

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. Casco 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. Casco 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

Recent Fines Information at CPL

February 2026

In April 2020 the library closed its physical presence due to the pandemic. At that point we paused the collection agency contract and froze all fines and fees for patrons. CPL was one of the first libraries to reopen with a curbside model only six weeks after we closed.

From April 2020 to September 2020 we offered curbside service for item pickups on both Green St and Prince St.

We reopened the building to the public October 2020, while adhering to social distancing and health guidelines from local, state and federal officials. By June 2021 Governor Sununu ended the executive order on the pandemic. We continued to keep fines/fees/collection agency all frozen.

In January 2022, we had 301 overdue titles. By May 2023 overdue items had ballooned to 1,275 overdue titles (324% increase), and we decided that we had to make a change as perhaps patrons got too comfortable with long overdue items. We still decided not to reinstitute a collection agency and have no plans to bring that back, however, we did turn fines back on with a grace period. The items quickly returned, wait times dropped, and a current snapshot for February 2026, only 218 items are overdue titles.

Over the last twenty years the revenue from library fines has gradually decreased for several reasons: we have tried to be more empathetic with patrons on fines so they don't lose library service, we are more accommodating in waiving fines due to "life happens" obstacles, we have changed ILS companies over time which required record purging for accuracy, and we have held numerous food for fine amnesty events for the human services food pantry. Fine revenue at the library peaked around 2009 at \$50,0000 and in 2025 was closer to \$15,0000.

Staff are instructed to try and work with patrons so that they are not denied library service, if at all possible. Patrons who express concern at paying fines (regardless of socioeconomic status which we do not ask or track) may be offered, for example, a long-term payment plan, so they can keep accessing library services. On the flip side there will always be a percentage of patrons that are habitually late with returns and a policy change will not improve their behavior. Only a handful of patrons in the last few years have expressed concern over fines at CPL. I've heard more about fines in the past few months than I have heard in many years, and part of that is definitely the trend for libraries to go "fine free."

If the library ends up Fine-free there is also the unknown response by City Council to losing \$15,000 in city revenue to the budget, we do not know how that will be offset, if at all.

For many years we have tried to work with our ILS vendor to add a credit card payment option but we have been unhappy with the results, including the fees passed onto patrons. Due to the amount of underprivileged and their children who may have library cards, and who do not have credit cards, we would still need to keep cash payment available for the foreseeable future even if we add a credit card payment option.

As a response to the library fines topic, there are several options on fines moving forward that the Concord Public Library Trustees may want to consider:

- A. Make no changes, no recommendation to City Council.
- B. Eliminate fines on all juvenile titles only, keep replacement fees for juvenile titles LOT/museum passes, etc....
- C. Eliminate fines for all, keep replacement fees for all titles/LOT/museum passes, etc...

Concord Public Library

Artificial Intelligence with regards to Collection Development

The library is committed to maintaining a collection curated by the library staff that reflects human creativity, knowledge, and expertise. As such, the library does not deliberately purchase, acquire, or accept donations of books that are knowingly generated, authored, or written by artificial intelligence. This policy ensures that our collection upholds quality, authenticity, and intellectual integrity for our community.

AI-assisted content is permitted in the CPL collection subject to the same requirements and criteria as wholly human authored works. AI-assisted content is work that is written by a human but for which the author used AI tools to edit, refine, or error-check the work.

Due to the lack of publishing standards regarding the disclosure of artificially created materials, AI generated content may inadvertently be added to the collection. These materials will be tagged in the catalog record. However, there are also digital resources that the library offers that are not staff curated and therefore may contain AI generated material.

To be inserted into:

Materials Selection Policy