

MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Pound Ridge Library District
Location: 271 Westchester Ave, Pound Ridge, NY
June 23, 2026

President Richard Esman called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. He welcomed trustees, staff and guests.

Present: Robert Bellhouse, Richard Esman, Richard Levan, Christina Sassi-Lehner, Marvin Markowitz, Valerie Shiba-Silverman, Jenna Wise

Absent: Anne Benefico (excused), Lexie Gallo-Cook, (excused)

A quorum was present throughout the meeting.

Mr. Levan made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 27, 2026. Motion passed unanimously.

The next two meetings are scheduled for Monday, July 27, 2026, at 7:30 PM and Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 7:30 PM.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Bellhouse reported that the library's cash position of \$2,126,654.64 was roughly the same as at this time last year.

Warrants. *Mr. Levan made a motion to approve the warrants in the amount of \$38,357.36. Motion passed unanimously.*

Mr. Esman announced that there will be an Executive session at the conclusion of the general meeting.

2025 Audit Presentation – Jeff Shaver of PKF O'Connor Davies presented the audit report and stated that they have issued an "unmodified opinion" for the library's financial statements, also known as a "clean" opinion, the most favorable opinion one can receive, meaning the financial statements were presented fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The auditor noted that revenues exceeded the revised budget, expenditures were closely aligned with the revised spending plan, and the Library ended the year with a budgetary surplus and an increased fund balance. The auditor further stated that the Library remains in a strong financial position, with a healthy fund balance, assets held primarily in cash and investments, very little in the way of liabilities, and no significant long-term liabilities. The Board briefly discussed restricted and non-spendable fund balances, older trust funds, and the Library's level of reserves. The auditor stated that "the audit went well" and that nothing came to his attention that needed to be brought to the Board's attention.

Committee Updates

Finance Mr. Bellhouse presented the proposed 2027 Budget. It will be voted on at the July Board meeting. Mr. Esman encourages all Board members to share their questions via email with all the other Trustees. Mr. Bellhouse explained that expenses associated with the parking lot project would be funded from reserves and not be included in the operating budget. He will present an 'overlay' budget for parking lot expenses separately. Ms. Shiba-Silverman opined that the Board might consider keeping an attorney on retainer for non-parking lot-related issues.

Public Relations Committee

The Public Relations Committee reported continued progress on the Library's logo and brand identity refresh. The Committee has been working closely with designer Gina Federico to develop a variety of brand application treatments, to ensure that the new logo and colors are implemented thoughtfully and consistently across Library materials. The Committee noted that there may be a modest additional project fee related to the signage design work, but no significant budget concerns are anticipated at this time. The Committee also intends to approach the Pound Ridge Library Foundation with a formal funding request to support the new signage and merchandise in anticipation of the Library's 75th anniversary in Spring 2027. A detailed list of proposed requests is being developed and will be shared with the Foundation.

Technology Committee.

The Technology Committee reported that the new Library website is well underway. The website build is expected to be completed by July 14, after which Library Market and Library staff will each continue work on their respective portions of the project during a one-month development period, with an anticipated completion date of August 14. Final adjustments will follow, with the goal of launching the new website in September. A brief tour of the website prototype will be presented at the July Board meeting.

Governance/Legal. The Personnel Policy is under review for an update.

Program Development Ms. Shiba-Silverman reported that she met with Ms. Coulter to review current programming and discuss opportunities to increase attendance at programs that have not drawn the level of participation anticipated, particularly Kids Book Clubs and the Kids Staff Picks initiative. They also discussed outreach for the upcoming *Battle of the Books* in October, a Westchester Library System-wide annual event. Ms. Shiba-Silverman offered to work with the PRES PTA to help promote these programs. Ms. Coulter reported that Summer Reading Game registration has reached 116 participants, significantly exceeding participation levels from previous years, and thanked Ms. Shiba-Silverman for her support and outreach efforts.

Human Resources – No report.

Mr. Bellhouse amended his earlier **Finance Report** to include the following: the Library's cash balances are insured up to \$250,000 per institution. It was reported that Citibank offers a program that may provide additional protection for deposits above the FDIC limit, and that this option will be reviewed further at the next meeting. The Board also discussed, as an alternative for future consideration, the possibility of distributing funds currently held at Chase among multiple banking institutions to remain within FDIC insurance limits at each institution.

Long-Range Planning - The Board discussed the presence of Japanese knotweed on the Library property, particularly near the upper parking lot. It was noted that Japanese knotweed is highly invasive, spreads rapidly, and would need to be addressed before any parking lot expansion could proceed, as it could otherwise grow through new pavement. Mr. Bellhouse reported that he has researched mitigation options and consulted with three companies that specialize in invasive plant removal, one of which has visited the site. He explained that the options include excavating to a depth of approximately six to seven feet, due to the depth and density of the root system, followed by refilling the area, or pursuing chemical treatment with glyphosate. A cost estimate is expected next week. It was noted that knotweed mitigation would likely be a two-year process, as effective treatment requires two growing seasons, and would require an ongoing suppression program. This timeline would affect the proposed parking lot project, with construction unlikely to begin before spring 2028 at the earliest. Bob recommends moving forward with presenting the parking lot project to the Planning Board. Ms. Coulter will research potential grant opportunities to help fund the knotweed mitigation project.

Parking Improvement – The Board discussed the need to engage Insite Engineering to prepare an engineer-certified concept plan for the proposed parking lot project. Mr. Bellhouse explained that the concept plan would be based on the preliminary layout previously presented to the Board, with additional details provided to Insite, and would demonstrate that the proposed plan is feasible and conforms with applicable code. He noted that this level of plan is not sufficient for construction, but is the type of document expected by the Planning Board at this stage. Insite Engineering has requested a budget of approximately \$1,700 - \$2,300 to complete the work. In anticipation of possible additional costs, Mr. Bellhouse recommended that the Board authorize up to \$5,000 for the preparation of the concept plan. Richard Levan made a motion to spend up to \$5,00 to engage Insite Engineering for concept plans, seconded by Mr. Esman. All in favor; motion approved.

Mr. Esman invited the Library's accountant, Michael Lewis, to add any comments he wished to make regarding the discussion. Mr. Lewis addressed the earlier discussion regarding whether to reserve \$5,000 for non-parking lot-related legal expenses, noting that the proposed budget already includes \$7,500 in contingency funds, which could be used for

one-time expenses of that nature. Mr. Lewis also commented on the proposed parking lot project, explaining that if the Library receives Planning Board approval, he would work with Mr. Bellhouse and Ms. Coulter to develop a project budget and identify the appropriate budget codes for anticipated expenses, including legal and other related costs. He noted that the Board would then need to determine how to fund the project, which could include undesignated fund balance, endowment funds, Foundation support, or financing, although he stated that financing may not be necessary given the Library's strong fiscal position. Once the project scope and funding plan are clearer, the budget could be amended accordingly. Mr. Lewis advised that it would not be fiscally prudent to include major project costs in the operating budget until the project has received the necessary approvals.

Director's Report – Jennifer Coulter

Community Survey Ms. Coulter presented the results of the 2026 Community Survey, which ran from April 23 through June 1 and received 107 responses, including 57 online and 50 paper responses. She reported that the results were encouraging and showed strong community engagement with the Library. The survey identified access, particularly parking, as the most significant barrier to greater Library use. Open-ended comments praised the staff, renovation, children's services, sensory room, museum passes, passport service, and other services, while consistently identifying parking as a key concern. The survey results will help guide future planning around access (parking), programming, and online convenience.

Ms. Coulter recommended that the Trustee election be held on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, noting that the date avoids major holiday conflicts in September. With the Board's approval, she also recommended that Heidi Nardelli, the Library's bookkeeper, serve as Election Coordinator. Ms. Coulter presented proposed exterior and interior signage concepts incorporating the Library's new logo and branding. Ms. Coulter reported that the new off-site book drop has been installed at Pound Ridge Square, providing patrons with a convenient return option in Scotts Corners. Ms. Coulter reminded the Board that all New York State library trustees are required to complete two hours of continuing education each year, including training on topics such as financial oversight, fiduciary duties, and other governance responsibilities. Resources and links to fulfill this requirement are presented each month in the Trustee Google Drive.

New Business-none.

Public remarks: Neal Rentz of *The Recorder* asked for clarification regarding the proposed 2027 operating budget, the "zero percent tax increase", and whether a public referendum would be required. It was clarified that, because the Board is not seeking an increase in the tax levy, no public vote would be required.

Ms. Coulter also reported that Library Clerk Catherina Viljoen will be leaving at the end of June. Existing staff will absorb those hours, so a new hire will not be sought.

Ms. Carmichael thanked the board for relocating the mailbox and praised the Community Survey as a tool to demonstrate the community's concerns over the parking lot.

Ms. Coulter provided an update that the AED machine purchase is in the works. She is awaiting input from PRVAC VP Tina August on brand, model, and training, which will be opened to the community and will include CPR and first-aid.

9:04 PM Public Session Adjourned

9:04 PM Executive Session

The Board entered Executive Session at 9:04 p.m. to discuss matters related to the cottage lease. Executive Session concluded at 9:30 p.m., and the Board returned to public session. No action was taken in Executive Session.

9:30 PM Public Session

Upon returning to public session, Mr. Esman made a motion to renew the cottage lease for the term October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027, with a \$100 per month rent increase. The lease will be limited to use of the cottage, walkway, garage, and patio only, with the Library reserving the right to use portions of the grounds as needed for the parking lot project. The lease will also include a bilateral clause allowing for a one-year extension upon the joint approval of both the Library and the tenants.

Public session concluded at 9:35 p.m.