

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

Prior to the meeting, a holiday gathering was held for the staff, trustees and guests.

President Richard Esman called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM. He thanked Library Director Jennifer Coulter for organizing the party.

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

**Absent:** Marvin Markowitz (absence excused)

A quorum was present throughout the meeting.

*Mr. Levan made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 17, 2025, meeting; Ms. Bellhouse seconded; all in favor.*

Mr. Esman initiated a discussion about scheduling our meetings for a consistent day each month, such as the third Tuesday. Other boards in our town have a pre-set calendar and Mr. Esman felt that perhaps we should consider doing the same. Mr. Bellhouse agreed and likes the idea of a set date, while other trustees favor the flexibility to select an agreed upon date each month for the following month. Mr. Bellhouse then suggested scheduling our meetings two months out and the trustees agreed to try this. *Mr. Bellhouse made a motion to set board meetings two months in advance; Ms. Benefico seconded; all in favor with the exception of Mr. Levan. Motion passed.*

**The next two meetings are as follows: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 7:30 PM & Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 7:30 PM.**

Mr. Bellhouse presented the Treasurer's Report. The 2-page report includes the assets for all 3 accounts going back 3 months. As of December 22, 2025, holdings are:

**Chase Bank:**

Checking 31,740.97; Savings 224,757.18

CD 383,139.89

CD 201,778.67

Chase Totals: 841,416.71

**Key Bank:**

Checking 5,000; Savings 172,084.06

Key Bank Total: 177,084.06

**Westchester Financial Advisors:**

Wood General 234,807.09

Wood Capital 296,167.37

Wood Maintenance 289,593.90

WFA Total: 820,586.36

**Financials** – The Profit and Loss Statement and the Balance Sheet prepared by Mr. Michael Lewis were included in the Google Drive folder and the trustees' folders. Total Assets as of November 30, 2025 were: 1,801,724.76

**Buildings & Grounds – Bonnie Schwartz**

A copy of the Building and Grounds Report was included in the shared drive. Ms. Schwartz highlighted the following:

- The antique school desk in the main entranceway was disrupting the automatic door sensors. Desk was removed and problem was fixed.
- The A/C work in the Non-Fiction Room has been delayed due to weather. Work will resume and be completed by end of December by White Plains HVAC, weather permitting as access to the roof is needed.
- Some electrical issues in the cottage have been addressed.
- Overhead lighting fixtures in Non-Fiction Room will most likely need replacing as new LED lighting has replaced incandescent lighting. Ms. Coulter is researching this and getting quotes for new fixtures.
- Pound Ridge Highway Department has been very responsive in salting our driveway and walkway due to black ice.
- Ms. Schwartz mentioned that the flat roof could need replacement in 2-5 years. The roof was replaced in 2014. Ms. Coulter said that roof replacement is eligible for a NYS Construction grant when the time comes.

- Ms. Schwartz recognized three members of the Pound Ridge Community for their attentiveness, reliability, and excellent work when the library has called upon them: Fred Albano from Albano's Appliance; Geoff Dodge, Arborist; and Vinnie Duffield, Pound Ridge Highway Department.

**WARRANTS:** *Ms. Benefico made a motion to approve the warrants in the amount of \$39,658.01; Mr. Levan seconded; all in favor.*

### **Committee Updates**

**Finance** - Mr. Bellhouse is meeting with the Finance Committee and is in the process of creating a "Financial Management Handbook" which will serve as a guide and instruction manual for financial record keeping and assist future Board Treasurers in understanding and fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities.

**Technology** – Ms. Wise will be meeting with the Technology Committee and Ms. Coulter to discuss a new website.

**Governance/Legal:** Mr. Levan called for an Executive Session.

**Public Relations** - Ms. Wise said there have been complaints about food in the Sensory Room and would like the Board to consider a Food Policy. Concerns regarding eating in the Sensory Room include the management of food allergies, maintaining proper cleanliness, and the risk of attracting pests or insects. Ms. Coulter prefers not to restrict food in the Sensory Room and she is diligent about keeping it clean and sanitized and removing trash. Ms. Coulter meets with the Pest Control Company once a month and so far, there are no problems. The Board decided that putting up some signage will help.

**Program Development** - Ms. Shiba-Silverman reported that the Junior Librarian program is in place but off to a slow start due to end of year being a busy time with December holidays and school vacation, but she will focus on ramping it up in the new year when the kids are back in school. Ms. Shiba-Silverman complimented the library's handling of the sudden school closure early Friday morning December 19, due to a power outage. Buses were re-routed to the library and Ms. Coulter opened early and welcomed the students and teachers, who were able to enjoy Music with Kurt Program. The library has a generator and serves as one of the town's designated Warming and Cooling Centers. Police and Firefighters were on premises to assist with security and safety.

**Human Resources** – Ms. Benefico announced that the library accepted the resignation of Morgan Annar-Brady, a part-time clerk. Also, Ms. Benefico will be meeting with the HR Committee to complete performance evaluations of full-time staff.

**Long Range Planning** – Mr. Bellhouse. Nothing new to report.

**Parking Improvement** – Mr. Esman met twice with Jim Perry, Building Inspector, to discuss the potential overflow parking lot, encompassing approx. 20 spaces. Ms. Coulter has also been in touch with the Planning Board. In order for the library to present informally at a Planning Board Meeting (Phase 1), we would need to engage the services of Insite Engineering (Richard Williams) and a Land Use Attorney (Gerri Tortorella). The costs for Phase 1, Informal Planning Board Appearance, would be \$20,500.00 - \$26,750.00. Phase 1 includes preparation, drawings, appearances and a Code Conforming Worksheet. A Cost Breakdown was included in the Trustees' Meeting Folder outlining all 3 Phases. Phase 2, Formal Planning Board Review, \$35,750.00 - \$45,750.00; and Phase 3 Construction, approx. \$90,000.00. Discussion followed with the primary point being the that library has already spent a lot of money meeting with engineering firms and legal teams and has gone in front of the Planning Board before. This time, however, it's a smaller project, with different drawings and plans. It was decided that the Legal Committee would reach out to Ms. Tortorella to assess what has changed from a legal standpoint since the last time the library appeared in front of the Town Board, and discuss likelihood of success this time around. They will report back at the January meeting.

### **Director's Report – Jennifer Coulter**

- The library has initiated a new policy of a 45-minute pause between programs to ease congestion in the parking lot.
- The Baby Music program, Rock 'n Rascalz has been moved from Thursday mornings at 9:30 am to Monday mornings at 10:15 am. Since the Library will not have to open early on Thursdays to accommodate this program, Thursday will now be a 10:00 am start conforming to the rest of the week.
- 3 new Book Clubs have been added: Reads and Reels: Book and Film Club; Sustainability Book and Lecture Series (co-sponsored by the Pound Ridge Sustainability Committee) and The Kids Book Clubs.
- Thank you to David and Ellen Ruttenberg for a \$500.00 donation to the library.
- The Frick Museum has been added to our Museum Pass program.
- Mindful Moments, a new wellness program for expecting mothers will be led by former trustee, Selena Shen. The pilot program has been scheduled for 3 dates: Jan 12; Feb 9; and March 9.
- Connect Northern Westchester Magazine has awarded the Pound Ridge Library "Best Community Space For Kids 2026."
- The library welcomed 100+ students from PRES on Friday December 19, when part of the town experienced a power outage. The children, teachers and members of the community enjoyed live holiday music with Mr. Kurt.
- Reminder to Trustees to complete their 2 hours of required training for 2025. Ms. Coulter is required to file a report with NY State.

**8:45 PM New Business - none**

**8:45 PM Public Remarks**

- Mr. Carmichael, a neighbor, expressed concerns about patrons parking in the lot all day even though the programs run an hour or two. He noted that parents working from home use the library as a place to send their kids all day. He was also concerned about safety and security at the library on the day of the power outage, and perhaps the library staff took on too much responsibility, and this should be the families' responsibility. Was there a nurse in case a child became ill or got hurt?
- Mrs. Carmichael, a neighbor, praised the library for the popular and successful programs, and said the new process in the parking lot seems to be working well for the past month. Is it worth it for the library to spend so much money for an additional 20 spaces? Mrs. Carmichael also mentioned that perhaps food should be designated for the café area in the library. She also expressed concern about patrons parking all day and cited an article she read about a new phenomenon where families are sending their children, with caregivers, to the library all day. Mrs. Carmichael, a former teacher, was shocked that 100 kids were sent to the library with only two bathrooms and no nurse, and no predator protocol. Both Ms. Coulter and Mr. Ramsay assured the Carmichaels that police and firefighters were on the premises. Ms. Schwartz also added that most Police Officers are EMT trained and teachers/students and many town employees are trained in Active Shooter situations. Mr. Ramsay added that it was a very controlled situation and he had to show his ID to gain entry to the building.
- Mr. Peirce, a neighbor, said that the library programs are great and the library needs more spaces and it is good that we are addressing it.

Ms. Gallo-Cook commended the school, the town and the library for doing a remarkable job in keeping the kids safe in an emergency situation. Mr. Levan agreed and said it was well-planned and well-executed.

**9:00 PM Public Meeting Adjourned**

**9:12 PM Executive Session Commenced**

**9:51 PM Executive Session Adjourned**