

**Medway Board of Library Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Regular Monthly Meeting
September 2, 2025 @ 7 p.m.
Medway Public Library**



Members Present: Susan Alessandri, Nutan Mathew, Nicole Haberman, Lisa Sheehan, Naomi Price

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Ivana Aguilar - Interim Library Director, Cheryl Houle - Town of Medway Human Resources

1. Call to Order - 7:00pm
2. Approval of July 15th, August 5th, August 12th & August 20th minutes - Tabled until the next meeting.
3. Report: Friends of Medway Public Library - Corinne Fahey sent Ms. Price a message stating that the Friends have nothing major to report other than they've been helping with the summer lunch program.
4. Update: Staffing & Director search - Ms. Aguilar stated they have hired 5 substitutes. Ms. Aguilar has trained 3 and are all working out great. The temporary assistant has been there for three weeks and loves the job and may pursue a Masters degree in the field.
5. Update: Mural for Story Hour room - Ms. Aguilar has signed the agreement. The artist is working on a sketch to give to Ms. Aguilar.
6. Announcement – Questions for Director candidates - Ms. Houle compiled a list of questions for the candidates for the Trustees to review. Ms. Houle explained the questions are broken down into 5 segments: leadership and management, community engagement, budget/financial/library management, governance and policy, and professional knowledge and technology. Ms. Alessandri explained that the sub-committee narrowed down the candidates to a group of 6 to be interviewed later that month. From that group of 6, the subcommittee will choose 3 finalists to be interviewed by the full committee. Ms. Houle shared the questions with the Trustees and Ms. Aguilar, who then discussed them and gave feedback. The Trustees made changes to some questions and added questions centered around hiring and creating an inviting culture within the library staff. Ms. Houle explained that not all questions need to be asked during the interview process, so the Trustees may

want to prioritize questions. Ms. Houle explained that she will provide the committee members the questions at the interview. For the second round, she will give the Trustees the candidates' resumes and questions. Ms. Houle explained once three finalists are decided on, she will explain to them the next part of the interview process is public, and she will get their permission to use their names in a public setting. The public is able to attend but cannot ask questions. The Trustees discussed timing of the second round of interviews with potentially three finalists. The Trustees decided the time slots offered to three potential finalists would be 4:30, 5:45, and 7:15 with a Zoom open meeting the next night at 7pm for deliberation. Ms. Houle explained that during deliberation it is important to remember the minimum requirements stated in the job description. Demographics are not to be considered, only the candidate's ability to do the job.

7. Announcement – Front signage - Ms. Alessandri stated that she noticed the sign could not be read from the street. The Town agreed to repaint it in Medway blue with letters that pop.
8. Vote – Patron Behavior Policy - *Ms. Mathew made a motion to accept the Patron Behavior Policy as revised since the August meeting, seconded by Ms. Alessandri, approved by all.*
9. Vote – Privacy Policy - *Ms. Alessandri made a motion to accept the Privacy Policy as written and revised since the August meeting, seconded by Ms. Sheehan, approved by all.*
10. Vote – Gift Policy - Tabled until the next meeting.
11. Incident Reports - There were no incidents to report.
12. Budget Report - Ms. Aguilar mentioned in the report that there was a negative line item. Carol informed that the account was set up last fiscal year and the expenses were transferred from the general funds to keep the fiscal year 2025 within the budget. The account has a negative balance since there is no budget to offset it, but the Tchasinsky fund currently has a balance of \$153,233 so there are no worries.
13. Director's Report - There were no questions on the Director's report.
14. Public Comment – Related to matters contained on the agenda above
The following public comment was submitted through an email:

As we cannot attend this evening's meeting, we are submitting our public comment via email.

After the last month's meeting was adjourned and the cameras were off, Susan Alessandri, Nutan Mathew, and Lisa Sheehan started a verbal altercation with to share their opinion that they don't like how I, Pamela, express my opinions and that they don't like when I'm here in attendance at public meetings. The chair, Susan Alessandri (paraphrasing, not direct quote) said she was going to speak to the town counsel about finding a way to remove ability to speak at and attend these meetings, which obviously would be a violation of my free speech rights. I noted on the agenda for this evening

that public comment is limited to the agenda items- not only is this a violation of recent legal decisions regarding comments made at public meetings, this is only more proof why these three trustees are unsuited for this position. You may require that comments be germane to the subject of the meeting, but it is not legal to censor public comments for content or tone, especially to avoid criticism. I suggest doing some research on this topic.

Again, you should be ashamed of your actions. You three are acting in a public capacity as public officials and you do everything you can to avoid listening to anyone besides yourselves. One of our repeated criticisms has been that none of you can handle criticism and none of you can handle people disagreeing with you. You have had clear disdain for multiple staff and for the Friends and public who disagree with things you think and question the things you say. You have restricted public comment more and more simply so you will not have to hear people disagree with you or criticize you. You talk as if you are open to hearing comments from everyone, but you pick and choose what public comments you read at the public meetings. Will you share this comment at the meeting this evening?

Additionally, you never respond to the comments made. Not by staff, not by the public. You try to point to how I say things and take issue with that, instead of ever addressing the content of what I have said. These are very undemocratic impulses, echoing some other alarming things we are currently seeing play out on the national stage. But sitting on a public board, you are beholden to the public. Your duty is to act in the best interest of the library and community and staff, not yourselves. And that means listening to and considering criticisms from the public, myself included.

This issue is so important to me because I am currently watching what I consider to be the worst case scenario happen. The trustees clearly enjoy having a small amount of power and using it to denigrate and belittle all other library stakeholders. Perfectly illustrative of this, last meeting when discussing the mural painted in the story room, Lisa Sheehan explained (and again I am paraphrasing) that library staff should not need to have input on the mural because a mural is between the artist and the commissioner. Is that how you see yourself? The sole parties interested in library decisions? You are not the owners of the library. You are not the only stakeholders of the library. You are making decisions on behalf of the community, not just yourselves. In what universe are the staff of the library who work with the children not qualified to speak on a mural for the children's story room? The library is an institution for all, and the trustees are not better than, more important than, nor larger stakeholders than the staff, the volunteers, the patrons, and the public.

Because of this clear and obvious disdain, condescension, and repeated overreach volunteers are leaving, and staff are leaving. The Medway library staff are incredible and dedicated and have made this a wonderful place for

the community. In the past six months, 4 employees, two full time, have left or ended their tenure earlier than they planned, in full or in part due to the actions of the trustees. Anyone who watches the meetings can see that the staff is belittled and not supported, whether it is about mural placement, disagreement about how a program should be run, or treatment of staff members who volunteer their personal time for the friends of the library, the organization that raises and gives money for the needs of the library and the community. We have all witnessed the trustees slandering library employees, and we have witnessed other library employees come to the defense of their coworkers with public letters. The trustees have never responded to these issues from the staff, either.

You, mainly Susan Alessandri, Nutan Mathew, and Lisa Sheehan, are directly responsible for driving these people away. 4 employees doesn't sound like much until you realize that that was 50% of the full time staff and around a quarter to a third of the library staff. Were this a corporation, this situation would be treated as an emergency. Why do you think there is a staff shortage? Why do you think these issues are arising? You are being told time and time again that these issues are coming from YOU and YOUR ACTIONS. We have spoken about it, other Friends have spoken about it, library staff has spoken about it, members of the public have commented on it. Yet you refuse to listen and try to shut down anyone who tells you this. All three of you are so clearly wrapped up in enjoying the small piece of power you have that you can't take a moment to consider the repeated criticisms that come from others. You would prefer to try and shut us down and consider violating first amendment rights than spend a minute in self reflection or considering other people's input. How can you claim to care about the library and want what is best for the library and ignore the harm that multiple other stakeholders tell you that you are causing?

We care about the local community and we are proud to run programs and volunteer at the library. We don't want to see further damage to this wonderful institution, which is why we don't plan on stopping coming to the meetings, exercising our rights, and repeating: Susan Alessandri, Nutan Mathew, and Lisa Sheehan, you NEED to step down before you do further harm.

Pamela and Samuel Francis

15. Adjournment - 9pm

Upcoming Meetings

October 7th, November 4th, December 2nd

To contact the Medway Board of Library Trustees, email librarytrustees@medwayma.gov