

West Hartford Public Library Board Agenda

Wednesday, February 19, 2025 - 6:00 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 February 12, 2025 Special Meeting
 - b. Library Administrative report
 - c. Budget report
4. Chair's Report
5. Business Items
 - a. Staff Day: April 3, 2025 (Library closed 10am – 2pm)
 - b. Close at 3pm Friday, July 25, 2025 (day before BookWorm Fest)
 - c. Legislative update – Laura Irmscher
6. Director's Report – Laura Irmscher
7. Executive Session

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200(6)A) to discuss the annual performance and evaluation of the West Hartford Public Library Director.
8. Adjournment
 - a. Next Meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 24, 2025.

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 February 19, 2025, or by attending the meeting in person.

West Hartford Public Library Board Minutes
Virtual Meeting
Wednesday, February 12, 2025, 5:30pm
Special Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gail Crockett called the Library Board to order at 5:40pm. Present, virtually, were Board members Kim Cohen, Eileen Daly, EJ Greenspan, Director Laura Irmischer, and Heidi Reagan, recorder.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: On a motion made by Kim Cohen and seconded by EJ Greenspan, the Board went into Executive Session to discuss the annual performance and evaluation of the West Hartford Public Library Director, Laura Irmischer at 5:45pm.

Board Members Eileen Daly, Kim Cohen, Gail Crockett, and EJ Greenspan attended the Executive Session

The Board returned to the meeting at 6:40pm.

3. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: On a motion made by EJ Greenspan and seconded by Kim Cohen the Library Board Meeting was unanimously adjourned at 6:41pm. The next scheduled Board meeting is February 19, 2025, at 6:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Daly
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.com/whctv5

January 2025 Administrative Report

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The 76th Annual Celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights took place on January 15th at West Hartford Town Hall. The West Hartford Public Library and the West Hartford Human Rights Commission co-hosted this event. There were 34 participants reading articles from the declaration in 21 languages. The celebration also included a keynote address by Ashley Phan, an activist and child trafficking survivor and founder and CEO of We Are One, a grassroots anti-human trafficking non-profit organization, and vibrant performances by Ballet Folklorico del Perú and a Nepali dance group. Seven organizations, including the West Hartford Library, shared valuable resources through information tables. West Hartford Community Interactive TV broadcast this event live, and it can now be viewed on its [website](#).

Children's Preschool Room Update

The Preschool Room at the Noah Webster Library is once again open and ready, after a two-week closure to be painted and patched, cleaned and refreshed. Children, parents and grandparents have enjoyed experiencing new computers, furniture and play activities at the branch libraries and will now appreciate new STEM activities, kitchen play, wall manipulative activities, a magnet board and a puzzle table plus study tables at the Noah Webster Library.

The Wilder gift, a generous contribution from former Library Board Chair Michael J. Wilder, has made it possible for our three libraries to refresh their children's spaces.



Puzzle Table and Benches



Magnet Activity Wall



Wall activity toys



Grocery Cubby in Play Kitchen Corner

Gayle Forman

Teen Services partnered with Voices of Hope, a non-profit educational organization created by descendants of Holocaust survivors from across Connecticut, to bring Gayle Forman, a young adult fiction author from Brooklyn to the West Hartford Public Library. Gayle is best known for her novels *If I Stay*, which topped the New York Times best sellers list of Young Adult Fiction and was made into a film of the same name, and her latest book *Not Nothing*, a tale of intergenerational friendship forged through a shared understanding of loss, about a boy assigned to spend his summer volunteering at a senior living facility and learning unexpected lessons. *Not Nothing* was read for a book club at the Noah Webster Library attended by middle school students and their parents, a week before the visit.

The Library Meeting Room was filled with parents and their children, members of the Mayor's Youth Council, aspiring fiction writers and students from Sedgwick Middle School. Everyone agreed that Gayle Forman's presentation was spellbinding and memorable as she described her own family's experience with the Holocaust and being new immigrants in America and how these experiences must be kept in mind in today's world.



At dinner afterwards to celebrate Gayle, she remarked to our table of librarians (both public and school) as well as a member of Voices of Hope, that she was in awe of the strong partnership created to offer this event and how much we support and admire each other.



From left to right – Abby, Carol, Robin Landau from Voices of hope, Kari and Gayle Forman

Strategic Plan Committee Reports

Committee #1 – Expand Access to Library Resources

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

The strategic planning group #1 met to discuss in-progress action items and goals for 2025

Existing action items that will be worked on in 2025

Spanish tech instructions: **Improve patron experience when using library technology, Expand library services in languages other than English**

Libby classes in person **Develop programming on the use of e-materials**

Instructions for downloadables - **Develop programming on the use of e-materials**

Feature kids ematerials **Develop programming on the use of e-materials**

New action items to be entered that will be worked on in 2025

Change online card form **Improve patron experience when using library technology**

Improve payments options for wireless printing **Improve patron experience when using library technology**

Expand catalog of early education apps for school readiness on new kids computers at branches **Improve patron experience when using library technology**

Instructions videos for website : ebooks, museum passes, PINs **Improve patron experience when using library technology, Develop programming on the use of e-materials**

Explore expansion of hotspot program **Improve patron experience when using library technology**

Expand lockers at BC **Improve patron experience when using library technology**

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

This committee met most recently on January 28, 2025. Discussions included:

The Welcome Kit grant requested in the amount of \$5000 from the West Hartford Library Foundation has been granted.

- Laura, Leah and Carol will meet to discuss first steps in planning for the patron Welcome Kits.
- A sub-committee of this group will be formed to determine what the kits will include, how they will be distributed, what age groups will receive them first, what merchandise will be purchased, the average cost of one Kit and how far the funding will take us.
- Discussion will also include distribution of kits on special library anniversaries.

Leah will send a QR code sheet to the Fern Street backpack program in the near future to be included in the 190 bags they distribute weekly.

Carol will be talking to Katie about distributing library card applications or the QR code sheet at the West Hartford Food Pantry. Suzanne Oslander has expressed interest in offering the opportunity to apply for library cards to the Food Pantry participants.

Leah will be forming an outreach committee in the near future. Members of Committee #2 might join this committee to be trained in outreach techniques.

Lisa Tanen-La Fontaine will visit Whole Foods to register shoppers for library cards soon.

Leah will attend the Wellness Fair at St. Joseph University with a member of Committee #2.

Carol will be registering children for library cards at Charter Oak Global Academy in March. The children's team will register families for library cards at all summer reading events.

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:

- Bishops Corner Story Room – Bailey is still exploring options for furniture.
- Nursing Area – Once funding is identified, Hannah is ready to move forward with the project.

- **Preschool Room Refresh** – Although the committee did not initiate this project, we submitted it as a strategic plan action item to document significant building improvements.
- **Meeting Room** – Laura and Leah met to review the list of Meeting Room improvements submitted by the subcommittee and that group will be meeting next week to discuss next steps.
- **Town asks** – Heidi provided the committee with updates on the town work requests we submitted. The highlight is the repair of the pillars on the South Main Street side of NWL.
- **Here's what we'd like to focus on in the new year:**
 - **Katie**
 - Modify the Circ desk to make it more welcoming
 - Offer circulating tote bags and umbrellas
 - **Andrew:**
 - Inventory patron chairs and purchase new chairs to replace what's broken and improve functionality
 - Increase study space locations
 - Weed the Reference Room as a precursor to improvements to the Reference Room and Media Room
 - **Jae:**
 - Increase study space locations
 - Improve charging and outlet access through the library
 - **Bailey:**
 - Weeding and shifting
 - **Hannah:**
 - Exploring options for a new project to focus on

Recent Media

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

[Adult Role-Playing Game Club Seeks Participants in West Hartford](#) (Patch & MSN)

[Cozy Community Puzzling Event Planned In West Hartford](#) (we-ha.com)

[Fill Out Brackets For West Hartford Library's Book Tournament](#) (Patch)

[Turn That Empty Wine Bottle Into Art At West Hartford Program](#) (Patch)

[West Hartford Classes To Help Folks With Computer Literacy](#) (Patch)

Staff Updates

Departures

We said goodbye to these staff members and wish them all the best:

Monica Khersonsky – PT Office Assistant, IT

February GOAT – Kevin Behan



LOTS OF BOOK CART RIDES AHEAD THIS MONTH...

This month, Benson has passed the GOAT to Kevin Behan! Kevin is a page at NWL where he works tirelessly to keep our stacks organized. No elevator? No problem. Kevin worked through elevator repairs, helping out in the effort to get books up to the mezzanine and holds down to the Circ desk. Kevin is always willing to go out his way to lend a helping hand, whether that's by helping to search for a book or by setting up for programs or events happening at the library. Congrats Kevin!

Adult Services & Programs

FEATURED PROGRAMS

[Introduction to Artificial Intelligence: Concepts, Demos, and Safety](#)

- 95 attended virtually, recording available on the [WHPL YouTube channel](#).

[Begin the New Year with the Healing Power of Meditation](#)

- 51 attended virtually

[West Hartford Tabletop Game Club: Season 4 Game Day](#)

- 39 attended in-person

[The Bushnell: Behind the Scenes Tours](#)

- 51 attended in-person

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights Celebration and Live Reading](#)

- 75 attended in-person (at Town Hall)

[Gardening Workshop Series: Winter Sowing](#)

- 60 attended in-person

[Winter Cardinal Wine Bottle Paint Night with Lindsey's Craft Studio](#)

- 35 attended virtually, recording available on the Library's YouTube channel [here](#).

Technology Classes

The first class in this three part series focused on email and internet basics and the Noah Webster class was nearly full. Two more classes are coming, one on iPhones and iPads, and one on virtual meetings.

ADULT PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS (NWL, FAX, BC)	
STANDALONE Programs	5
Attendance	264
Avg. Attendance	53
RECURRING Programs	21
Attendance	149
Avg. Attendance	7
TOTAL Programs	26
Attendance	413
Avg. Attendance	16

Winter Madness Book Tournament

This week we launched the Winter Madness Book Tournament and the first round of voting begins January 21. There's been a constant stream of patrons stopping to admire the beautiful bracket Leslie created near the stairs by the reference desk!

Studio TV

Notice anything new about the Studio? We got the TV in our window up and running showing photos and videos of studio workshops and projects. Come check it out!

Tote-ally Unique Tote Bags

Kate and Cherokee hosted this fun program. Attendees made custom tote bag designs using our new sublimation printer and our Cricut equipment.



BookWorm Fest

Hear ye, hear ye! We are ramping up our work on BookWorm Fest 2025 with the formation of working groups to tackle the many moving parts of this mammoth event. Mark your calendars for Saturday, July 26. We can't wait to celebrate all things fantasy and adventure with our colleagues and the community.

[Gertrude Blanks Storytelling Event](#)

This year we are honoring educator and storyteller Gertrude Blanks with an exhibit about her life (thanks to Brett!), a children's program, and a storytelling event with the theme "Everyone's Grandmother: Stories of the People Who Shaped Us." The theme is inspired by a description of Gertrude given by her friend and fellow storyteller Andre Keitt. We hope you can join us for the big event on Thursday, March 20!

[Branch Libraries](#)

Faxon

The new Tuesday Preschool Craft Lab at Faxon is off to a great start, with 29 children and adults in the room last week for pipe cleaner crafts and playtime. Faxon's Mother Goose also has good attendance, with people still on the waitlist.

Teens in grades 6-12 had a blast at the new Teen Maker Lab program! They learned and explored their creativity by designing 3D models with TinkerCad and also made custom buttons using our button-making machine.

Building challenges

Most of everyone's time at the branches recently was spent dealing with building issues. Faxon has a mouse infestation (possible points of entry have been identified and are being addressed and nightly cleaning is an on-going struggle that we're working through). One of the automatic door buttons at Bishops Corner gave up on life and the carport at Faxon flipped over in the wind. Let's all hope next month is kinder to the branches!

Children's Services & Programs

Photos below from the very successful Moms and More Book Swap held on Saturday, January 11. Eighty-five people attended, bringing many bags of children's and adult books. Families took home 10 books and the remainder were brought to the Little Free Libraries in town. Moms and More representatives expressed interest in making this an annual event.



A first-grade class from Renbrook School visited on January 29 as part of their unit about a library's role in the community.



Teen Services Programs

WHiT (Button Making in Studio 20)

- Teens had a blast making collage pins for their table at the UN Declaration of Human Rights celebration

SAT Class

Teens in grades 9-12 had the opportunity to take a practice digital SAT test, find out their results, and participate in a Q&A session with [College Prep by Design](#) to help prepare for the March SAT.

Updates

Library Card Sign Up Day at Hall

- Lots of teens studying for midterms and checking out fiction this week

Conard Translation Club



- Made buttons for Multicultural Storytime

WHiT Special Meeting

- Prep for Multicultural Fair 2/12 @ Hall

Library Financials - February 2025

General Fund

Description	YTD Actuals	Original Budget	Available Budget
Library-Personal	1,886,135.03	2,821,945.00	935,809.97
Library-NonPers	434,094.29	671,637.00	237,542.71
Library-Sundry	131,187.73	211,667.00	80,479.27