DRAFT
The Bloomfield Public Library Board of Trustees
Conference Remote Meeting
https://youtube.com/live/cT92xldcneg?feature=share
September 8, 2026

Attendance: Elizabeth Lane (*Library Director*), Erin Corbett (*Chairperson*), Patrick DeLorenzo (*Vice-Chairperson*), Sherry-Ann Chance, Harvey Frydman, Angela LaBella (*Friends of the Bloomfield Public Libraries*), Christopher Siloac (*Assistant Director*), Allison Wilkos (*Assistant Director*)

Absent: Claudia Gwardyak, Beverlee Merritt

Quorum present? Yes, 4 of 6

E. Corbett called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

Roll Call – C. Gwardyak and B. Merritt were noted as absent.

Citizens' Statements and Petitions – There were no citizens' statements.

Report from the Friends of the Bloomfield Public Libraries

Friends' Report – The Friends will kick off their new membership campaign in October with an updated brochure, plus send out letters to past members and different groups. The new database system, Little Green Light, makes it easier to communicate with members and allows for online applications and payments. A. LaBella thanked librarian Sara Ray for her assistance with Canva and the new brochure. She also thanked the town's communications department, particularly Romano Tucker, for his help getting the Friends' messaging out. The Friends will be doing their first outreach event at the Senior Expo and will be stationed next to the library. They are launching a new table cover that features their logo.

Chairperson's Report – There was no chairperson's report.

Director's Report

Employee of the Quarter – E. Lane acknowledged Kim Ketcham as BPL's employee of the quarter from back in March and read the nomination into the record:

With budgeting season and the fiscal year speeding to a conclusion, it seems a perfect time to nominate BPL's singular business manager, Kim, for employee of the quarter. I say singular because Kim is not quite like other library business managers. For one, she is a professional librarian and regularly works the service desk. In fact, she excels at it. With the library short-staffed, Kim has frequently been diverted from number crunching and payroll to work the desk. We've jokingly advised her to stop serving the public so well. Kim improves staff morale with fun things like celebrating Jane Austen's birthday with tea and British treats. Of course, it's Kim's guidance of the business operation through rapid changes that stands out the most. She anticipated the collapse of book-giant Baker & Taylor last year and rapidly moved BPL to another vendor, ensuring opening day collections for McMahon and Prosser. This past

quarter, she has continually analyzed the library budget, flagged concerns with solutions, and forecasted the remainder of the fiscal year. Kim has only been with BPL for 16 months, but her flexible skill-set, vision, and collegiality have made her a foundational pillar of the revitalized Bloomfield Public Library system.

State Laptop Program – The state library, working with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, has started the new Laptop Connect program, which provides laptops for loan through libraries. BPL received 29 laptops: 5 will be used for onsite use, and 24 will be distributed for long term loans. The public advertising for this program began before libraries received the laptops. The program involves a training component, so it will take some time to work out how BPL will implement it.

Federal and State Funding – E. Lane is keeping an eye on federal and state levels in terms of where money is going. Issues with early literacy are being targeted, such as the $10 million federal grant for targeted reading intervention in schools that was received by Connecticut's Department of Education. E. Lane wishes public libraries were included more in these initiatives. She noted the way the library is already doing early literacy interventions through 1000 Books Before Kindergarten, storytimes, and other early literacy initiatives.

Library Card Sign-up Month – September is Library Card Sign-up Month. BPL currently has 7,502 card holders. E. Lane reminded everyone of the following: library cards are free from birth; all Bloomfield residents are eligible for library cards; there are two colors to choose from; and each card comes as a pair, with a keychain and credit card sized card. Cards need to be renewed every three years. The board discussed card sign-up at the library's outreach initiatives, including the technological aspects. The library would like to do more BPL Everywhere card sign ups in the future, now that Polaris makes it easier to access the system. E. Corbett asked if the library can send emails to notify people that their cards need to be renewed and expressed an interest in adding the number of expired cards to the monthly reporting. E. Lane said she would look into doing both in the future.

New Library Staff – BPL has welcomed three new part-time librarians—Vanessa Kelman, Marisa Tassinari, and Rosie Luther—all of whom are currently cross-training at both libraries. The library is also in the process of interviewing candidates for the part-time library assistant position. There were an overwhelming number of applicants, so library experience is a must. There will be at least one candidate hired at 10-15 hours per week from the pool, but additional candidates could be hired depending on their availability. E. Lane spoke about the challenge of filling gaps with part-time staff and noted that the new part-time librarians have a lot of youth experience, which is needed now. E. Lane reemphasized the size of the candidate pool and the need for library experience to be considered. She thanked the human resources department for their assistance.

Town Staffing – E. Lane noted the scope of town staffing changes, including the departure of the Director of Leisure Services and the Director of Finance. A new finance director has been selected from within the organization. The library is working on navigating all the changes and continuing to move things forward. This degree of organizational change impacts everybody.

Summer Interns – In collaboration with Community Workforce Partners, the library hosted four interns this summer. It was a lot of work but also a wonderful experience.

FY26 Annual Reports – Staff is already working on finalizing numbers and starting narratives for FY26 annual reports.

Summer Reading – E. Lane thanked the Friends for funding the entire summer reading program. There were 562 participants this year. Staff is working on final reporting, including a year-over-year comparison to present to the board and the Friends. E. Lane thanked youth librarian Donna Merritt for taking the lead this summer.

Building Project Update – The McMahon Wintonbury Library parking lot should be accessible again next week, weather permitting. The remainder of the work will be completed this fall. The pergola is a key component that is still being worked on. The foundation has been approved but not the pergola. E. Lane will continue to advocate for this key part of the project. She thanked the Blue HIlls Fire Department for allowing library staff and patrons to park in their lot during this time. The Prosser parking garage was damaged when a vehicle forced itself in without clearance, despite the signage. The person has been identified. The hope is to have the garage fixed and reopened by the end of the month.

HVAC concerns continue. The resequencing has commenced, and there are still issues being found, like two compressors that were never connected correctly. E. Lane described the complexity of the issues and the challenges that library leadership faces in trying to understand, assess, and advocate. The HVAC issues involve many players, from installers and suppliers to public works, TSKP, and Downes. The library has almost been opened a year, yet there are issues with the system still being discovered. E. Lane is concerned about the financial implications these issues could have on the project, the library, and the town. Concrete is the other big issue. We are currently waiting for samples to be taken and tested from the front plaza. There has been a FOIA request to the town from attorneys of the subcontractors. E. Lane is hoping for a new pour. Landscaping is another lingering issue. The committee has been told that dying plants and bare grass would be addressed in September. The lack of ground cover and weeding responsibilities are other concerns. E. Lane emphasized getting it right before the town takes over. There is also non-warranty work that has still not been done correctly, such as some lighting issues. E. Lane intends to bring these items up at tomorrow night's Library Building Committee (LBC) meeting, but she also stressed the role the library board plays in accepting the LBC's work.

Administrative Load – E. Lane noted that everything going on right now is a heavy lift for the library's administrative team. The team is trying to prioritize wherever possible. The town manager wants to change up the budget process by starting it in September, months earlier than in the past. E. Lane noted concerns with how this process could play out, and the impact it could have on administrative load. She wants the best experience for all Bloomfield residents visiting the library, which requires the administrative team to prioritize and focus.

BPL Everywhere – The library is being more strategic with where we go as part of the BPL Everywhere initiative. The library will be at the upcoming Senior Expo and Auerfarm Fall Festival.

Building Safety – Both libraries had a fire drill with the public in the buildings last week. The drill went well but also revealed some things that needed to be worked on. E. Lane thanked public works and police department for helping refine procedures.

Monthly Statistics – Staff is still compiling August numbers, but program attendance, study room use, and library card sign-ups continue to be strong. P. DeLorenzo asked if it was possible for more detail on program attendance, such as the number of people who attended remotely versus in-person. E. Lane and C. Siloac said it was possible to present more detail, but that the library often collects numbers in accordance with reporting for the state library's annual report. E. Lane and C. Siloac will look for ways to present more detail to the board. The library is working on ways to better quantify BPL Everywhere and BPL Online. E. Lane talked about how much staff time is required for BPL Online and the other technology-related work the library is doing. She talked about the difficulty of quantifying this behind-the-scenes yet essential work.

Old Business

Discussion of Library Building Committee project timeline and impact to library services – LBC updates were part of the Director's Report. E. Corbett asked if there was an impact to services from the work being done. E. Lane noted that the McMahon Wintonbury Library's grand opening will be pushed back to the week of May 3, 2027, so that the new landscaping can be featured in bloom.

New Business

Consider and Take Action Regarding Regularly Scheduled 2027 Library Board Meeting Schedule – The board reviewed the proposed 2027 schedule of regular meetings, which continues with meetings on the second Tuesday of the month and a 6:00 PM start time. As discussed in the previous meeting, the July and August meetings have been removed. E. Corbett reminded the board that special meetings can be held as needed. **MOTION by H. Frydman to accept the proposed board meeting schedule, with the amendment that an asterisk be added to the May 11 meeting to indicate it will be held at McMahon Wintonbury Library**; seconded by P. DeLorenzo and passed unanimously.

Library Director's Annual Evaluation – E. Lane is working on her portion of the evaluation, while E. Corbett has been looking at prior evaluations and becoming familiar with the process. E. Corbett will be paying close attention to work/life balance and prioritizing the use of paid time off in light of all the job demands. E. Corbett asked E. Lane to let the board know if they can provide anything to help with the self-evaluation process. In response to a question from P. DeLorenzo about the deadline, E. Corbett said that the board will receive the evaluation in time to complete the review at the October 13, 2026 meeting.

Discussion of Fiscal Year 2027 and 2028 Budgets – E. Lane stated that the library works on the budget year round, with month to month assessment. She is waiting on guidance from town hall on the management furlough that was included in FY27. As stated previously, the FY28 budget process is starting now. The public will be included in the process, starting in September. In response to a request from E. Corbett, E. Lane explained that this year's budget deliberations included a one-week furlough for

all management staff, but that there is no guidance yet from the human resources department on how it will occur.

Citizens' Statements and Petitions

James Biffer, 17 Terry Plains Rd, stated that back in 2019 many people fought to include in the charge to the building committee the acceptance of both buildings by the library board of trustees. J. Biffer noted that building committee members seem to be confused, mistakenly assuming that when they accept the buildings, the buildings are done. He reiterated the fact that the charge to the building committee says that the library board of trustees must accept the buildings, meaning acceptance will be made on the recommendation of the library director. J. Biffer noted that the HVAC system entailed $3 million of the $34 million spent on Prosser but has not worked from the moment when the wrong system was installed. The system does not maintain temperature and humidity, which negatively affects books. He stated that last winter the staff was wrapped up in blankets due to an absence of heat. The air conditioning often doesn't work, and, to make it work, the library building committee's solution has been to run the system 24 hours a day, which will double the electric bill. The system was supposed to only run during library hours and sporadically at night to maintain humidity and temperature levels. J. Biffer emphasized that the building cannot be accepted without the HVAC working properly, and that higher electric bills will translate into staff cuts to compensate for the cost. He ended by saying it is very important that the board accept the building when it is done and not until it is done.

Angela LaBella, a past president of the Chamber of Commerce, noted that companies have offered to sponsor improvements in other buildings, and that a business may consider funding the pergola at McMahon Wintonbury Library. As an example, A. LaBella indicated that Auerfarm has a corporate sponsored pavilion. She suggested the possibility that a corporate sponsor could fund the pergola and be recognized with a sign.

Board Comments

H. Frydman noted that a few weeks ago on Bloomfield Access Television, the mayor, deputy mayor, and town officials welcomed students and kicked off the school year. H. Frydman said E. Lane did a great job on television and provided the students with information about programs and services.

Approval of the Minutes

MOTION by H. Frydman to accept the minutes of the July 14, 2026 meeting; seconded by S. Chance and approved as submitted.

The next meeting will be held October 13, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

The board decided to bypass the agenda item regarding Executive Session.

MOTION by H. Fryman to adjourn the meeting; seconded by S. Chance and approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Siloac
Assistant Director