

MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Pound Ridge Library District
Location: 271 Westchester Ave, Pound Ridge, NY
January 20, 2026

President Richard Esman called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM. He welcomed trustees, staff and guests.

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

Absent: Marvin Markowitz (excused)

A quorum was present throughout the meeting.

Mr. Levan made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 22, 2025, meeting; Ms. Bellhouse seconded; all in favor.

The next two meetings are as follows: Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 7:30 PM and Wednesday, March 18 at 7:30 PM.

Mr. Esman read aloud the Annual Report he authored, highlighting the library's growth, productivity, and achievements in 2025, including financial stewardship, programs and offerings, technology advancements, facility enhancements, and community partnerships. He expressed gratitude to the Board, staff, volunteers, and the community for their continued support. The report will be published on the library's website and shared via social media.

Financials. Mr. Michael Lewis, Accountant, presented the year-end (preliminary) financial statements, noting that the library experienced another prosperous year with a healthy net position. Total year-end income was \$984,324.26, and total assets were \$1,809,644.11. He also prepared budget amendments and transfers to cover various operating expenditures that exceeded 2025 budgetary authorizations.

Mr. Bellhouse made a motion to amend the budget to cover various expenditures during the library's 2025 fiscal year as presented by Mr. Lewis; Ms. Benefico seconded; all in favor.

Mr. Lewis is working with PKF O'Connor Davies to get the year end audit done in a reasonable amount of time. A portal has been set up so Mr. Lewis, Ms. Nardelli and Ms. Coulter can upload library financials. A representative from the firm will be at the library on Feb 16, a draft should be completed in March and final copy in April/May.

Mr. Lewis will also be attending board meetings at the library on a quarterly basis.

Treasurer's Report. Mr. Bellhouse presented a chart illustrating cash flow in the Chase Checking Account over the past 30 months, providing insight to help forecast peaks (when tax revenue comes in) and valleys in future cash availability.

Buildings & Grounds – Bonnie Schwartz

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

- The HVAC system in the Reading Room was completed. A new, easy to use thermostat was installed to complete the project.
- There is extensive heaving in walkways due to extreme weather conditions. This would be a major project should the library decide to address this.
- Chairlift is not working and needs to be repaired.
- Toilet overflowed. Culprit: a dirty diaper. It was fixed within an hour.
- Quotes are being obtained for new lighting /in the reading room. Bulbs are outdated. Possibly replace chandeliers with high hats. Jennifer is researching.
- Plumbing issues in the cottage will be addressed.
- All lights, including bathroom fixture, Teen Area, Fiction Room and Schaffner Room were replaced.
- Waiting on quotes to replace an old fuse box in the Mystery Room. Parts are still available for it, and it is not a fire hazard, and depending on costs, replacement might be the best way to proceed.

Warrants. *Ms. Benefico made a motion to approve the warrants in the amount of \$48,537.17; Mr. Levan seconded; all in favor.* Mr. Bellhouse will make a transfer of \$50,000 from Chase Savings to Checking to cover warrants.

Committee Updates

Technology. Ms. Wise continues to meet with the Technology Committee and Ms. Coulter to discuss a new website and new design/branding. Ms. Wise recommends proceeding with a new website once a new logo is designed. The library currently has

several logos and color schemes in use. The objective is to unify these into one consistent design and color scheme across all materials, including stationery, letterhead, apparel, book labels, signage, and the new website.

Governance/Legal. Mr. Levan called for an Executive Session to discuss by-laws and the clause about board vacancies.

Public Relations. Ms. Wise and Ms. Coulter proudly announced that the Library was selected by Connect to Northern Westchester Magazine as Best Community Kids Space for the Sensory Room.

Mr. Esman suggested to Ms. Wise that the library increase its social media presence and consider hiring an outside consultant. The Board noted that this approach has been tried in the past and that having a staff member manage social media has proven more effective, as the most timely and engaging content is generated during working hours. Currently, Madyson is handling social media responsibilities, though she works only two days per week. Ms. Coulter suggested the possibility of securing a summer intern through the Aspire Program and expressed willingness to take technology classes. Expansion to X was discussed and not supported; TikTok was also discussed. Ms. Wise will consider the suggestions.

Program Development. Ms. Shiba-Silverman is in discussions with Dr. Bell, Principal of PRES, and the PTA to learn about upcoming school events and explore how the library can serve as a resource to support them. The Pound Ridge Human Rights Committee requested funding from the library to support its Lunar New Year event, scheduled to take place at the library on February 22. The requested costs were within Ms. Coulter's spending authority, and she approved the request, noting that this support is not intended to establish an annual commitment. Ms. Coulter also recommended exploring alternative options for overflow parking for this event.

A new program, Mah Jongg for Kids, is being considered. Ms. Shen's Program for Expectant Mothers received positive feedback.

Human Resources – Ms. Benefico called for an Executive session to discuss annual staff appraisals and compensation.

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

Parking Improvement – Mr. Esman continues discussions with the attorney and engineer. The attorney, Ms. Gerri Tortorella, has prior experience with both the Planning Board and the Library Board and is familiar with previous parking lot expansion proposals. Her hourly rate is \$500, with her associate billing at \$400 per hour.

The Board discussed the need to meet with the attorney and engineer to obtain an assessment of the likelihood of success if the Library returns to the Planning Board for an informal hearing. A minimum one-month lead time will be required to prepare, with the possibility of securing a place on the Planning Board's March calendar.

Mr. Bellhouse offered to prepare a document summarizing prior meeting minutes and related materials outlining the history of the parking lot project, noting that the information is currently disjointed. Ms. Gallo-Cook emphasized the importance of understanding what was previously submitted and the reasons for prior rejections. Ms. Wise suggested reaching out to two former Board presidents who participated in earlier proposals and meetings with the Town Board.

The location and number of handicapped parking spaces remain unresolved issues. Mr. Levan will arrange a meeting between Ms. Tortorella and the Parking Lot Committee to review all concerns and considerations.

Director's Report – Jennifer Coulter

- Ms. Coulter shared on the screen the 2024 Performance Report Overview, noting dramatic growth in various areas. The library is up 10% in program attendance, up 22% in physical materials checked out; active cardholders increased by 12%; weekly operating hours increased by 27.5% due to the new expanded 7 day schedule. Among libraries in our peer group, of which we are the smallest (5,000 to 15,000 population), we were #1 for programs per borrower; #1 programs per population served; #1 in attendance for population.
- Hiring of a company for Parking Lot Monitoring has been implemented on days with popular programs. So far, it is working out well.
- A library patron, Ms. Carmichael, suggested that the library purchase an AED (Defibrillator) machine, at a cost of \$1,705–\$2,090, which exceeds Ms. Coulter's spending authority. If approved, staff would require training in its proper use. Discussion followed, including the frequency of 9-1-1 calls at the library (only once since 2018), staff willingness and comfort in using the machine, and the possibility of staff receiving CPR training first. Mr. Esman suggested that Ms. Coulter speak with her staff regarding the proposal and also recommended arranging a presentation by a qualified organization who can talk to the Board about the AED Machine.
- The Garden Club has suggested 6 dates they need the library in 2026, all on Mondays. It presents a conflict, as now the library is open on Mondays, so Ms. Coulter will work with them to provide a solution and offer them dates/times when the library is closed.
- Our IT vendor, Right Click Solutions, is now offering a service to monitor emails through Proof Point Essentials, a cybersecurity service that will block any threats to our inboxes.
- Thank you for two generous donations: Mr. and Mrs. Richard Schlessinger in the amount of \$350.00 and Ms. Irene Porter, \$200.00 for the museum program. Ms. Coulter will use the \$200.00 to add the Guggenheim Museum passes to our offerings.
- Looking Ahead 2026: Placing a Drop Box in Scotts Corners and possibly adding a Satellite Library for services like Printing, Copying, Picking up holds, returning materials. This could be a short-term solution for the parking lot congestion.

- Another idea to alleviate parking congestion would be to move our highest attended programs to Conant Hall through a discounted partnership with the Town of Pound Ridge.
- Library Card Partnership Program. Partner with the town and PRES to automatically issue a library card to kindergarteners.
- Add a painting, mural, shelving, etc. to welcome patrons as they enter the side entrance. This would be displayed on the wall over the staircase. o
- Reminder to Trustees to complete their 2 hours of required training for 2026.

9:25 PM New Business

9:25PM Public Remarks

- Ms. Carmichael expressed her gratitude to the library staff and trustees for their dedication and hard work in serving the community.

9:26 PM Public Meeting Adjourned

9:33 PM Executive Session Commenced

10:45 PM Executive Session Adjourned