

NHLTA Library Trustee

The Newsletter of the New Hampshire Library Trustees Association

www.NHLTA.org

Congratulations to the 2021 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.



Derry Public Library

Library of the Year

Derry Public Library

Library Director of the Year

Cynthia Jewett, James A. Tuttle Library, Antrim

Lillian Edelman Trustee of the Year

Ron Brown, Wilton Public and Gregg Free Library, Wilton

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

Friends of Tucker Free Library, Henniker

Special Library Service Contribution Award

James McFarlin, Meredith Public Library

Dorothy M. Little Award

Conrad V. Moses, East Kingston

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Further Strategies for Library Staff Retention During the Pandemic

By Lara Berry, NHLTA Board of Directors; Director, Langdon Library, Newington

New Hampshire libraries continue to grapple with increases in employee attrition and turnover caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. As September began there were 53 open positions listed on the NH Library Jobline. Previously, the average monthly number of listings was five to ten. Now, that number has spiked to an unprecedented monthly average of 20 to 30. While staffing challenges are not unique to our profession, we may be harder hit due to being female-dominated.

According to the Achievers Workforce Institute's 2021 Employee Engagement and Retention report,

the top two reasons for job seeking are better compensation/benefits, and work-life balance. Though the majority of NH libraries offer vacation and holiday pay, most staff are part-time and therefore do not receive health benefits. In addition, library hours frequently require regular weekend and evening shifts. Pay rates vary widely in our state, but, according to the 2020 NH Public Library Statistics, over one third of NH public library positions are paid less than \$15 an hour. Starting pay for many open service positions in other NH industries is \$15; our neighboring state of Vermont is even offering up to \$7,500 in relocation expenses for people who move there for work as part of its Worker Relocation Grant Program. These are

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Marcia McLaughlin
NHLTA President

Fall 2021

As we head into fall the library world continues to face challenges brought on by the Covid pandemic. I recently read an NPR article regarding the need for masking in schools when they reopen/reopened for the fall semester. It stated that “schools are more than just places where students learn how to read and write – they’re communities.” The article suggested that schools should “hit the reset button” this fall. I feel that many New Hampshire libraries, which are often the centerpiece of their communities, have hit the reset button on the policies and practices which were put in place as libraries reopened after the early months of Covid closures, when vaccinations became available and the hopeful feeling of “getting over the hump” prevailed. Many libraries have now “reset” as the incidence of Covid infections in unvaccinated and vaccinated alike continues to increase. Directors and trustees have faced the difficult decision to suggest or require masks for all who enter the library, but it has been out of a sense of our responsibility to protect the health and well-being of our patrons and families, our staff, our community and one another. We will get through this, but masking and social distancing are our best lines of defense for now, and won’t last forever.

The NHLTA Toolbox. By now one copy of the 2021 edition of the NHLTA Trustee Manual has

been delivered to all 233 libraries in the state. The accompanying letter instructed the directors to place the manual in the binder previously supplied by NHLTA and remove the 2016 edition. The manual is also available on the NHLTA website. I participated in the revision of the manual, reading it through in its entirety, page by page. That task was the most educational undertaking of my seven years as a trustee. I have long been a cheerleader for trustees spending the time to become familiar with the manual and I am now advocating that each of you, no matter how long you have served as a trustee, take the time to read through the manual as it is “the guide for (NH) trustees.” It will be time well spent.

Another tool in our trustee arsenal is the NHLTA LISTSERV®. It is a valuable source for information available to trustee members of NHLTA. It is possible to post questions and/or have a discussion which will generate answers and feedback. You may subscribe by accessing the NHLTA website and then scroll down to “GET CONNECTED” on the opening page.

In a previous newsletter one of my predecessors pointed out that the NHLTA manages to accomplish a lot on a small budget. Not only that, but the work of NHLTA itself is accomplished by a small number of people – those who serve on the board as well as a small number of others who serve on its various committees. We are always looking for individuals who are willing to roll up their sleeves and invest some time to advance our mission to “assist trustees to be knowledgeable and effective in order to serve, improve and promote New Hampshire public libraries.” There are numerous opportunities to become involved. You can email any board member for information. We’d love to hear from you!

On a personal note, I offer my warm congratulations to the 2021 NHLTA Award winners and to those who were nominated – all would have been worthy recipients. They will be highlighted in the Winter 2021-2022 newsletter.

My best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcia". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a personal style.



Thanks to their ARPA grant, the **Lee Public Library** was able to support their summer reading program with “Trail Tales,” a series of story walks. The titles chosen were all based on walking in the woods/forests/trees. The library parking lot offers access to several trails out behind the library. The town’s conservation commission trails group assisted in designing and installing the Trail Tales. In addition, the Lee Library has made available several backpacks with a variety of themes such as science and nature, math skills, my senses, my body, life on the farm, and health and wellness. The trails group helped select materials for the nature-themed backpacks.

Staff Retention Strategies

continued from page one

strong incentives for library workers to leave both our profession and our state. This year, more than ever, trustees need to advocate during budget season, and be proactive when educating their communities. Libraries do not immediately come to mind when NH staffing shortages are mentioned, but they should. Encouraging communities to budget for libraries to recruit new employees with sign-on bonuses and relocation reimbursements, and to retain employees with pay raises, annual bonuses and other inducements should be part of trustees' commitment to sustain our state's libraries.

Library trustees should also take a look at workforce culture. According to <https://allwork.space>, two-thirds of voluntary departures are for preventable reasons. Recommendations to improve retention include career development opportunities, recognition, asking for feedback (and acting on it) and providing flexibility. Budgeting for professional development programs and meetings via NHLTA, NHLA and regional library cooperatives, as well as allotting paid time to volunteer for these organizations, allows employees to grow and advance their careers without leaving their job. If your library is not already providing time and funding for employees to participate in these opportunities, start now.

Nominating an employee for one of the awards offered each year by NHLTA and NHLA is a no-cost way for trustees, directors or co-workers to acknowledge the value of high performing library staff. When it comes to feedback, asking for and acting on it may be more easily accomplished by directors than trustees, and may require a rethinking of communication patterns, such as scheduling regular check-ins with one designated member of the board, who can then communicate with the board as a whole to discuss needed changes.

These times demand flexibility, but the ability to provide it is limited. Staff shortages become a vicious cycle, in which available staff cover additional shifts, leading to burnout – another major driver in staff turnover. In libraries this most likely falls upon directors, who are often the only salaried employee and can work more hours without affecting the budget's bottom line. Trustees at the Jaffrey Public Library have told the library director that she has the freedom to change the level of service, including closing the library, during staff shortages. It might also be a good time to look at the busiest times of the week and eliminate any consistently slow open hours, especially evenings or weekends.

Strengthening company culture in libraries may be also more difficult now. One of the librarians who spoke to me in confidence about retention: "Besides wages, the biggest reason why people leave libraries is managers. And this can be due to lack of freedom, lack of resources, lack of professional growth and, most importantly, lack of compassion for being human." This sentiment was echoed by another: "Your staff are human beings. Remember they are people with lives and

families. You can't serve the public if your staff can't take care of their own needs." The intermittent contact that trustees have with directors, either in meetings or as a library patron, may foster a lack of awareness of the challenges staff face as human beings. Staff members need directors to check in with them and provide support for days off and recognition for successes. Directors who don't receive support from their trustees will be more prone toward burnout. As the strain of the pandemic continues, towns that invest in library employees will be rewarded with fewer positions to fill, and more eager candidates available to fill them. Boards who make this happen benefit their community as well as our state, giving library staff opportunities to thrive in NH rather than move to another state. As one of our state's librarians said: "Your people are everything. They matter... You'll find that the more you value your employees, the more your organization has to gain. Stand up for them!"

Direct comments and responses to: l.berry@nhlta.org. Please include permission whether you may be quoted in future articles, anonymously or otherwise.



The Barrington Public Library used their ARPA funds to purchase a canopy, a new PA system and a Meeting Owl. The canopy area was later spruced up with gravel purchased with donated funds. These improvements enabled them to be able to offer programming to a larger audience.

Members of the Friends group and the local garden club also volunteered their time to spruce up other areas of their outdoor space, making it truly inviting.

The Cook Memorial Library in Tamworth used their ARPA funds to purchase items to make their outdoor space more welcoming. In addition, they added a summer program for 9- to 12-year-olds, a tabletop role-playing game, AdventureQuest. This program was led by Kevin Mahoney, Ed.D, an educator who developed this game over 25 years ago to teach kids to work together as a team and to develop communication and problem-solving skills while playing a game similar to Dungeons and Dragons.

“Greenland’s Living Room”: The Weeks Library Expansion

By Susan Bartlett

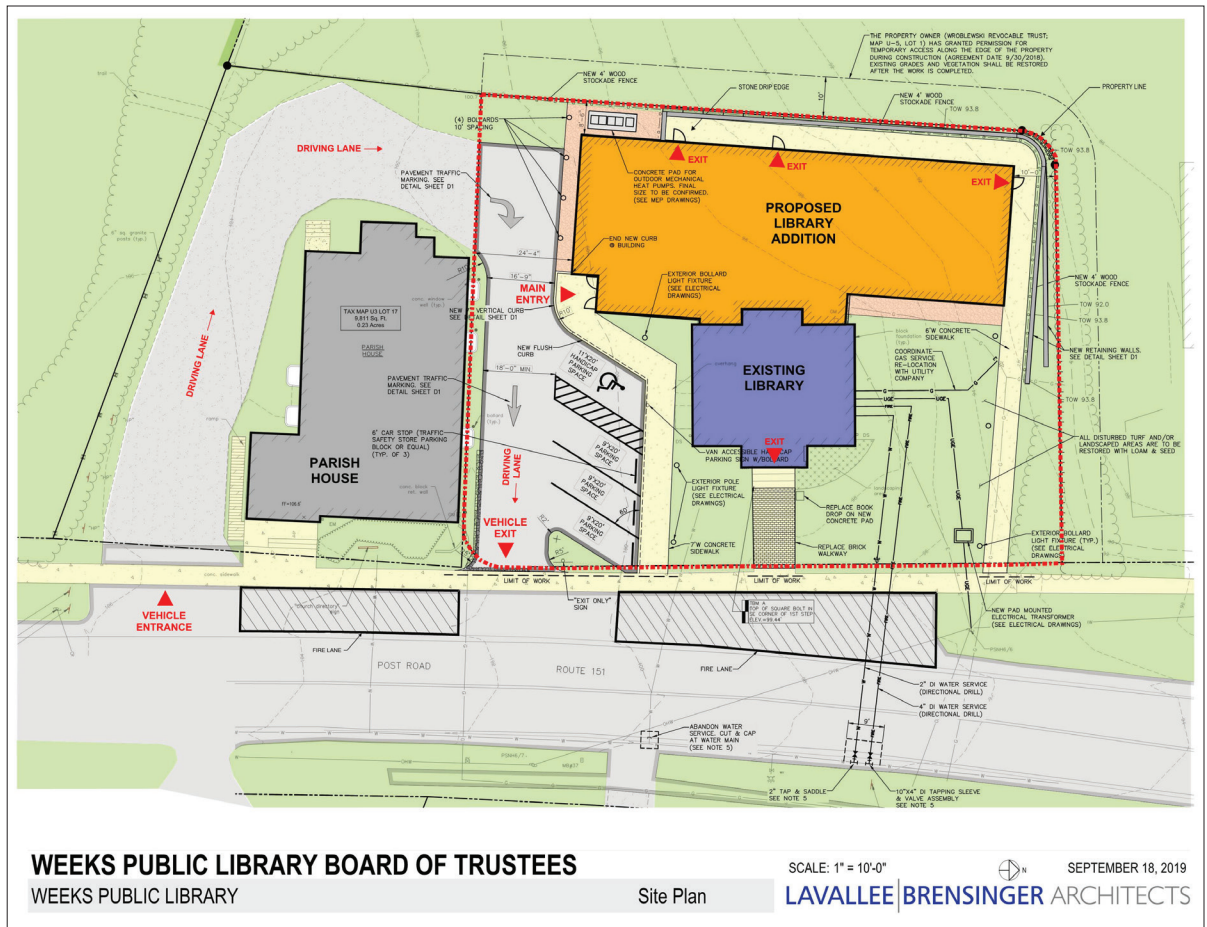
Like many of our original small-town libraries in New Hampshire, Greenland’s Weeks Public Library, which was originally built in 1898, was running out of space. “We were exploding out of that tiny building,” says Marcia McLaughlin, chair of the Weeks’ board of trustees. Cardboard boxes overflowing with new books were piled high behind the director’s desk. Children sat knee-to-knee on the floor between the stacks during after-school programs. There was little room to squeeze in the new computer desks, and no public meeting space for more than six people. Increased demand for services proved the little library’s importance to the town, and gave urgency to the call for expansion.

Outgrowing a library originally built for a rural community of several hundred residents is not surprising. Especially since Greenland has seen a surge in population, increasing from 3,549 residents in 2010, to 4,120 by 2019 according to the Census

Bureau, making it the community with the highest percentage of growth in the state. It would seem obvious that increases in usage should lead to an expansion of services, but naysayers argue that the digital universe provides the modern extension of library “space,” reducing the need for bricks and mortar, picture books and stacks. Isn’t internet access to information and literature enough? Trends show the demand for library use held steady throughout the last two decades and is increasing in the 2020s. According to the Pew Research Center, in addition to checking out books, patrons now seek computer and Internet use, help with digital skills, and meeting space for book discussions, community groups, and presentations. With the expansion of library space, our appreciation for various literacies is broadening: shared recipes, patterns for quilts, take home science and crafting kits, 3D printing and game nights are all part of our modern library experience. Digital networks



ABOVE: The original library building. RIGHT: Site plan showing the location of the new addition





ABOVE: Weeks Public Library following completion of its addition. BELOW RIGHT: The list of donors greets patrons at the library's new entrance.

provide access; the 21st century library provides contact, fulfilling the very human need for face-to-face connection.

But there may be other tensions in a small town that make an expansion controversial. In March 2018, Greenland voters approved a **\$2,900,000** bond. There was a recount, which affirmed the vote and increased the yes votes by 12. There were other delays, including legal work concerning the ownership of the lot; in October 2019, the NH Superior Court confirmed that the Town of Greenland owned the lot upon which the library sits.

Other hurdles included a citizens' petition warrant article to "rescind the expansion and renovation of Weeks Public Library," a warrant article to reallocate \$500,000 of library capital reserve funds for a new soccer field in town, and another proposal that would move the library out of its old building and into the new municipal complex. The old library was either "fine the way it was," or the lot was too small. Space again, was the main issue.

Greenland's citizens rallied. From 2018 to 2021, voters turned out to

defeat the warrant articles that threatened the library's future and to support raising funds for the expansion. Finally, in 2021, there was another citizens' petition warrant article – this time, to approve \$198,000 for the library project, to come from the town's undesignated fund balance. This was to help cover the \$540,000 shortfall created by the delays caused by the opponents of the project. Greenland's Friends of the Weeks Public Library also came to the rescue, raising \$455,000 toward acquiring furnishings for the addition. "The people were the real heroes of this story," says Marcia, "the anonymous voters, and those working behind the scenes who could marshal library supporters when needed. It really was a community effort."

The library building project finally broke ground in April 2020. The addition is situated behind and connected to the historic original building, which has been renovated and is now known as "Greenland's Living Room." Once furniture arrives in October, it will provide space for patrons to work, gather or read a

newspaper in front of the historic fireplace which was been converted to a fully functioning gas fireplace.

The Weeks Library re-opened August 30, 2021. A slideshow detailing the progress of the expansion may be found at <https://weekslibrary.org/library-expansion-slideshow/>.





By Natch Greyes,
Municipal Services
Counsel,
NH Municipal
Association (NHMA)

Building a New Library? You May Have Some Questions

There are few things more exciting than building a new library, at least for those of us who love libraries. Yet the process can be fraught with complications. Not only are there a million-and-one decisions that need to be made on everything from architectural design to finishing touches, it's also probably the biggest project that the town has undertaken in a while. So it's understandable that the governing body of the town would be as interested in the project as the library trustees. Thanks to RSA 202-A:6, which gives the library trustees power over all property of the town relating to the library, this can lead to confusion and conflict.

Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to the conflicts that arise. The basic principle of municipal property law is that a town holds all real estate in the name of the town, not in the name of any of its boards, commissions or trustees (RSA 31:3). Based on that rule, it can be difficult to determine which board is the one that controls the situation. RSA 41:11-a, for example, confers on the select board the authority to manage all real property owned by the town and to regulate its use, unless delegated to other public officers, such as the library trustees pursuant to RSA 202-A:6.

Despite the language of RSA 202-A:11 that states that “[a] separate budget request shall be submitted [by the library trustees] for new construction...,” it's entirely feasible that the select board would choose to author a warrant article to raise and appropriate such sums necessary to build a new building, build it, then turn over some or all of it to the library trustees as a new library. How that works within the provisions of RSA chapter 202-A that seem to say that the library trustees would be the ones to propose a new library and oversee its construction has not yet been resolved by the courts.

However, there might be some answers hidden elsewhere in the statutes. RSA 33:3-a states that “the proceeds of any sale of bonds or notes shall be used only for the purposes for which the loan was incurred.” Meanwhile, RSA 202-A:11, III says that the library trustees are the ones who “[e]xpend all moneys raised and appropriated by the town or city for library purposes[.]” Therefore, it would seem

that if bonding is necessary to build the building and there is some indication that the bond is for a new library, then it would be the trustees who would control the construction project.

In addition, RSA 202-A:4-c provides that, at town meeting, the legislative body may grant the library trustees the authority to accept and expend gifts/donations without approval of the town meeting. Utilizing that power, the library trustees could solicit donations or have a capital campaign to raise money in connection with a particular project that the library is looking to do, such as constructing a new library. It would be almost nonsensical to say that the board that raises the money and has authority to spend that money independent of other authorities in town would not be able to oversee the project itself.

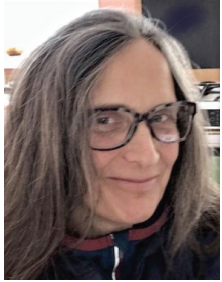
There are many other instances where, while it would appear that the select board should be the one to take action, it is actually the library trustees who take the action. For example, libraries may apply for grants without the permission or knowledge of their town's select board. And, of course, anyone who has consulted the Charitable Trusts Unit of the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office about EINs knows that that Unit advises that libraries use their town's EIN when possible. In practice, that means that library trustees are acting for the town (rather than as a subdivision of the town) when an EIN is necessary, such as when applying for funds from an outside source to build a new library.

All of that aside, it's important to remember that large projects, such as new libraries, are major projects in which townspeople and town officials are interested in having input. That input can be invaluable where town land is dedicated to a new library (or an addition), and it's always a good idea for the library trustees and select board to have clear, written understandings of what is – and what is not – library property, where that property may be in contention. That may solve future headaches, such as when it comes time to repave the parking lot that serves the library. It may also help identify and resolve some of those thorny issues surrounding authority over new projects.

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Meet the New NHLTA Board Members

A long-time resident of New Hampshire, **Susan Bartlett** has taught high school and college literature and composition, written scripts for local theater, edited a small literary journal, and worked in adult literacy education. From 2008 to 2013,



she collaborated with Rubia, Inc. to create the “Whole Cloth” oral history project, bringing the stories of Burundian refugee women to libraries and museums around

the state. Most recently, she has worked with New Hampshire Humanities, directing the Connections Adult Literacy program: distributing books and facilitating book discussions for adult learners in English language classes, and parents in the state prisons.

Susan is a member of the Tuttle Library [Antrim] Board of Trustees, where she serves as secretary. She lives on a family farm with rescued donkeys, a u-pick blueberry patch, as well as a writer’s retreat cabin. Susan is especially interested in following up on the NHLTA 2021 spring conference theme, *Embrace Change!* by exploring ways in which we can encourage diversifying library board membership around the state.

Rosemary D’Arcy has more than 40 years of experience in for-profit, government, and not-for-profit organizations. She has worked with Fortune 500 companies, academic institutions and national, state and local agencies to bring her knowledge of leadership effectiveness and executive development to bear. She currently serves as Chair of the Minot-Sleeper Library Board of Trustees in Bristol, NH, where she has served on the board since 2013.



A graduate of Merrimack College (BA) and the University of Rhode Island (MLS), Rosemary has also completed Management of Lifelong Learning course work at Harvard University’s School of Education. She retired from Citizens Bank in 2010 as Senior Vice President, Head of Leadership and Executive Development and has had her own executive coaching and organizational development consulting business, D’Arcy & Associates, since 1999.

Rosemary and her husband moved to Bristol full time in 2010 where they have owned a home since 1981. She is an avid reader, golfer and an enthusiastic supporter of the library and its staff.

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POSTMASTER:
Return Service Requested



The **Jaffrey Public Library** used its ARPA grant for a Library Book Bike. Once the staff took safety training, they began taking the bike to the weekly Farmer’s Market which allowed them to reach new patrons. The Farmer’s Market visits will continue through September; visits to senior centers, homebound patrons, preschools, and the local grade school will carry through October or until snow flies, whichever comes sooner.

Youth Services Librarian Andrea Connolly on her way to the Farmer’s Market.



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