

West Hartford Public Library Board Agenda

Monday, January 27, 2025 - 6:30 p.m.

Noah Webster Board Room

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of the Consent Agenda (Items 3a, 3b, and 3c)
 - a. Approval of the Minutes of the October 28, 2024 Meeting
 - b. Library Administrative report
 - c. Budget report
4. Chair's Report
 - a. Election of Officers – Gail Crockett
 - b. Director's Evaluation – Gail Crockett
5. Business Items
 - a. FY26 Budget – Laura Irmscher
 - b. Library Board bylaws discussion
 - c. Next Meeting date (scheduled for 2/24/25) – Gail Crockett
6. Director's Report – Laura Irmscher
7. Adjournment
 - a. Next Meeting is tbd.

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 January 24, 2025.

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MINUTES
Monday, October 28, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice -Chair EJ Greenspan called the Library Board to order at 6:33 p.m. Present were Board members Kim Cohen, Eileen Daly, and Natalia Menjivar, Library Director Laura Irmischer, and Heidi Reagan, recorder, and invited guests, Kari Karp and Abigail Simard. Chair, Gail Crockett was absent.

2. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA (Items 2a, 2b. and 2c)

- a. Approval of the Minutes of the September 23, 2024, Meeting.
- b. Library Administrative reports.
- c. Budget Report.

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

3. CHAIR’S REPORT – none

4. STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Teen Department

- a. Kari Karp and Abigail Simard presented some of the projects and programs the Teen Department is currently working on

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

- a. 2024 – 2025 Holiday Schedule – Laura Irmischer
 - i. Laura asked the committee to reconsider the time the Library will close on December 24 to 2pm.

MOTION: On a motion made by EJ Greenspan and seconded by Natalia Menjivar, the Board unanimously approved to close the Noah Webster and Faxon Libraries at 2pm on December 24 and to not open the Bishops Corner Library that day at all (since they normally don’t open until 1pm on Tuesdays).

- b. Sunday Schedule for 2025 – Laura Irmischer
 - i. Laura presented the dates for ten Sundays for the Library to be open in early 2025.

MOTION: On a motion made by Eileen Daly and seconded by Natalia Menjivar, the Board unanimously approved the Sunday schedule as presented.

- c. Library Board Meeting Schedule for 2025

MOTION: On a motion made by Kim Cohen and seconded by Natalia Menjivar, the Board unanimously approved the Library Board meeting schedule as presented.

- d. Cancelling the Library Board’s December 23, 2024 meeting

November and December 2024 Administrative Report

Staff Recognition Breakfast

Every year the Town hosts a holiday breakfast and recognizes staff who have reached milestone anniversaries in 2024. [We-ha.com](https://www.we-ha.com) wrote a nice article about the event.

This year 9 library staff were recognized:

- Sara Bartelmo (5 years)
- Bailey Berardino (10 years)
- Stephanie Laorden (5 years)
- Heather Pease (30 years)
- Heidi Reagan (10 years)
- Deborah Roe (10 years)
- Cindy Wall (5 years)
- Carol Waxman (40 years)
- Lauren Yarnall (5 years)

Kindness Project

The 8th annual Kindness Project ran November 12 – December 13. Collection bins were out in all three buildings and donations were robust again this year. Teen volunteers sorted and packed the donations for the West Hartford Food Pantry, Fern Street Universalist Church and the nurses' offices at Hall and Conard High Schools.

Inspired by the book *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio, a story of learning to show compassion and kindness towards others, Carol and Bailey created a project in 2017 to help children and adults in the community. They were interviewed by the local NBC News channel on November 13 to inform the local community about the project. There is no doubt that the 8th annual Kindness Project was a huge success and that the community was generous and thoughtful.

Make and Give Celebration

In November and December, we encouraged everyone to give handmade gifts to family, friends, and the community, and hosted several hands-on activities including Perler bead holiday keychains, custom mugs, ceramic ornaments, and more. Community members of all ages came together to make warm and cozy blankets for [West Hartford Animal Control](#) as part of their Adopt-a-Pet initiative. Blankets will provide animals with comfort when they transition from the shelter to their “fur-ever” home. Altogether, we made 13 blankets!



More than a Phone

We are collaborating with an organization called [More Than a Phone](#) to collect old phones that are then distributed to domestic abuse survivors. More than a Phone works with local nonprofits to distribute phones to survivors in need to keep them connected and safe. For anyone who wishes to donate a phone to this organization, they can bring them to any of our library locations. We have directions for erasing the data and passcode from the phone, then we pass it on to More Than a Phone.

Dignity Totes

We launched another initiative to help our neighbors in need by starting to offer Dignity Totes at all of our locations. The Hartford-based organization [Dignity Grows](#) provides the library with tote bags containing essential toiletry items. We opted to display the totes on retail-style bag stands in areas where patrons could easily find them without having to request them from staff to align with the organization's statement that "Human dignity should not be considered a luxury." Signage for the bags is in English and Spanish.



Strategic Plan Committee Reports

Committee #1 – Expand Access to Library Resources

Rebecca Nugent (chair), Gen Francis, Ellen Phillips-Willcutts, Karen Polmatier, Brenda Roggeveen

Action Items in progress

Expand public service hours, Lead: Rebecca/Karen

Cost estimations submitted to Laura

Lockers at NWL, Lead: Gen

This was discussed at Operations and is in the information gathering stage

Market LCI App, Lead: Rebecca

Will be referred to Operations

Spanish translations of tech instructions, Lead: Gen/Karen

Will be referred to operations

LCI Libby Classes, Lead: Rebecca

Rebecca was in touch with LCI, they proposed a “train the trainer” session, and the library will give the classes to the patron

Overdrive/Libby instructions, Lead: Rebecca

Rebecca is still working on this, hopes to have finished products in December

Feature Kids ematerials Lead: Rebecca/Ellen

This is in progress

Completed Action Items

- Wireless printing
- Instant Language Asst

Committee #2 – Increase Awareness of Library Services and Reach New Users

Carol Waxman (chair), Marie Callahan, Leah Farrell, Amy Gallent, Desiree Meyer, Lisa Tanen-La Fontaine, Janelle Walsh

Contacting Educational Institutions in West Hartford

A form was included in elementary school newsletters at the end of October with a QR code for families to use to register for library cards. Unfortunately, we only had 3 submissions. However, schools may continue to include the form and there may be additional submissions via this method in the future.

The committee discussed other ways to reach families of school age or other groups of people:

- Sending a version of the form (quarter size sheet with code) to preschools, parochial schools, private schools and other educational institutions.
- Designing a form that is a quarter size sheet to distribute at community gatherings such as Celebrate West Hartford, the Farmer’s Market, Pride Day, Juneteenth, Halloween Stroll, etc.
- Contact Whole Foods to see if we can distribute the form there.
- Including form in 135 food backpacks distributed in the Fern Street Backpack program.

Welcome Kits for New Card Holders

Create Welcome Kits to offer to new card holders (1 per person or family).

Carol will meet with Laura to decide on a reasonable budget to produce Kits.

Kits will be designed and produced over a 6-month period, with the goal of starting distribution in June.

Leah has experience purchasing items for similar Kits and will take the lead in working with vendors on products and pricing.

Items will be packed into a paper gift bag with a sticker to identify the library.

Metrics: track who receives Kits using a field in Sierra.

Items that may be included in Welcome Kit:

- Car magnet
- Phone case card holder
- Bookmark with library information
- Mugs? – use those already here?
- Pens (already have plenty)
- Sticker for water bottle or laptop

All items will be contained in a paper gift bag with a label with library logo

Welcoming Back Inactive and Expired Card Holders

We will send a friendly email to people on a list of inactive and expired users that Rebecca has created. The email will include information about programs and services happening at the library and a message saying that we would like to have our former patrons regain active status.

Further discussion on whether these users will receive an incentive to renew their cards will take place later.

Food Resources

The Programs and Publicity team is working to edit and decrease the amount of information into readable format before publishing.

Welcome Events for New Users

Planning for these events will take place after the Welcome Kit project is complete and the Kits are ready to for distribution.

Committee #5 – Improve Building Experience for All Types of Users

Andrew Piro (chair), Bailey Berardino, Jae Douglas, Hannah Hokanson, Katie Kottas

Here's what Committee 5 has been up to this past month:

- The committee met to review progress on action items and discuss new business. New ideas include purchasing totes that patrons can use in the library and/or check out to bring items home.
- The Bishops Corner Story Room has been painted and Bailey is currently working with vendors to identify new furniture for the space.
- Eating areas at NWL are up and running – in the new book area on the adult level and outside of the BBS elevator on the Children's level. Katie and Hannah communicated with custodial staff, arranged for trash cans and cleaning supplies to be kept nearby, worked with P&P on signage, and shared the news on SharePoint.
- Andrew provided Heidi with a list of action items that the town might be able to help with. Heidi provided updates on projects that have already been submitted and will work on submitting tickets for new projects, emphasizing work that could be bundled together.

Recent Media

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

[Ballet Hartford Offers Program For Children, Returning To West Hartford With 'Holiday Happenings'](#) (we-ha.com)

[Connecticut celebrates World Kindness Day](#) (NBC Connecticut)

[West Hartford Garden Club Shares Recent Successes](#) (we-ha.com)

[West Hartford Marks Native American Heritage Month](#) (Patch)

[West Hartford Teens Have Friendly Face At Library](#) (Patch)

[West Hartford's 'Kindness Project' Collecting Aid For Those In Need](#) (Patch)

Staff Updates

Recruitment

We're excited to welcome these new staff to our team:

Anthony Hubbard – PT Page, Circulation

Francisco Devevo – PT Office Assistant, Studio 20 South



December GOAT – Cherokee Cowherd

In November the GOAT was hard at work in the Studio. Fortunately, he didn't have far to go in December - Kate passed the GOAT to Cherokee Cowherd!

Cherokee is such an asset to the Studio 20 team in so many ways. Her skills on our equipment are impressive to say the least. There's nothing she can't do on the 3D printer! She even created one of our signs in braille. She is patient with all the patrons and everyone one who comes in for a project most definitely leaves smarter just by hanging with her. I've gone to her Workshops just to learn from her, too! She shares her time with the Makerspace in Hartford and brings so much creativity and skill to our library. We

are very lucky to have her.

Most of all though, she is a good person. She is generous with her time and talents, and her beautiful smile. Cherokee is a treasure!

-Kate

January GOAT – Benson Thai

This month, Cherokee passed the GOAT to Benson!

Benson is part of the Studio 20 South crew, where he specializes in sound engineering. Whether patrons need a hand with recording music, a podcast, or really anything else, Benson's expertise ensures it will come out sounding great. Benson also offers weekly Tech Help at Faxon, utilizing his patience and tech know-how to great effect. When not at work sharing his talents, you can find Benson playing guitar or watching movies.



Community Engagement & Outreach

Ellen visited 3 of 5 Pre-K classrooms at COIA (Charter Oak) for stories and songs and handed out library bookmarks and stickers to go home to parents. Ellen and Carol also visited Webster Hill to meet and greet families and register them for library cards.

The Building Connection Book Club had its final class of the Fall Session at Faxon on 11/20/2024. This program is a partnership between the West Hartford Library and Golden Door for Immigrants and is funded by a Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Community Grant.

Pramod helped record and edit the 6th episode of the Trout Brook Tales podcast at the Faxon Library. Trout Brook Tales is a podcast that explores people, places and events throughout West Hartford's rich history. It was officially launched on February 6, 2024. In episode 6 Chuck Coursey interviewed Mary Martha Donohue, host of Grating the Nutmeg Podcast to talk about the History of Elizabeth Park & Elizabeth and Charles Pond.



Adult Services & Programs

We held a party to celebrate the first year of the West Hartford Tabletop Game Club (WHTTGC), enjoying snacks, playing board games, and planning the full schedule for 2025. This diverse group is made up of people from all walks of life, including some who had never played a tabletop game in their life but are now passionate, engaged players. The group members wanted to convey their thanks to all library staff for how welcoming and accommodating they have been.

The Garden Club has been hard at work every Tuesday sorting seeds for the 2025 Seed Library! Our annual kickoff event is happening Saturday, March 8.



Local History

2024 ended with 331 local history reference interactions (in-person and off-site)

Patron interest areas: Genealogy, yearbooks, house history

Collection additions:

- A few items from Ellen Ash Peters, first female State Supreme Court Justice (and Chief), that were brought in by the folks that bought her old house. Apparently, her family left some things behind and said they did not want them.
- Sandborn maps for West Hartford in 1963, a great resource for town development, from Finn at the Town offices.
- With Kilfoil funds we added *West Hartford Cookery* to our local cookbook collection.

Highlights:

- There was a younger patron that spent a lot of time researching trains that operated in town and the rest of the rail throughout central CT in the 19th century.
- One request was for a house that was built by Jacob Lippman who began the New England Novelty and Calendar Co., widely accepted as the first promotional item (aka swag) company in the country. Company still exists too!

Branch Libraries

Bishops Corner

Bailey has continued running Family Storytime during this “off storytime session” to give families a drop in option and it has been very successful. She has had a number of new families joining and discovering the BC branch.

Faxon

Michele Urban had a full house (46) at Faxon for a Submarine Serenade with preschoolers and parents.



Children's Services & Programs

Programs

My Productions CT presented Video Games and Crafts for Grades 1-5 on November 5 (no school due to election). The event featured 4 Nintendo Switch Consoles and HD projects, Meta Quest 2 VR systems and assorted 3D printer and handmade crafts.



A Native American Beading Workshop to celebrate Native American Indian Heritage Month for students in grades 3-6 to create earrings was held on November 20.



The Connecticut Concert Ballet of Manchester performed selections from The Nutcracker with dancers in full costumes. This annual production, held at the West Hartford Conference Center and supported by the Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Charitable Trust, is a much-anticipated annual event and a favorite of local families.

Updates

Two classes of second grade students from the Whiting Lane School visited the Noah Webster Library. Carol read stories on the theme of children overcoming challenges and being bold and brave. The students completed a library scavenger hunt designed by their teachers.

Teen Services

Programs

- Book Turkeys
- Candle Workshop @ WeHa Candle Co. (filled up in less than a day!)

Updates

- Mayor's Youth Council Special Meeting
 - Upcoming Outreach: Screenagers, Holiday Stroll, Teen Skate Night
 - Meeting Dates 2025-2026
 - Serve CT Grant
- TAB Meeting (Hybrid)
 - Meet Abby Simard
 - Mural Reception
 - Taylor Swift Activities
 - Outreach Invites
 - Teen Room Movie Script
- WHiT Meeting
 - Sweet Support Bake Sale
 - Trout Brook Tales Podcast
 - Serve CT Grant - "Diversiteen" Cultural Fair

- MYC members did their first outreach event by hosting a rock painting table at Bristow for a screening and panel of the film **Screenagers**
- WHiT Sweet Support Bake Sale at Hall
 - Kari Karp, WHiT members, and Mayor's Youth Council Diversity & Cultural Appreciation subcommittee members baked
 - The group earned \$202.58 for Golden Door Hartford / 2 West Hartford Families from Eritrea and Somalia



(Diego, Anaya, and Yimin from WHiT @ Hall)

The Teen Mural Reception celebrated the unveiling of the new mural in the Noah Webster Library Teen Room. The mural was painted by students in the Creative Leadership Program at RiseUP for Arts studio in Hartford. At the event, participants heard speeches from the muralists, listened to live music, and enjoyed light refreshments as they appreciated this teen-led community art installation.

MOTION: On a motion made by Natalia Menjivar and seconded by Eileen Daly, the Board unanimously approved to cancel the December 23, 2024 Library Board meeting.

6. Director's Report – Laura Irmischer

- a. West Hartford Reads!, featuring Jacqueline Woodson, was a huge success with 276 people, many of them children, in attendance.
- b. Babies Love Books is a new program launched at Faxon in September, with nine families representing countries from all over the world attending.
- c. The new Community Center and Library project is still in the early stages, but progress is being made and the architects are responsive to the Library's needs.
- d. Spooktober featuring our new intern, Mr. Bones, has kept everyone busy with programs, crafts, a special Storytime at Bishops, and a movie screening of The Shining.
- e. Last week's Staff Day included a presentation by Melissa Henowitz, our HR rep, a department spotlight on Programs and Publicity, the launching of our new staff intranet, and training opportunities on our new Language Translator.
- f. We've had a lot of Outreach Events this past month as part of our Strategic Plan to meet the community outside the Library.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: The Library Board Meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:05 p.m. The next scheduled Board Meeting is November 18, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Cohen
Board Secretary
West Hartford Library Board

Library Financials - January 2025**General Fund**

Rollup Code Description	Period Actuals	YTD Actuals	Original Budget	Available Budget
GF-Library-Personal	233,018.01	1,651,247.18	2,821,945.00	1,170,697.82
GF-Library-NonPers	40,028.07	413,168.20	671,637.00	258,468.80
GF-Library-Sundry	16,352.08	114,781.59	211,667.00	96,885.41

BYLAWS
of the
WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD
West Hartford, CT

ARTICLE I - Purpose and Administration

Section 1.1 Purpose

The objectives and purposes of the Library Board of the Town of West Hartford, Connecticut (the "Board") are those set forth in the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended, and in the Charter of the Town of West Hartford, as amended.

Section 1.2 Administration/Function

The general functions and duties of the Board shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

1. To manage and control the free public library system of the Town of West Hartford;
2. To make and adopt bylaws, rules and regulations for the governance of the library system;
3. The authority to act as trustee for any property or income designated for public library purposes;
4. To purchase, lease or accept grounds, and erect, lease or occupy an appropriate building or buildings, for the use of the public library system of the Town of West Hartford;
5. To appoint the Director of Library Services and, when necessary for the good of the Town of West Hartford, to remove such Director ;
6. To recommend to the West Hartford Town Council the salary, benefits and other compensation for the Director of Library Services;
7. To perform such duties and have such powers as are, or may be imposed upon or vested in library boards by the Connecticut General Statutes;
8. To assume such duties, responsibilities and authority, which are not inconsistent with, or which may be assigned to it by ordinance not inconsistent with, the Connecticut General Statutes or with the Charter of the town of West Hartford.

ARTICLE II - Name

The Board shall be known as the Library Board of the Town of West Hartford, Connecticut.

ARTICLE III – Membership

Section 3.1 Members

The Board shall consist of five members who must be electors of the Town of West Hartford, appointed by the Town Council for five-year overlapping terms commencing January 1.

Section 3.2 Term

A Board member shall serve a maximum of two terms.

ARTICLE IV - Officers and their Duties

Section 4.1 Officers

The officers of the board shall consist of a chair, vice-chair and a secretary. Each officer shall be elected from among the appointed members at the regular annual meeting.

Section 4.2 Term

A term of office for an officer of the board shall be one year. No member may serve more than two consecutive such terms in the same office.

Section 4.3 Roles

- a. The Chair shall preside at all meetings; shall authorize calls for special meetings; shall be the spokesperson and representative of the Board for all public functions and activities related to West Hartford government, including the budget process, and shall generally perform the duties associated with that office.
- b. The Vice-Chair shall act as assistant to the Chair, and assume all duties of the Chair in the absence of such Chair.
- c. The Secretary shall have the responsibility of seeing to it that a true and accurate account of the proceedings of Board meetings is kept and maintained, and that such account is recorded and filed with the proper authorities. Such responsibilities may be delegated to the Board's staff.

ARTICLE V – Committees

There are no Standing Committees of the Library Board. Ad Hoc Committees may be established as needed and as determined by the Members. Each ad hoc committee shall be established for a particular project or purpose and shall be in place only for the duration of such project. Additional members of the public community may be appointed to an ad hoc committee, and shall be determined by the Board who are administering such ad hoc committee.

ARTICLE VI- Meetings

Section 6.1 Schedule of Meetings

A regular meeting shall be held each month. The dates and hour of the monthly meetings will be set by the Board at its regular Annual Meeting. The time and place of meetings may be changed by vote of the Board at any regular or special meeting.

Section 6.2 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Board shall take place each January. The Annual Meeting shall be for the purpose of the election of officers, the meeting schedule, plus any regular business scheduled for the month.

Following the Annual Meeting, the Board shall file with the Town Council a copy of the minutes, including the schedule of meetings and the elected officers in accordance with S5-1 of the West Hartford Code.

Section 6.3 Special Meetings

Special meetings of the Board may be called by the Chair when it is deemed to be for the best interest of the organization or at the written request of at least two Board members. Members shall be notified of such meeting at least three days before the scheduled date. Notice shall include date, time, place and purpose of the meeting. Notice shall be publicly posted at least twenty-four hours before the Special Meeting.

Section 6.4 Quorum

A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of three members of the Board.

Section 6.5 Public Session

All Board meetings shall be open to the public when in session. The Board shall hear comments from the public, or take testimony from the public, regarding agenda items as the first item of Board business at meetings. The Board reserves the authority to limit the length of such public comments and/or testimony.

Section 6.6 Executive Session

The Board may hold an executive session, at which the public is excluded, for discussion concerning personnel matters, pending litigation, security strategy, or other reasons stated in Chapter 14, Section 1-200 of the Connecticut State Statutes.

Section 6.7 Order of Business

The order of business shall be that of the published agenda, unless the Board votes to amend the agenda.

Section 6.8 Voting

Every Board Member shall be entitled to one vote, in person or by other technological communication.

ARTICLE VII - Director of Library Services

Section 7.1 Responsibilities

The Director of Library Services shall be responsible to the Board for the operation of the West Hartford Public Library system and shall carry out policies as established by the Board. Subject to such rules and regulations as may be adopted pursuant to the merit system provisions contained in the Charter of the Town of West Hartford, the Director of Library Services shall have the right to appoint and remove all other employees in the West Hartford Public Library system and shall prescribe their duties.

Section 7.2 - Duties

The Director of Library Services shall be responsible for the efficiency of library service to the public and for the operation of the library, for the direction of the library staff, and for the care and maintenance of library property within the limitations of the approved budget.

Section 7.3 - Board

The Director of Library Services shall attend all meetings of the Board, shall participate in discussions and offer professional advice, but shall be denied a vote upon any question.

ARTICLE VIII - Governing Rules

All Board meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE IX – Amendments

Amendment of the Bylaws requires a minimum of three affirmative votes of Board members present, provided that written notice of the proposed amendment shall have been mailed to all members at least ten (10) days prior to that meeting.

[Adopted: October 20, 1987; Revised: October 20, 1992; November 17, 1992, September 21, 2009]