of the Library Group

Friends of the Goffstown Public Library

### Special Library Service Contribution Award

Jeanne Palleiko, Newbury



Fuller Public Library, Hillsborough

### Dorothy M. Little Award

Connie Kirwin, Antrim

## Protect Your Library

Library trustees are authorized to govern the library per RSA 202-A:2, II and RSA 202-A:11, I and to adopt bylaws, rules and regulations.

Protect your library from censorship by adopting the following policies:

- Collection Development
- Materials Selection
- Program Selection
- Library Display
- Bulletin Board
- Request for Reconsideration of Materials or Programs
- Reconsideration Form

Sample policies are available on the NHLTA website: [www.nhlta.org/resourcesmaterials.asp](http://www.nhlta.org/resourcesmaterials.asp).

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# Letter from the President . . .



Marcia McLaughlin  
NHLTA President

## *Fall, 2023*

In late May the NHLTA Board of Directors held a retreat where its Strategic Plan was reviewed and updated to continue its goal of improving NHLTA's engagement and communication with its members while fulfilling its mission to assist trustees to be knowledgeable and effective in order to serve, improve and promote New Hampshire public libraries.

Along with its Strategic Plan, NHLTA's goals and objectives are to develop a more effective body of public library trustees by providing educational opportunities to assist in understanding the responsibilities and duties of the position, to offer a forum for the exchange of information and ideas, to provide current information about library devel-

opments and to advocate for and promote public library services in New Hampshire.

This year to educate and inform trustees, we continue to offer trustee orientations and area gatherings, maintain a presence on Facebook, and provide a way for you to connect with over 1200 other trustees in NH via the NHLTA LISTSERV® – [listserv@NHLTA.org](mailto:listserv@NHLTA.org) – where it is possible to seek answers to your questions and share information. I also encourage you to connect with NHLTA via its website [nhlta.org](http://nhlta.org) where a multitude of information is available at your fingertips to inform and assist you in your trustee duties.

Let each of us strive to be the best trustee we can be by educating and informing ourselves as we serve our libraries and communities.

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

### **Stephanie Hasselbeck**

has served on the Board of Trustees at the Kingston Public Library for five years, currently as the chair. But, in what little spare time she has (her fourth child is due in December), Stephanie shares her voice and love of storytelling with children and adults, through educational and professional music and theater programs. For the past year, she's also been singing with the Timberlane Community Jazz Band. Recent performances include Plaistow's Summer Concerts on the Green (shown at right) and at Concerts in the Courtyard at the Kimball Library in Atkinson.



# The American Library Association: Some Talking Points

By Mindy Atwood, Assistant State Librarian at the NH State Library

I want to thank NHLTA for allowing me the opportunity to continue the great work my predecessor, Lori Fisher, did in highlighting various library-related topics of interest. Before I start, I'd like to briefly introduce myself.

My name is Mindy Atwood and I am the new Assistant State Librarian for New Hampshire. Prior to my work here I was a New Hampshire library director for more than 12 years; first at the Salisbury Free Library in Salisbury and then at the Abbott Library in Sunapee. I'm thrilled to be in my new role and look forward to working with all of you.

With the American Library Association (ALA) in the news, it's possible some of you may be getting questions from the public about the organization. I've included some talking points about the ALA that I hope you will find helpful. Many thanks to Amy Lappin, who is the New Hampshire Library Association representative to ALA, and Denise van Zanten, NHLA past-President, for crafting much of this message.

Established in 1876, the ALA is a non-partisan, non-profit professional organization that supports library and information services to its members. Members consist of libraries, librarians, library workers, library trustees and library supporters.

The American Library Association:

- Is not a governing body and has no authority over the funding and governance of New Hampshire libraries, which are governed by their local board of library trustees;
- Provides information about best practices to its membership;
- Serves all demographics and ideologies in our free democratic society;
- Is governed by a council and executive board elected by the membership, including a representative from the New Hampshire Library Association;
- Supports our country's constitutional First Amendment Rights to free speech, thought and opinion;

- Promotes the Freedom to Read and Library Bill of Rights;
- Publishes professional publications that many of us use including *American Libraries*, *Information Technology and Libraries*, *KnowledgeQuest*, *Public Libraries*, *Reference and User Services Quarterly+* and *Young Adult Library Services*;
- Offers discounts for members on publications, workshops, conferences, webinars (professional development); and
- Creates public relations campaigns that promote library services for all libraries to use.

ALA advocates for federal and state funding for libraries. ALA membership also gives New Hampshire libraries a path to collaborate with libraries and librarians around the country. This is particularly important when there are issues affecting us all. For example, during COVID-19 shutdowns ALA's Chapter Relations Office provided many opportunities for us all to share and learn about ways to continue good customer service with our patrons and ways to assist our colleagues with the unprecedented challenges of a pandemic.

If you or a member of your library community has more questions about the role of ALA as it relates to New Hampshire Libraries, please do not hesitate to reach out to NHLA or the State Library.



Mindy Atwood

The ALA is not a governing body and has no authority over the funding and governance of New Hampshire libraries

## Calendar 2023

**October 23, 10:00 am-2 pm**

### **NHLTA Trustee Orientation Workshop**

NHMA Building, 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord



# Webster Free Public Library Regional Meeting

A lively and comprehensive discussion took place at the Webster Free Public Library Regional Meeting on June 10.

## Topics discussed included:

- **Hiring.** There has been an increase in turnover and job-hopping; the housing shortage has made relocation a challenge and libraries should review their pay scales to make sure they reflect the demands of the job and are competitive.
- **Job Descriptions.** One piece of advice was to include the word “oversee” or “manage” instead of “is responsible for.” Webster uses Management by Objective (MBO) where the director chooses three areas they would like to work on and then (on a set date) give a presentation on what they have accomplished.
- **Policies and Bylaws.** They should be re-

viewed annually and should be reviewed by an attorney. Many libraries’ policies may be found on their websites and also on the NHLTA website.

- **Book Challenging.** Dave Hallenbeck, Amherst Town Library Trustee, attended a book challenge meeting of the Souhegan Cooperative School Board on June 9, 2023 and described how it was organized and smoothly run. To watch the video recording of this meeting go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2g-57WTsBM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2g-57WTsBM). It was recommended that trustee boards do a “test run” role play on a book challenge policy.

The Webster Free Public Library



# NHLTA New Board Member: Cathryn Harvey

Cathy Harvey has lived in Spofford, NH for 35 years; she and her husband raised four boys and are now the proud grandparents of seven grandchildren!

Before her retirement, Cathy taught music for 43 years; public education through the schools and libraries is her highest priority. She served on the local school board. A member of the Chesterfield Public Library Board of Trustees for the past six years, she currently serves as chair.

It was in her role as chair that she became interested in NHLTA as a wonderful source for administrative and legal questions. She found the orientation for new members to be especially helpful.

In addition to being a library trustee, Cathy also serves as

a representative in the NH State Legislature for Cheshire District 6 which includes her hometown;

she is the deputy ranking member of the Fish and Game Committee. She also volunteers as a CASA GAL (Court Appointed Special Advocate Guardian ad Litem). As a CASA GAL it is her job to be the voice of the children in the court system when it becomes necessary for the Division for Children, Youth and Families to be become involved with the family. She says it is one of the most fulfilling jobs that she has ever had.

Cathy welcomes the opportunity to continue to be a strong advocate for public libraries as a new member of the NHLTA board.



As a CASA GAL it is her job to be the voice of the children in the court system . . . . She says it is one of the most fulfilling jobs that she has ever had.



## Library Annual Reports: When are they due? What should they include?

Fortunately, RSA 202-A:12 is very specific regarding the information to be included in the Annual Report. The Board Treasurer typically reports on the first four items; the Library Director and the Board Chair report on the last three including a list of programs, workshops, classes, and any other services such as meeting room usage offered by the library that further the education of the public.

**202-A:12 Annual Reports.** Every library regularly open to the public, or to some portion of the public, with or without limitations, whether its ownership is vested in the town, in a corporation, in an organization or association, or in individuals, shall make a written report to the town or city at the conclusion of each fiscal year of:

- (a) all receipts from whatever sources;
- (b) all expenditures;

- (c) all property in the trustees' care and custody, including a statement and explanation of any unexpended balance of money they may have;
- (d) and any bequests or donations they may have received and are holding on behalf of the town, with such recommendations in reference to the same as they may deem necessary for the town to consider;
- (e) the total number of books and other materials and the number added by gift, purchase and otherwise; the number lost or withdrawn;
- (f) the number of borrowers and readers and a statement of the use of the property of the library in furthering the educational requirements of the municipality and such other information and suggestions as may seem desirable; and
- (g) submit a similar report to the state librarian at such time and on such forms as the commissioner of cultural resources may require.

## Trustee Orientation Workshop – October 23

Who should attend? Newly-elected trustees and any trustee who could benefit from a comprehensive overview of trusteeship, information on library RSAs, trustee job description and library advocacy. This comprehensive overview of trusteeship will provide you with the tools and information you need to be an effective library leader. The workshop will cover the following topics, and there will be time available to answer questions.

- NH Laws Relative to Public Libraries
- Library Trustees – A Job Description
- Establishing Policies for the Library
- Budgets – The Process from Adoption to Management
- Trustees as Employers
- Trustee Meetings and the Right to Know Law
- The Trustee as Library Advocate

**Monday, October 23, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

**NHMA, 25 Triangle Park Drive, Concord**

Bring your own lunch, we'll provide cookies and beverages

Watch for registration information on the NHLTA website, [www.nhlta.org](http://www.nhlta.org).

# NH Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the  
New Hampshire Library Trustees  
Association

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By Natch Greyes,  
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## Sealed Meeting Minutes Procedure Change

Pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, III, minutes of non-public sessions “may be withheld” (commonly called “sealed”) “until, in the opinion of a majority of members, the [reason for withholding the minutes] no longer applies.” The question that naturally arises out of statutory provision is what obligation the public body is under to evaluate whether the reason for withholding the minutes continues to exist.

RSA 91-A:3, III also states that “[m]inutes of meetings in nonpublic session shall be kept” and RSA 33-A:3-a, LXXXI requires that meeting minutes must be kept permanently. Therefore, any sealed minutes must be kept permanently as well. Presumably, if there was a nonpublic session and the minutes were sealed, they should have been kept somewhere. Obviously, if that didn’t happen, that’s a problem, but the only thing that can be done going forward is to ensure that minutes are made and kept.

In the past, the practical reality was that sealed minutes would either be reevaluated upon the receipt of a records request from someone or sealed for a certain amount of time (subject, presumably, to a reevaluation upon the time coming to a close). Yet, RSA 91-A:1 stated that the “purpose of this chapter is to ensure both the greatest possible public access to the actions, discussions and records of all public bodies, and their accountability to the people.” How, then, could the best option be to wait until the public decided that it wanted access for those records to become public? A better practice would be for the government to take proactive steps to ensure that minutes are withheld for only as long as the circumstances leading to their withholding apply.

In 2023, HB 321 was introduced to address the discrepancy between best practice and common practice as the result of a coalition of stakeholders coming together to discuss where the right-to-know law could be improved. In short, HB 321 adds statutory language that tells public bodies to either develop their own process to review minutes or to follow a statutorily created process. The bill,

which was signed by Governor Sununu in August, goes into effect starting October 3.

In developing their own process, public bodies have wide discretion in deciding how to structure their review of sealed minutes; the legislation gives boards complete discretion as to what they want their policy to be. Some may choose to assign one board member the task of reviewing the minutes and making a recommendation, others may choose a subcommittee, still others may choose to review all sealed minutes as a whole committee. Similarly, boards may choose to review all sealed minutes or only some each year. Thus, a board may stagger the review process so that it does not interfere with other board business. Boards may also choose to simply pick a cut-off date many years in the past beyond which they will just vote to unseal the minutes.

In the absence of adopting its own process, a public body must follow the statutorily created process. That statutory process requires a review of sealed minutes “no more than 10 years from the last time the public body voted to prevent the minutes from being subject to public disclosure.” (For those concerned about sealed minutes that were last reviewed more than 10 years from the effective date of the law’s change, the drafters included a provision to ensure that boards have 10 years from the effective date to review those minutes before the 10-year period kicks in.)

Public bodies ought to take advantage of the 10-year grace period and start evaluating what, if any, review process they would like to develop. Once that determination has been made, it is important for boards to follow those processes and teach new board members about the legal requirement to review sealed minutes and the locally adopted process designed to comply with that requirement. Since there will likely be a turnover in board membership in a ten-year period, maintaining an inventory of meetings that had non-public sessions that were sealed is recommended.

While, in most cases, there is no penalty for disclosure of information that could be withheld

“Public bodies have wide discretion in deciding how to structure their review of sealed minutes.”



## Legal Q&A *continued from previous page*

from public disclosure as our law begins by assuming that any information held by the government is subject to disclosure, there are a handful of circumstances where disclosure is not in the best interests of anyone. Private information, such as social security numbers, statutorily protected information, such as whether someone is receiving municipal welfare, and information that, if disclosed, could result in harm to persons or property, such as information about access points to public water systems, ought to continue to be carefully protected from disclosure. The best way to do that is to ensure that future boards need not rush through a review process to protect that type of information from becoming public. Instead, starting now boards can ensure that the citizens of the state of New Hampshire can “know what the government is up to” while also ensuring that information that was rightfully protected from public disclosure and ought to continue to be protected from public disclosure remains protected.

## Library for Dogs



The Lee Public Library recently installed a Doggie Stick Library for those who bring their dogs to walk the nearby trails. Director Hayley Van-Gils repurposed and decorated the kiosk which was installed by the Trails Committee.

## McKay Scholarship Award

NHLTA is pleased to announce that a \$1,000 graduate course scholarship was awarded in May 2023 for the Summer 2023 session to Christina Finemore, Youth Services Librarian and Assistant Director at the Maxfield Public Library in Loudon, NH.

NHLTA is also pleased to announce that two \$1,000 graduate course scholarships were awarded in August 2023 for the Fall 2023 semester to Caitlin Frost of the New Durham Public Library and to Beatrice Couser of the Lebanon Public Libraries.

More scholarships are available in 2024 for New Hampshire public library staff and trustees from the NHLTA's Mildred P. McKay Library Scholarship

Fund. NHLTA Scholarships are awarded for graduate courses (e.g., MLS and MLIS courses, etc.), library conferences (including NHLTA's 2024 Annual Conference) and library workshops.

The deadline for applications for Spring 2024 semester graduate courses is December 1, 2023; two \$1,000 graduate course scholarships will be available. Applications for library conferences and workshops should be submitted approximately one month before the event. Virtual courses, conferences and workshops are also eligible for scholarship awards.

Criteria for scholarship eligibility and a scholarship application can be found on NHLTA's website, [www.nhlta.org](http://www.nhlta.org). Past

McKay scholarship recipients and past no-award applicants may apply again for a scholarship for that next course, conference or workshop.

Mildred P. McKay was New Hampshire State Librarian, 1942 – 1964. NHLTA established the Mildred P. McKay Library Scholarship Fund in 1965 with the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

## Save the Date

### 2024 Spring Conference, June 5, 2024!



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Trustees Association**  
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### MISSION

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

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