

MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Pound Ridge Library District
Location: 271 Westchester Ave, Pound Ridge, NY
October 22, 2025

Anne Benefico called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. She welcomed staff, trustees, and guests on Zoom.

Present: Robert Bellhouse, Anne Benefico, Lexie Gallo-Cook, Richard Esman, Marvin Markowitz, Christina Sassi-Lehner, Valerie Shiba-Silverman, Jenna Wise

Absent: Richard Levan (excused absence)

A quorum was present throughout the meeting.

Ms. Gallo-Cook made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 15, 2025, meeting; Ms. Wise seconded; all in favor.

The next Board of Trustees Meeting will take place at the library on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, at 7:30 PM.

Michael Lewis presented financials.

Financials – The Profit and Loss Statement and the Balance Sheet prepared by Mr. Michael Lewis were included in the Google Drive folder.

Treasurer's Report – Mr. Clark prepared the report and it was included in the trustees' folders. Prior to the meeting, on October 20, he transferred \$50,000.00 from Savings to Checking to cover the warrants.

Chase Bank

Checking \$81,249.37

Savings \$249,748.71

3-month CD \$379,906.88 (3.41% - maturing November 29, 2025)

3-month CD \$200,000 (3.58% - maturing October 28, 2025)

Key Bank

Checking \$5,000

Savings \$241,853.89

WFA

Woods Capital \$295,544.59 (cash 4,020.64)

Woods Maintenance \$289,479.86 (cash 9,447.59)

General Maintenance \$234,280.01 (cash 2,444.92)

Cash available \$15,913.15

Mr. Bellhouse made a motion to approve the warrants in the amount of \$30,368.90; Ms. Gallo-Cook seconded; all in favor.

The Trustees selected their respective committee appointments:

Standing Committees:

Finance Committee will be chaired by Bob Bellhouse. Committee members: Anne Benefico, Lexi Gallo-Cook and Valerie Shiba-Silverman.

Governance and Legal Committee will be chaired by Richard Levan. Committee members: Lexi Gallo-Cook.

Public Relations Committee will be chaired by Jenna Wise. Committee members: Christina Sassi-Lehner.

Program Development Committee will be chaired by Valerie Shiba-Silverman. Committee members: Christina Sassi-Lehner.

Human Resources Committee will be chaired by Anne Benefico. Committee members: Richard Esman and Lexi Gallo-Cook.

Long Range Planning Committee will be chaired by Bob Bellhouse. Committee members Richard Esman and Marvin Markowitz.

Ad Hoc Committees:

Parking Improvement Committee will be chaired by Richard Esman. Committee members: Anne Benefico and Bob Bellhouse.

Technology Committee will be chaired by Jenna Wise. Committee members: Lexi Gallo-Cook.

Officer nominations:

Ms. Benefico opened the floor to any Trustee interested in serving as **President**. Mr. Esman expressed his interest in the position. Ms. Benefico read a letter from Mr. Levan in support of Mr. Esman's candidacy. No other Trustees expressed interest in the role.

Ms. Benefico invited nominations for the position of **Vice President**. Ms. Gallo-Cook nominated Ms. Wise and spoke in support of her candidacy. Mr. Esman nominated Ms. Benefico and offered his endorsement. Ms. Benefico deferred to Ms. Wise for the role of Vice President and expressed her willingness to continue serving as **Secretary**. In turn, Ms. Wise deferred to Ms. Benefico, noting that Ms. Benefico had only one year left to serve and Ms. Wise had two additional years of eligibility to serve. Ms. Benefico opened the floor to any other Trustees interested in serving as Secretary; there were no additional candidates. Ms. Benefico then invited nominations for the position of **Treasurer**. Mr. Bellhouse opined that it would be logical for the Chair of the Finance Committee to serve as Treasurer. Mr. Esman spoke in support of Mr. Bellhouse's candidacy.

Trustees cast their ballots, which were collected by Ms. Coulter. The results were to be announced at the conclusion of the meeting.

Committee Updates

Finance – no update.

Technology – Ms. Wise. Ms. Wise, as the newly appointed Chair of the Committee, initiated discussion on the continued use of Zoom for Board meetings. She reviewed the history of Zoom use, noting that it began during the pandemic, and observed that the use of microphones has proven cumbersome. Ms. Benefico suggested that meetings could continue to be recorded without being broadcast via Zoom. Ms. Gallo-Cook stated that, as someone who travels frequently for business, she finds the Zoom option convenient but noted that phoning in is equally effective. Ms. Gallo-Cook then called for public remarks, particularly from the Pound Ridge Library Foundation. Ms. Sonia Friedman, representing the Foundation, expressed that Foundation members value the option to attend meetings virtually. Ms. Benefico inquired of Ms. Coulter whether other library boards offer meetings via Zoom or record them. Ms. Coulter reported that very few libraries do so. The Board discussed potential technological alternatives. Ms. Coulter noted that Zoom could still be used for recording purposes without broadcasting, though this would still require the use of microphones. She also suggested exploring the speech-to-text feature in Microsoft Word, which could produce both a video and a transcript of the meeting. Mr. Bellhouse recommended that the Board defer any vote on the matter and test the speech-to-text recording option at the next meeting. The Board also discussed the appropriate use of artificial intelligence tools. Ms. Gallo-Cook clarified that AI would be used only as a *transcription aid*, not for the *creation* of minutes. The Board agreed to table the vote and to test the speech-to-text recording process at the next meeting. Mr. Esman wondered whether having different applications running simultaneously would be advantageous. Ms. Wise expressed her preference to use prompts for AI.

Program Development - no update.

Human Resources – Ms. Benefico. Ms. Benefico reported that staff member Morgan Annar-Brady requested to be transitioned back to part-time as of October 8, after serving full-time since September 2. Ms. Gallo-Cook requested that the Board continue the discussion in Executive Session. Ms. Benefico called for an Executive Session at the end of the general meeting.

Governance/Legal – Ms. Gallo-Cook. Ms. Gallo-Cook explained to the new Trustees that a question was raised about the bylaws and the way they were entered into when they were codified into statute and how they have been amended since. The committee is looking into "squaring up", so if there are any future amendments to the bylaws, they would be in accordance with proper procedures. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

Public Relations – no update.

Program Development – no update.

Long Range Planning – no update.

Parking Improvement – no update.

Director's Report – Ms. Coulter

- **Harvest Festival.** The library's table at the event was very successful. 18 residents signed up for new library cards. Promotional give-a-ways included new magnets with the new library operating hours. The children's craft table featured make-your-own autumn themed bookmarks and beaded jewelry which was extremely popular. Ms. Coulter thanked Mr. Markowitz, Ms. Sassi Lehner, Ms. Benefico, and the library's Facilities Manager Bonnie Schwartz, for representing the Board at the event.
- **Halloween Walk.** Ms. Coulter invited the Trustees to join the staff at a table in front of the Village Green in Scotts Corner on Friday, October 31 from 4 – 6 pm for the Halloween Walk, to distribute candy and promotional materials including branded sensory balls which were extremely popular the previous year.
- **The Great Pound Ridge Bookworm Hunt.** Ms. Coulter reported on the success of the Bookworm Scavenger Hunt, which took place from mid-September through mid-October, an event which was designed to highlight the library's expanded hours of operation and its new seven-day-a-week schedule.

- **Trustee Education.** Ms. Coulter reminded trustees of the two-hour education requirement and explained the procedure to the new Trustees.
- **Technology.** Ms. Coulter reviewed the library's technological achievements over the past year and noted that the website lags behind other areas of technological infrastructure. Ms. Coulter noted that best practices recommend updating websites every five to seven years and that the current site is six years old. She recommended that the Board reconsider partnering with Library Market as the library's website provider. Ms. Coulter outlined the features and benefits of the Library Market platform, noting that the library's new events calendar—also a Library Market product—has been highly successful for both patrons and staff. She reviewed the costs: a full-service build at \$24,900 or a collaborative build at \$15,000, which she recommended. The latter option allows staff to upload content, requires no technical expertise, and provides identical results while saving nearly \$10,000. Annual hosting, maintenance, and support are \$2,000. A \$15,000 grant from Senator Shelley Mayer, expected at year's end, could offset this expense through reallocation of funds within the technology budget. Ms. Gallo-Cook inquired whether the February 2025 proposal in the Board's Google Drive was the same as previously presented. Ms. Coulter confirmed it was and that pricing remained valid. In response to further inquiry, Ms. Coulter clarified that the prior Board had not rejected the previously presented proposal, but instead the ad hoc Website Committee recommended conducting a community survey to gather community opinion of the current website. She offered to share the survey results and reported that informal community feedback before and after the launch of the Library Market events calendar was also valuable to the discussion. When asked by Ms. Gallo-Cook about the principal benefits of a new website, Ms. Coulter cited improved usability, discoverability, and overall patron experience. She noted that several Westchester libraries—including Scarsdale, New Rochelle, Chappaqua, Croton, Bedford Hills, and Yonkers—use Library Market. Mr. Bellhouse requested an estimate of staff time required to upload content and maintain the website. Ms. Coulter stated that, given the current challenges of maintaining WordPress, time spent on maintenance would likely decrease and that staff member Morgan Annar-Brady could assist with archival uploads. The Board requested a cost comparison between the current vendor, Cyberoptik, and Library Market. Ms. Coulter explained that fees for frequent fixes and upgrades from Cyberoptik have effectively doubled annual costs compared to Library Market's rates. Ms. Wise suggested that the matter be referred to the Technology Committee and reiterated her concern that a new website may prompt a broader rebranding effort which could be costly. Ms. Coulter reported that Library Market offers logo design services for \$3,500. Ms. Coulter offered to arrange a demonstration for the Technology Committee or the full Board. Ms. Gallo-Cook expressed interest in meeting with the company's owner and wanted to seek board alignment on what the Board hopes to accomplish with a website upgrade prior to that meeting. Ms. Coulter agreed to facilitate the meeting. Ms. Gallo-Cook recommended that further discussion be tabled.

Wood Memorial: Ms. Benefico explained for the new trustees, our obligation to visit the wood Memorial at Kensico Cemetery. She visited on October 8 and took pictures which are in the Trustee Google Drive.

Facilities Management: the monthly report is located in the Google Drive and is submitted monthly.

9:20 PM New Business - none

9:20 PM Public Remarks – none

Election results:

President: Richard Esman

Vice President: Jenna Wise

Treasurer: Bob Bellhouse

Secretary: Anne Benefico

9:22 PM Public Meeting Adjourned

9:27 pm Executive Session

9:47 pm Executive Session Adjourned