

MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Pound Ridge Library District
Location: 271 Westchester Ave, Pound Ridge, NY
July 27, 2026

President Richard Esman called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM. He welcomed trustees, staff and guests.

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

Absent: Jenna Wise

A quorum was present throughout the meeting.

Mr. Levan made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 23, 2026, meeting; Mr. Bellhouse seconded; all in favor.

Due to a request from a board member the August meeting originally scheduled for August 18th has been rescheduled for **Monday August 31st**. No date was agreed upon for the September meeting, and Ms. Coulter will be sending a Doodle to the trustees to set a date, keeping in mind that Trustee Election takes place on September 22.

Mr. Esman announced that this meeting will be Mr. Levan's last meeting as a Trustee. Mr. Esman composed a letter of appreciation and read it aloud citing Mr. Levan's kindness, enthusiasm, wisdom and sound judgment. Mr. Esman thanked him for almost 6 years of service and his invaluable legal advice. Gifts were presented to Mr. Levan and he responded that it has been pleasure to serve and thanked Ms. Coulter for the outstanding job she does day in and day out.

Treasurer's Report – Bob Bellhouse

Key Bank has officially closed their branch in Pound Ridge. The Library will continue to maintain a Key Bank account and use the Mount Kisco branch.

A copy of the Treasurer's Report was included in the Trustee folder and Google Docs. As of July 25, 2026:

- Chase Checking Account: \$608,586.19; Chase Premier Savings: \$249,774.15; Key Bank Checking: \$5,000.00; Key Bank Premier Savings: \$172,334.12; Wood Capital Fund: \$295,792.04; Wood Maintenance Fund: \$287,137.66; General Fund: 243,306.36. Account TOTAL: \$2,057,755.96

Warrants. Warrants were reviewed and two were added and an adjustment to total was made by Ms. Coulter.

Ms. Benefico made a motion to approve the warrants in the amount of \$79,627.53. Ms. Gallo-Cook seconded; all in favor.

Committee Updates

Finance: Mr. Bellhouse addressed the 2027 budget and responded to concerns received from trustees. It was decided to add \$25,000.00 to the operating budget to address rising fuel charges, legal fees and parking monitor services. \$5,000.00 will be earmarked for legal fees, and the remaining \$20,000.00 for contingencies. The funds will come from the General Fund which is not restricted.

Ms. Sassi-Lehner made a motion to approve the 2027 Budget as presented; Ms. Gallo-Cook seconded; all in favor.

Mr. Bellhouse discussed the engagement letter from PKF O'Connor Davies, the accounting firm who performs the annual library audit. The engagement letter is the contract the library enters with the firm to conduct the audit.

Mr. Bellhouse made a motion to approve the 2026 Engagement Letter and audit fee of \$14,750.00; Ms. Benefico seconded; all in favor.

Mr. Bellhouse referenced his memo of July 22, 2026, regarding funding of parking monitor costs. Ms. Coulter has requested a continuance of this service for an additional 2 years. Although Mr. Bellhouse appreciates the results this service has provided, it is very costly. He is concerned about the recurring cost, approx. \$1000.00 a week, which is being funded from the operating budget as a temporary measure. Mr. Bellhouse expressed that the parking situation is directly linked to programming and he recommends that we try to find ways to reduce the cost of parking monitor services, and that these costs should be treated as program-related costs. In the short term, reserve funds can be made available.

Buildings & Grounds – Bonnie Schwartz

- Recent heavy rainfall caused a flood in the basement of the cottage. No damage reported. Ms. Schwartz reported that the flooding is coming through the ground. Installation of a curtain drain can remedy this. A bid from Luppino Landscaping has been presented and Ms. Schwartz will be obtaining two additional bids.
- A Fire Inspection was conducted on July 20 by Mary Anne Clampitt, Assistant Building, Plumbing and Fire Inspector for the Town of Pound Ridge. The library passed all electrical inspections. Ms. Clampitt identified two minor items requiring attention: the application of fire-retardant material to seal gaps around pipes in the furnace room and the reinstallation of two fire extinguishers at a higher mounting level to prevent access by children. Also, some modifications to signage is recommended. Ms. Schwartz has already contacted BVT Construction to address the items.
- A report from Mill River Home Inspections identified concerns with the old lighting fixtures in the Reading Room. One light has been out for some time. Ms. Coulter suggested replacing the six existing chandeliers with recessed lighting. She researched the cost of replacing the chandeliers with comparable fixtures, which is approximately \$6,000 per fixture. In addition, the light bulbs used in the current chandeliers appear to be obsolete, making maintenance and replacement increasingly difficult. Ms. Schwartz reported that three electricians inspected the fixtures and each advised that they were unable to perform the necessary work. Mr. Bellhouse suggested removing one of the bulbs and taking it to a specialty lighting store in New York City to determine whether replacement bulbs are still available and whether the existing chandeliers can be preserved. Ms. Schwartz will have an electrician remove the bulb.
- Ms. Schwartz is continuing to obtain bids for the additional work recommended by Mill River Home Inspections, Inc. as part of the Library's Long Range Planning initiative. Once all bids have been received and reviewed by the Board, a phased approach to the repairs may be the most practical and financially responsible option. For example, electrical upgrades could be completed in 2026, plumbing improvements in 2027, with other recommended projects scheduled over subsequent years as funding permits.

Technology. Ms. Coulter presented a preview of the Library's new website, displaying the prototype on the screen for the Board. Library Market has completed the website design, and Ms. Coulter is now adding content. Library Market will provide training to Ms. Coulter on August 18. One suggestion was made to consider relocating the search bar on the Home Page. The new website is expected to launch in September and will provide a more user-friendly, engaging, and personalized experience for patrons.

Governance/Legal. Ms. Gallo-Cook reported that she continues to review and revise the Library's Personnel Policies, making updates where necessary. She also reviewed the proposed one-year lease for the cottage tenants and recommended that the Board retain the legal services of Shipman & Goodman LLP. Ms. Gallo-Cook indicated that she was comfortable with the firm's proposed fees. In reviewing the Terms of Representation, she requested that the final paragraph under Electronic Data/Communications in Provision 6 (page 3) be removed from the agreement. *Ms. Gallo-Cook made a motion to retain Shipman & Goodman LLP as legal counsel contingent upon striking the final paragraph of Provision 6. Mr. Levan seconded; all in favor.*

Program Development. Ms. Shiba-Silverman reported that the Summer Reading Challenge has been exceptionally successful. The goal was to enroll 100 children, but participation has exceeded 200. She noted that the prizes have been very well received and have contributed to the program's success. She is also planning a Battle of the Books program for students in grades 4–7, tentatively scheduled for October. However, she noted that with many families away on vacation during the summer and the school year beginning in September, she is uncertain whether there will be sufficient time to prepare for an October launch.

Human Resources – Ms. Benefico announced that a part-time Library Clerk has resigned, and Ms. Coulter was able to redistribute the vacated hours among two existing part-time employees. As a result, library operations have continued without disruption, and there is no immediate need to fill the position.

Long Range Planning – Mr. Bellhouse reported that he contacted three certified landscaping companies regarding the removal of the Japanese knotweed on the Library property. Invasive Plant Solutions declined the project. The Board is awaiting a proposal from Bellantoni Landscaping, while Trilliumism submitted a proposal outlining a three-year treatment program to control the invasive plants through targeted spraying. Because treatment should begin before Labor Day for maximum effectiveness, the Board will review both proposals and make a decision at the next meeting after Mr. Bellantoni's proposal has been received.

Parking Improvement. Mr. Bellhouse reported that he received a draft of the revised Concept Plan immediately prior to the meeting and has not yet had an opportunity to review it. After completing his review, he would like to schedule a site meeting at the Library with the engineer from Insite Engineering to walk the property and discuss the proposed revisions in greater detail.

Director's Report – Jennifer Coulter

- Westchester Library System (WLS) requested that the Pound Ridge Library review and acknowledge its proposed **Free Direct Access Plan** for the 2027–2031 period. WLS must obtain approval from at least 20 member libraries in order to adopt the

five-year plan. After discussion, Ms. Gallo-Cook stated that she did not believe the plan provided a benefit to the Pound Ridge Library. As a result, no motion was made to approve or acknowledge the plan.

- Promotional materials featuring the Library's new logo have arrived. She presented each Trustee with a lightweight tote bag, a cap, and a T-shirt. Ms. Coulter ordered a limited quantity of each item, along with a branded tablecloth, and expressed that she was pleased with the quality of the products. She is awaiting feedback from Ms. Wise and the Public Relations Committee before placing any additional orders.
- Harvest Festival Giveaway Ideas. Ms. Coulter is asking for suggestions. Some ideas include mini canvas tote bags (might be too costly), chip clips with magnets, mini note pads, seeds (pumpkin and gourds) book lights.
- Call for Trustees. Two Trustee seats are currently open. The Library is seeking interested candidates, and encouraged everyone to spread the word. Nominating forms are due by August 21, and the Trustee election will be held on September 22. An announcement was placed in The Recorder.
- Additional Seating. Ms. Coulter reported that more patrons are utilizing the café area, now that eating has been prohibited in the Sensory Room. This has created a need for additional seating. She proposed purchasing four additional chairs for the café with a fabric that will complement the existing chair since the original fabric is longer available. Cost would be \$5651.75. Ms. Coulter also reported that the Library's folding chairs are showing significant wear, with approximately 38 of the 65+ chairs currently damaged. She has begun researching replacement options and is obtaining pricing for approximately 60 new chairs. She recommended the National Public Seating Series 3200 chairs available through QUILL as a potential replacement option. Since these expenses were not included in the 2026 budget, the Board discussed possible funding options, including utilizing fund balance, contingency funds or having Ms. Coulter pursue a grant opportunity through the Foundation.
- Signage for wall behind staircase at Library's side entrance. Ms. Coulter is in receipt of a proposal from Gina Federico for a 3D Wood Sculpture Wall Installation inspired by our new logo. The Public Relations Committee has not reviewed it yet.
- Reminder to Trustees to complete their 2 hours of required training for 2026.
- Mr. Esman inquired about the new book drop located at Scotts Corners. Ms. Coulter reported that the book drop has been well received and is being used regularly by patrons. However, some individuals have been leaving book donations at the site. A sign will be added indicating that book donations are not accepted.

9:19 PM New Business None

9:19 PM Public Remarks

Ms. Schwartz expressed her support for the purchase of the new café chairs. She noted that, as a regular participant in the Library's weekly knitting group, she has observed that attendees prefer comfortable seating and are borrowing the chairs from the café to accommodate the large group that attends.

9:21 PM Public Meeting Adjourned

9:25 PM Executive Session Commenced

9:55 PM Executive Session Adjourned