

West Hartford Public Library Board Agenda

Special Meeting

Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, March 5, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.

This meeting can be viewed live on West Hartford Community Television at

www.whctv.org and www.youtube.com/whctv5

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of the Consent Agenda (Items 4, 8ai, & 8aii)
4. Approval of the Minutes of the January 22, 2024 Meeting
5. Chair's Report
 - a. Upcoming meeting topics
6. Old Business
 - a. FY25 Budget – Laura Irmscher
7. New Business
 - a. Library closing for staff meetings – Laura Irmscher
Staff Day: March 21, 2024 (Library closed 10am – 2pm)
 - b. Library eBook bill – Laura Irmscher
SB 148: An Act Making Certain Terms In Electronic Book And Digital Audiobook License Agreements Or Contracts Unenforceable.
8. Director's Reports
 - a. January documents submitted:
 - i. Library Administrative reports
 - ii. Budget report
9. Adjournment
 - a. Next Meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 25, 2024.

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

Public Comment Instructions: Individuals who wish to comment on an agenda item, may do so by sending an email with the subject “public comment” to Board@westhartfordlibrary.org on or before March 4, 2024.

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MINUTES
Monday, January 22, 2024 6:30 p.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Eileen Daly called the Library Board to order at 6:35 p.m. Present, virtually, were Board members Kim Cohen, Eileen Daly, Gail Crockett, Natalia Menjivar, and EJ Greenspan, Library Director Laura Irmischer, and Heidi Reagan, recorder.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - none

3. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA (Items 4 & 8a i, 8a ii, 8a iii.)

MOTION: On a motion made by Gail Crockett and seconded by Natalia Menjivar, the Board unanimously approved the Consent Agenda.

4. THE MEETING MINUTES of November 27, 2023 were approved as part of the consent agenda.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

- a. Election of Officers – Eileen Daly
 - i. Gail Crockett – Chair
 - ii. EJ Greenspan – Vice Chair
 - iii. Kim Cohen – Secretary

MOTION: On a motion made by Natalia Menjivar and seconded by Kim Cohen, the Board unanimously approved the slate of officers.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Draft Strategic Plan – Laura Irmischer
 - i. The mission statement remained the same except for the addition of the word “resources”.
 - ii. Some ideas heard for the mission were incorporated into the Vision Statement
 - iii. Five Strategic Initiatives were developed to represent the core of what people told us they want for the library and what we’ve been striving to do over the last few years
 - iv. The plan reflects what was learned during the planning process as well as what the Board and the Town have shared with Laura since becoming Director
 - v. Once the plan is approved, Laura will work with staff to create an action plan to achieve the goals over the next four years
 - vi. Laura will provide regular updates to the Board of progress made

MOTION: On a motion made by Kim Cohen and seconded by Natalia Menjivar, the Board unanimously approved the final version of the Strategic Plan.

- b. New Community Center Update – Laura Irmischer
 - i. The selection process for an architect is nearing the final stages
 - ii. Pricing proposals from the top three are being considered
 - iii. Problems with the Faxon Library building continue
 - 1. The basement floods when it rains
 - 2. An issue with the heating lead to closing the library today
 - 3. These issues are a regular reminder of the importance of this project.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. FY 25 Budget – Laura Irmischer
 - i. The FY25 budget was submitted to the town on January 3
 - 1. Personnel costs have increased based on contractual obligations and increases in minimum wage levels
 - 2. Operating costs were kept level
 - 3. A \$40k increase was requested for the Collections budget to fund ematerials
 - a. This is reflective of the high cost and high demand for these materials
 - b. The Collections budget has remained flat for five years (it was higher in 2018) and the circulation of ematerials has increased 163% during that time period.
 - ii. Laura will meet with the Town Manager and Finance Director to review the submission and then it will go to Town Council for approval
- b. Annual Report – Laura Irmischer
 - i. This document is a reflection of the many things the library staff has achieved in the past year
 - ii. Thanks go to the library staff for their accomplishments and the P&P Dept. for designing the report
 - iii. The theme is “Welcome Back”
 - 1. By going fine free we are welcoming those who weren’t coming to the library due to outstanding fines
 - 2. Offered numerous big events that brought the community together and focused on an increased focus on in-person programming

8. DIRECTOR’S REPORTS

- a. November and December documents submitted
 - i. Library Administrative Reports
 - ii. Budget Report
 - iii. Quarterly Statistics
- b. Current Month Briefing.

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200(6)(A) to discuss the annual performance and evaluation of the West Hartford Public Library Director, Laura Irmscher.

MOTION: On a motion made by Kim Cohen and seconded by Natalia Menjivar, the Board went into Executive Session at 7:02pm.

Board members Kim Cohen, Eileen Daly, Gail Crockett, Natalia Menjivar and EJ Greenspan as well as Library Director Laura Irmscher attended the executive session.

The board returned to the regular meeting at 7:36 pm.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: The Library Board Meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:38 pm. The next scheduled Board Meeting is February 26, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Cohen
Board Secretary

"This meeting was held remotely and the public had the ability to view the meeting in real-time live on West Hartford Community Television at www.whctv.org and www.youtube/whctv5."

Library Financials
February 2024
General Fund

Year	Period	Rollup Code Code	Rollup Code Description	Period Actuals	YTD Actuals	Original Budget	Available Budget
2024	8	01411	GF-Library-Personal	204,883.01	1,686,285.76	2,752,294.00	1,066,008.24
2024	8	01412	GF-Library-NonPers	7,017.18	391,950.49	652,637.00	260,686.51
2024	8	01414	GF-Library-Sundry	14,301.36	115,232.72	206,828.00	91,595.28
2024	8	29003	Library Fund-Capital	0.00	9,230.55	0.00	68,656.75

January 2024 Administrative Report

Strategic Plan & Annual Report

The Library Board approved the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. This document will serve as the library's roadmap for innovation and improvement over the next four years. Staff will work on an action plan that identifies the steps we will take to achieve the goals outlined in the plan. Printed copies will be available to the public soon. In the meantime, the plan can be viewed [here](#). Thank you to the Strategic Planning Team for developing the process, working with staff and the public, and synthesizing over 2,000 comments to write this plan!

The [Annual Report](#) has also been completed and is a snapshot of the remarkable things the library accomplished over the last year. Thank you to all library staff who worked so hard to serve the public and welcome everyone back to their library. Printed copies of this document will also be available soon. Thank you to the Programs & Publicity team for all their work putting these documents together and making them so beautiful and easy to read.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Pramod coordinated the 75th Annual Celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was celebrated at the West Hartford Town Hall on Jan 17th, 2024. Thirty-six individuals read the articles from the declaration in 19 languages. Ten organizations set up tables during the event to promote their programs to the attendees, including the library and W.H.I.T. This event was co-sponsored by the United Nations Association of Connecticut and Bombay Olive Restaurant. The WH Library partnered with the West Hartford Human Rights Commission to make this event possible.

West Hartford Immigrant Teens had strong representation at the event. Teen members read articles in 6 different languages. They also sold bracelets and baked goods and collected donations for Heal Africa

Winter Reading Challenge

Rebecca and Lauren introduced the new Winter Reading Challenge Book Chat this year. The program was a great addition to Winter Reading Challenge offerings, giving participants a chance to chat about the books they've been reading and enjoy a hot chocolate and toppings bar. Participants have through February 29 to complete activities and get BINGOs to enter the raffle for prizes.

River Bend Books created a display for our Winter Reading Challenge in their store!



Butterfly Project

In 2023, members of the West Hartford Mayor's Youth Council visited schools in the community to paint butterflies and presented them at the Annual Greater Hartford International Holocaust Remembrance Day sponsored by Voices of Hope. These butterflies, created by local teens, hope to remember the young lives lost and spread the message of hope, acceptance, and kindness.

Under Leslie's design expertise, MYC members recently installed butterflies on the Mezzanine level of the Noah Webster library.



Recent Media

Follow the links below for recent media coverage about the library's programs and services.

[Antisemitism/Hat Topic Of West Hartford Library Program](#) (Patch)

[Chronicling Bucknoll: An Author Talk with Mary Lowengard](#) (Patch)

Staff Updates

February GOAT – Leslie Sano

This month the goat took the elevator up to the P&P Office to stay with Leslie Sano! Whether you've met Leslie or not, chances are you're familiar with her great work – her fingerprints are everywhere at the library. You'd be hard pressed to take a step in the library and not come across a sign, flyer, graphic, or display designed by Leslie. There's too many projects to name here but she designs graphics and publicity for our adult programs, as well as larger initiatives like West Hartford Reads and the Summer and Winter Reading Challenges. Most recently, Leslie has been working on publicity and displays for year 2 of our Seed Library and the Love is in the Air campaign to launch our new Romance collection. She also just collaborated with Kari and the Mayor's Youth Council to create a display for the Butterfly Project. Leslie is always willing to take on a challenge. She's calm, thoughtful, and a pleasure to work with. Her attention to detail and creativity are her superpowers and she's a big reason why the libraries look as great as they do. Congrats Leslie!



From Our Patrons

Here are some stories and interactions our staff recently had with patrons at the library:

- We received this lovely note about Sam:
"The Studio 20 South is a very useful resource. Sam Ferri was personable, knowledgeable and helpful in converting an audio tape dedication and son and burning it onto a recordable CD!"
-Paul D.
- A nice note from a patron after we experienced a short Skillshare outage:
Thank you very much for resolving this issue AND letting me know! When I was "locked out" of my Skillshare account, I was in the middle of a programming class taught by Steve Tran. The class is well done and I'm very happy our library offers Skillshare access to patrons!!
- A patron called to compliment the reference desk staff this week (Cynthia and Kari). She said that they helped her and her son do some research for a family trip. They also tracked down an atlas that is keeping her son in good spirits while he is recovering from wisdom tooth surgery.

Adult Services & Programs

Create a Portrait of Your Family Pet with Watercolor

Artist Nancy Roman (9 attended in-person)

Artist Nancy Roman brought all the supplies for the workshop and the end results were quite stunning!

PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS

Programs	31
Attendance	436
Avg. Attendance	14

Virtual Author Talk with Academy Award-Nominated Jena Friedman (31 attended virtually)

Jena Friedman is a comedian and writer (she wrote for *Borat*).

Author Talk with Mary Lowengard (35 attended in-person)

Mary is the sister of Alex Lowengard, who works at the West Hartford Public Library. Her talk was inspiring and funny.

Taking Care of Your Mental Health (35 attended in-person)

LCSW Michele Kieras gave a wonderful presentation about protecting your mental health. Wanted to do this program in the winter when folks struggle with SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder).

Stand Up to Antisemitism and Hate: What It Is and What We Can Do About It Together (55 attended virtually)

Hosted in partnership with Bloomfield Public Library. Presented by Anti-Defamation League Connecticut.

Understanding Islam 101: Beliefs and Practices (50 attended virtually)

Hosted in partnership with Bloomfield Public Library as part of a two-part series. Presented by Aida Mansoor of the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut.

Family Recipe Keepsake Platters (24 attended in-person)

Partnered with the Childrens Department to hold an intergenerational program presented by West Hartford's own Claypen.

Local History

Recent topics of interest in the Local History Room: a group of folks working on family history that visited twice using yearbooks, directories, maps, and census stuff; visitors researching slavery in CT, Rochambeau, folklore, and the always entertaining yearbook pictures of friends and family.

One cool research request came over the phone from a gentleman in California researching the history of his Colt revolver; apparently, it's a rare police issue one that was sent to a few stores by accident in 1918. He was able to trace the first owner/seller to West Hartford and Brett found out that LS Knoek lived in town and owned what we would call a pawn shop in Hartford (on State St.). He took it over from his father who was a tailor that refurbished clothes for the secondhand market. Knoek then expanded on what he sold second-hand: hardware, tools, jewelry, firearms. The store then became a more legit hardware store in the 1920s before closing after Knoek died. Brett and the patron figured out this guy was one of the shops that accidentally was given the Colt 1918 revolvers (or possibly Knoek came about them in a more nefarious way). Brett enjoyed helping the patron, and this project shows how far-reaching local history can be!

As for the year 2023, the overall numbers are 278 in-person visits with 57 virtual/phone requests. Yearbooks have been the most used object in the collection by the general public; Brett plans to fill the few gaps that we have for the high schools in the next year. Brett has found the directories and microfilmed WH newspapers valuable for his own research and looking into stories for patrons. We have a great collection and grateful patrons, and we are thrilled to have this service restored after such a long absence.

Branch Libraries

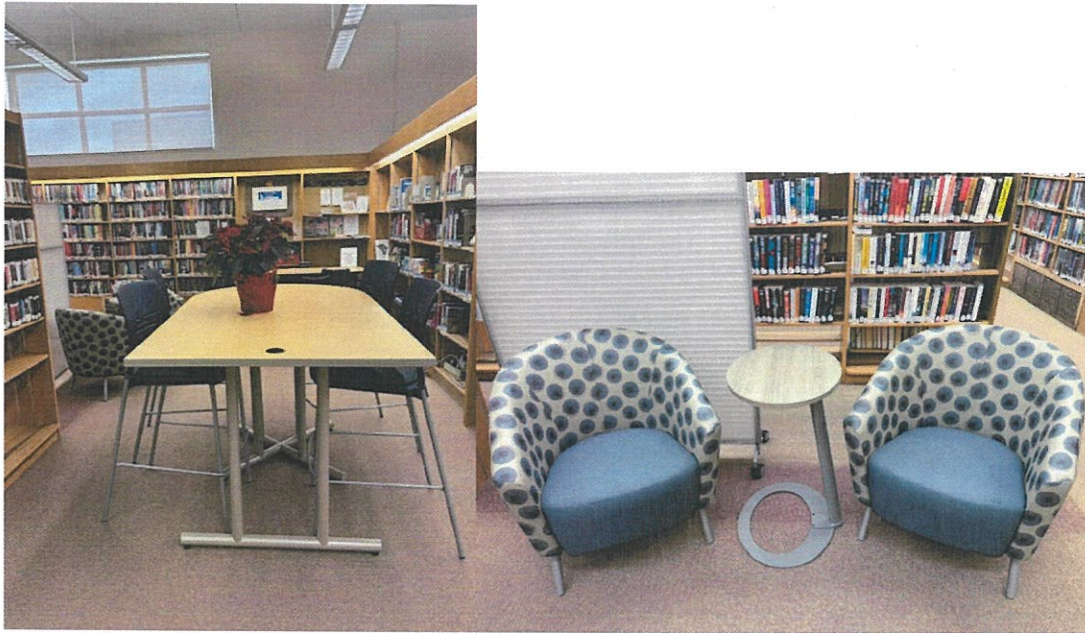
Bishops Corner

Another record was broken at Bishops Corner, we had a total of 227 deliveries to the lockers in January, besting the previous high of 224 from May 2023. We also now have 289 registered locker users.

Children's programs started up again at Bishops Corner and were very well attended. A few families from the American School for the Deaf attended Family Storytime on Thursday along with a translator.

Faxon

Thanks to a generous grant from the Kilfoil fund, the Faxon Library welcome center has gotten a much-needed facelift! Four new tall chairs around the table and two comfy chairs and a laptop table were delivered just before Christmas.



The grant also included \$3,000 for a new and update Welcome Center book collection. Faxon staff will begin ordering for that new collection soon, and in the meantime, we have cleared shelf space in that area by moving the patrons' holds to a new bookcase located right when they walk in the door (and right across from the self-check!)

Tech-Help sessions at Faxon are now offered every Monday from 2-3 pm and on Wednesdays from 4 to 6 pm. Patrons must sign up for a 30-minute session to get help on the computer topic they want to learn. Two volunteers and one Tech staff instruct this program.

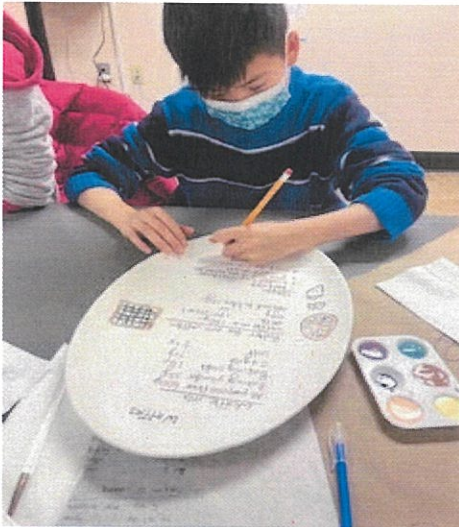
Due to a leakage in the air intake system of the heating system at Faxon, there was no heat in the work area, and the smell from the leaking steam was unbearable. To address the issues, Faxon Library was closed at noon on January 22nd, 2024. The problems were resolved later the same day, and the library was opened to the public the next day.

Children's Services & Programs

Programs

Sara and Leah offered a fun evening of family bonding through painting a family keepsake platter program at the Faxon Branch Library on January 24. Family Keepsake Platters, in partnership with

the Claypen studio, was a workshop for children ages 8 and older with their family members who were asked to bring a family recipe to paint on their own keepsake platter.



Updates

A Toniebox is an innovative audio player for kids 3+ that is great for bedtime stories, music, and education that can be operated independently. Playback starts automatically when Tonies audio characters are placed on the Toniebox. Each library building will have Tonieboxes to circulate. Funding for this project was granted by the West Hartford Library Foundation.



The first in a monthly series of craft programs for tweens to be held in Studio 20 with Kate Wilson facilitating is at 6:00 PM on February 7. The theme will be Valentine's Day crafts.

We have booked the Ballet Theatre Company production of excerpts from their spring show *Snow White* for the evening of April 10, 2024. The event will be held at the West Hartford Conference Center. Funding for this show is generously provided by the Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Charitable Trust.

Teen Services

- West Hartford Immigrant Teens made bracelets to sell at the UN Declaration of Human Rights event at Town Hall (proceeds will go to Heal Africa).
- Esam Boraey spoke to WHIT about the UN Declaration of Human Rights Celebration & the Human Rights Commission's new advisory board for teens.

- TAB met with local author & Conard 9th grader Ari Shukla about her book Heir and are planning a book club event with her this winter.
- Teen Advisory Board had guest speaker Gretchen Levitz, West Hartford Prevention Council / P.H.A.C.C.T. (Peer Health Awareness Concerns Teen Taskforce).
- Rockin' Robotics Planning Meeting
 - Farmington Robotics Team volunteers will run 5 programs for grades K-2 from 2/7 - 3/13
 - Themes are: catapults, egg drops, marshmallow towers, the science of pennies, and making music: shakers & kazoos
 - These students have presented at the Farmington Library (same students who did Finance in Advance)