

CONCORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, March 9, 2026, 6:00 PM
Library Auditorium

In Attendance: Chris Casco; Stephanie Simard; Jeremy Clemans; Jeanie West; Ceillie Clark-Keane; Norm Kinsler; Charles O'Leary; Roy Geiser; Todd Fabian, Director
Not present: Sarah Fortin

1. N. Kinsler called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. The board welcomed new member Roy Geiser who introduced himself. The other members and T. Fabian also gave introductions.
2. The first agenda item was to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2/9/26. By motion of J. Clemans, seconded by J. West and adopted by unanimous vote.
3. The next item was public comment. There was no public comment.
4. Library Director's Report and Monthly Update:

He began by updating on legislation impacting libraries to include HB 1184 related to trespass orders on public property. If it were to pass it would cause difficulty in issuing no trespass orders given the process it would require to remove an individual for infractions of library rules. He explained that the current and more streamlined process allows for a person to be trespassed for 1 year. This only occurs when there is serious misconduct. The formal process is not always used, and in less serious cases, a verbal warning may be issued. C. O'Leary gave some background information concerning issues where people need to be removed from public buildings for misconduct and how it is addressed. For example, some individuals are only allowed in by appointment and police are available in the buildings to monitor them. He stated that as to state buildings, there is a reluctance to ban citizens. Rather, restrictions are imposed as to

time, place and manner for entry and use of the building. The effective date of HB 1184, should it pass and become law, is 60 days after passage.

He next gave highlights of grants awarded to the library, and the amount of approximately \$18,000 for various projects to benefit the library. For example, a button maker, memory bags, museum passes, seeds, bike racks, database launches, and a new ADA compliant computer will be purchased with funds from the foundation.

The AI policy draft was discussed. Based on the ongoing spread and evolution of AI, it is likely that review and further amendments to the policy will likely need to be done every 6 months. The Board and Director worked to revise and finalize the draft, and the new AI Library Policy entitled Artificial Intelligence with Regard to Collection Development was voted on by motion of C. Casco, seconded by N. Kinsler, and was approved by unanimous vote.

5. CPL Foundation Update:

Author Sy Montgomery was selected for the Concord Reads program which has launched. She is a New Hampshire resident and gave a discounted appearance rate. The Foundation chair resigned unexpectedly and the group is discussing in house changes as a result as to what their leadership will be moving forward. A new administrative person may be hired to ensure day to day operations are done as they need to be done. Another thing under review is to hire a paid bookkeeper rather than have a volunteer do that work. There may be some restructuring done. The foundation members, however, remain committed to supporting the library despite changes.

6. New Business- None

7. Old Business:

N. Kinsler summarized various emails that he received related to the fines for overdue materials issue raised by citizens during public comment at the last trustee meeting. T. Fabian indicated that one of the individuals who provided public comment at our last meeting had first raised the issue with him individually, and when he explained the process necessary before a change could be made to eliminate fines, the issue was brought to the trustees. C. Casco reminded the board that an individual Board member has no legal authority to make changes on their own as any decision must be made by the board at a public meeting. So responding to emails and any discussions outside of public meetings must be done with caution and citizens reminded of this fact when having any non-meeting communications. The board discussed fines in detail and at length. The discussion is summarized as follows: J. Clemans does not necessarily like fines and thinks that children should not be fined or restricted from withdrawing materials from CPL. Other board members agreed. He would like more data on the issue (e.g., what percentage of fines emanated from withdrawals related to children's use of the library). T. Fabian stated that fines for children's titles are 40 percent of the overall fine amount. N. Kinsler posed whether using fines to get people to return books works or not; does it lead to increased returns, or does it lead to less usage of the library by children and families? This theme was echoed throughout the Board's discussion. Members sought more information from the Director regarding whether fines result in more items being returned, and he hopes to provide further data at a later meeting. T. Fabian said that amnesty programs like food for fines have been used in the past and have been successful. S. Simard wonders about whether fines are worth it

and if they prevent people from using the library and if the money doesn't go directly to the library, she is less interested in having fines. It was noted that funds from library fines do not go to the library according to City Manager Aspell. There is, however, a budget impact in that the amount raised in fines is ear marked for the library budget by the city council even if the exact funds do not go directly to the library. S. Simard is open to the conversation to eliminate fines. She noted that the staff has authority to give amnesty and asked whether the board could draft a policy for standards and rules for fine waivers. T. Fabian noted that the library staff intends to not have overdue fines bar access and they work with patrons to ensure such. The fines and fees are part of a city ordinance so the board may not eliminate them on its own as noted at the last meeting. A recommendation could be made to city council by the board, however, pertaining to addressing fines and waivers, proposing changes, or eliminating them altogether. Even though the fine money may not go directly to the library, the library is given funding based on the amount of fines which is essentially a credit of that amount in the library budget which may be lost if fines are eliminated. C. Casko stated that the board should be cautious about making recommendations to the city council and only do so in cases where there is an urgent need. The only instance during his tenure on the board when it has done so related to recommending maintaining a library facility in Penacook, something about which the board felt strongly. Since he has been on the board, last month was the first time that he recalls having heard from patrons that fees are problematic. J. Clemans recalls the issue having been discussed previously at some point. C. Casko commented that additional data is needed before any recommendation to eliminate fines is made to the council. The 2019 American Library

Association (ALS) policy submitted at the last meeting indicated that a study on eliminating fines would be done and a report given back to the ALS on the impact. Therefore, C. Casco suggested learning what that data showed about the impact of eliminating fines. Another data source is the experience of other comparable NH libraries that have eliminated fees and whether that has been helpful, and what alternative systems they may have implemented in order to ensure the return of items without using fines. C. Casco also stated that if fines are eliminated, they need to be replaced with another system to gain compliance for item return, otherwise, checkout deadlines may not be followed and are essentially meaningless. He suggested that a subcommittee could be formed to study the issue in more detail before deciding whether to make a recommendation. He agreed with J. Clemans that he does not think fines should be assessed against children. Making the issue more narrow to address the fines related to children's items may be preferable as eliminating all fines may be more broad than is necessary. S. Simard agreed that a subcommittee may be a good idea to study the issue and do so more quickly than by only discussing the issue at upcoming monthly meetings. N. Kinsler asked if a more immediate way to address the payment methods issue of only cash or check being accepted to pay fines could be implemented and T. Fabian said that there are issues with the vendor in altering the payment method to allow credit card payments. This may be cost prohibitive with the current vendor. N. Kinsler also wondered whether offering a grace period to patrons after notifying them by email that items were overdue might be a useful strategy. J. Clemans stated that if we can learn the data as to how much of the fines owed were for children's items, there may be a solution of people in the community paying the fines to ensure no child is ever

prevented from using the library due to fines owed. Other sanctions than not allowing a patron to use the library if they owe fines should be considered. C. O'Leary said that his perception of the board's position is that the members don't want to fine children or any patrons. The purpose of fines is not to punish, it is to ensure the timely return of items. At the same time, it also offers the opportunity to teach children about personal responsibility, and is an opportunity to reinforce for patrons the need to be considerate of others by returning materials that others want. There is an aspect of teaching responsibility, and the fine system may do that. J. Clemans suggested that more data is needed to determine whether fines achieve teaching personal responsibility. Some board members expressed during the discussion that patrons who owe fees feel discouraged from using the library and in fact don't go to the library because they owe fine money. There seemed to be consensus not to use fines to keep patrons away from the library and that equity of access to the library is a concern. In addition, the requirement of having to go to the library to inquire about amnesty or a fine payment plan is problematic as not all patrons know this, and may not do so due to embarrassment and/or being unable to pay. There was consensus that this issue warrants further study. A subcommittee will be formed to answer some of the questions and collect data and make a recommendation to the full board. J. Clemans moved to create a subcommittee, the Fine Review Committee, seconded by C. Clark-Keane and adopted by unanimous vote. The subcommittee membership will be J. Clemans, C. Clark-Keane, S. Simard, N. Kinsler and R. Geiser although all board members may attend. The subcommittee will make a recommendation to the full board. The first

subcommittee meeting will be at the library on 3/23/26 at 6:00 p.m. It is a public meeting, and therefore, will be posted and open to the public.

8. Next Meeting- April 6, 2026

9. Adjournment- By motion N Kinsler, seconded by C. Clark-Keane, the meeting concluded by unanimous vote at 7:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Chris Casco, Secretary

Date: March 10, 2026