



Brunswick Community Library

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

June 17, 2025 - 6:00pm

The Brunswick Community Library provides access to life-long learning, resources, engaging activities, and an inclusive community space for all.

Call to Order: 6:07 pm

Present: Virginia Anderson, Brittany DeWire, Alix Duggan, Therese Goyette, Meredith Lee-Clark, Annie Metzger, Carol Rosbozom, Yusuf Silk, Andrea Wedler, Fred Wobrock, Debra Zaffuts, Sara Hopkins - 100% attendance, yay!

Approval of May 2025 meeting minutes: Alix moves to approve, Andrea seconds, all in favor, motion carries unanimously

Treasurer's Report

- Approval of May 2025 Treasurer's Report: The finance committee met prior to the meeting to go over the Treasurer's report, which was sent via email in advance to all board members. The finance committee moves to approve the report, Therese seconds. All in favor, motion carries unanimously.
- Moving forward on having our investment account opened; there are many forms to fill out.
- Alix received a \$500 check for the library along with her Trustee of the Year award!
- We signed up to partner with Subaru last year for their Share the Love event. We just learned how much we are going to get: \$12,000!!!
- The response to last month's fundraising letter has been outstanding: \$13,729 as of this morning.

Director's Report

- Monthly Community Message: June 30th is the start of Summer Reading!! It is for all ages - children, teens, adults. People get a game board and mark off one space on the game board for every day that they read - audiobooks, magazines, books, newspapers all count. Reading to your child counts for BOTH of you! There are prizes. If you read 5 days, you get a prize! The more you read, the more prizes you get. You can't start early, but you should visit weekly! Participation in summer reading is important to try to keep kids' reading skills up; we are facing a literacy crisis nationwide, thanks to talk-to-text, voice notes, AI. It is important to match the book to the reader, to make reading pleasurable; we can't assume that a 3rd grader reads at a 3rd grade level. What we track: number of sign ups per level (kids, teens, adults), their goals (how many days they want to read), how many prizes they get (which tracks how many days they read in increments of 5 days).
- Collaboration with Tamarac School: Last month, Sara had a field trip FROM the school. Sara went TO the school this month, and got to speak to every grade in the elementary school. The kids were EXCITED about summer reading!
- At the UHLS award ceremony, the winner for the children's programming (Colonie Library) received an award for a sensory room that they constructed, as a useful tool for people with sensory overwhelm. We are a much smaller library, and probably a bin of sensory toys in the children's area (moveable to whatever corner of the library is quietest) would be a better fit for us, or potentially a sensory program.

- Buddy Bench: Polywood selected our library as the recipient for a free Buddy Bench! It's here, it's in the back by the playhouse. It's made from recycled plastic, it's a \$900 bench. Our outdoor area is growing! Our community is starting to really enjoy our outdoor area and use it more.
- The History of Emma Willard talk was popular and excellent; Sara will seek to schedule more talks with the speaker, the director of the Burden Iron Works Museum.
- Community Hospice will be here this summer to do a bereavement program, for anyone who needs it regardless of if they went through Hospice. Ellen Graf's writing workshop is going great - the writers are getting a lot out of the program. Our first Qigong class is on the 30th; if it goes well, we will pursue more!
- The numbers for the Director's Report were sent out via email prior to the meeting.
- June 28th 8 - 3 /29th 9-3 Susan O'Dell Taylor School estate sale

Committee Reports:

- **Building & Grounds:**

- After much discussion about static versus electronic signs, we will stick with the plan that the board already voted on. Alix will proceed with the order as discussed at the May meeting. The sign will be made of thick acrylic panels with vinyl applied; the manufacturer warranties the parts for the life of the sign.
- Update on ongoing projects: Future septic work will be rolled into the siding project with the grant we're seeking in 2026 for 2027 work
- We would like to complete the walkway with blank pavers, so that it's finished. There is room for 4 more trees, so we plan on 2 peach and 2 pear.
- We would like to add 3 raised bed planters to make a strawberry bed in the garden. Sara would like to use money from the Stewart's grant to purchase 3 garden planters at \$150 each. Yusuf moves that we use the funds in this way; Virginia seconds, all in favor, motion carries unanimously.
- The committee is working its way through the UHLS equity challenge.
- We discussed using the Subaru funds to erect a pavilion in the backyard, with a concrete pad, for use for concerts and other programs.

- **Fundraising / Annual Appeal:**

- Spring Appeal Letter update above. What we've learned is we will make specific asks when sending fundraising letters.
- Honor Garden update: Fred had a table at Garden Day, and talked to some folks. We will do thank you bricks to Kevin Cox and Gavin Landscaping.
- Garden Day recap: It was fun! It was an indoor event due to the weather. \$631 earned. We'll keep doing Garden Day for now; Brittany has some ideas for expansion for next year.

- Upcoming Events:
 - Bake-Off for Christmas Cookies in December, or Apple/Pumpkin themed baking competition in Fall
 - July Jazz event - Sara hasn't heard back from the band
 - Fall Fest or Not??
- **Nominating:** Portfolio of nominees for Board seats in 2026: Jonathan Mann has sent a resume. Jennifer Shatz said she would love to return but does not want to take the seat from someone who wants a new shot. We will reach out to Mike Centanni; if he turns us down, we'll ask Tim Rahn.
- **Personnel & Policy:**
 - UHLS Equity Challenge updates;
 - Discussion of Trustee Term Limits as defined in ByLaws: we are debating this clause: **Each Trustee shall be elected for a three (3) year term of office and may be elected to serve a second consecutive term for a total of six (6) years. No Trustee may serve more than two full terms consecutively except where elected to fill an unexpired term.** We would like to amend it to say that if you are filling an unexpired 3-year term with less than a year left, you can serve two full terms after finishing the other person's term, but if you are filling a seat with more than a year left, your own first term will begin the following January. If you take over someone's seat in January, that starts your first term.
 - Proposed "New Trustee Packet" has a goal of completion for January when the new terms start. A further proposal of a trustee-elect packet for folks before they get on the board. Board members should send Meredith notes on things they wish they had gotten when they began their term.

Old Business:

- 2026-2029 BCL Long Range Plan Ongoing Review
- June 11th UHLS Annual Awards: Alix won Trustee of the Year. It was a great evening. Alix used the podium to extol our virtues. Alix's take home was that, in general, community members don't understand that our libraries have a parent organization in UHLS, and don't understand all the work that UHLS does.
- Jennifer Mann Memorial Garden Planting Event happened in the rain. We had about 380 people that day, but attendees were probably about 350, since the library was open during that time. Katie Dolan donated a beautiful HEAVY solid bronze plaque with the words "Jennifer Mann Memorial Garden Dedicated in 2025", which arrived today. We will have an unveiling of the plaque at our next board meeting.

New Business: Discussion about day-hab group relationships with libraries

- On 5/15, there was a meeting for UHLS librarians and day-habilitation providers to discuss how to improve the relationship between the libraries and day-hab groups. Successes and challenges were discussed, and ideas for improvements were put forward. In the midst of other suggestions, a suggestion was put forward that, when a day-hab group comes to use the library, staff members sign in at the door. In the follow-up email where the minutes were shared, a UHLS staff person also shared a template for the sign-in sheet and called out this suggestion as a best practice for UHLS libraries to use going forward. Sara was not present at this meeting, but read this suggestion and was troubled. She spoke with Carrie Painter, associate executive director at ARC, to see how she should proceed, and Carrie agreed it was troubling, and contacted UHLS on her own to say that this policy was not okay and stating that ARC would not be signing in at any libraries. Here are a few of Sara's words in her response to the UHLS staff person (full response Attachment 1): "BRUN will not be asking anyone with disabilities or their support staff to sign in at the door. While I do not believe harm was intended with this suggestion, I believe harm will be done. You are creating, quite literally, a new barrier to access at the library's front door. Are you asking any other groups to sign in as they enter the building? What other groups are being singled out like this? If you only require that your disabled patrons sign in as they enter your building this seems, *at best*, less than equitable."
- We had an executive committee meeting, where we discussed this, and the executive committee sent a letter to Judith Wines, director of adult services, and Chris Sagaas, director of UHLS (Attachment 2). Coincident with that, Sara attended a director's meeting where she got largely positive feedback from other directors when she explained the issue. To date, two things have happened in response: 1. ARC sent us a lovely letter of support and appreciation that our response is what they would like to see (Attachment 3). 2. Chris Sagaas responded that he would like to meet with us this coming week, preferably in person; Alix will coordinate with anyone who is interested in joining this meeting.

Town Concert 6/24 6:30 pm: 50/50 is for the library! Volunteers welcome!

Next Brunswick Town Council meeting: July 10, 2025 at 7pm (*Andrea Wedler attending*)

Next Library Board of Trustees meeting: July 15, 2025 at 6pm - *Andrea's Birthday!!*

We will officially decide at the next meeting if we will take August's meeting off.

Adjourn: 7:50 Yusuf moves to adjourn the meeting, Deb seconds. All in favor, motion carries unanimously.

Attachment 1: sent by Sara Hopkins as an email 6/6/25, 7:15 am addressed to Judith Wines and all of the UHLS member library directors, bcc'd to the Brunswick Board Executive Committee
Hi All,

BRUN will not be asking anyone with disabilities or their support staff to sign in at the door. While I do not believe harm was intended with this suggestion, I believe harm will be done. You are creating, quite literally, a new barrier to access at the library's front door. Are you asking any other groups to sign in as they enter the building? What other groups are being singled out like this? If you only require that your disabled patrons sign in as they enter your building this seems, *at best*, less than equitable.

-Support staff exist to aid disabled people in their daily tasks and in helping them to get around the community, similar to someone with disabilities using a wheelchair or a service animal. If you wouldn't ask someone to register their service animal or wheelchair at the front desk, you should not be asking them to register their support staff at the front desk. Someone's support needs are, simply put, private and not the business of the library staff. I believe the purpose of this request is to hold support staff accountable if they are slacking on the job, but in essence you are detaining disabled people at the front door and having them register their private support needs with your staff. This is inappropriate.

-How is your staff recognizing who is with a day-hab group? How are you recognizing who is a day-hab staff member? Are you simply requesting that anyone who is with a group that "looks disabled" signs in at the front desk? This is problematic.

-What happens when a person with a developmental disability visits your library and your staff asks them to sign in and they are *not* with a day-hab group, but visiting with friends and family? What happens when your staff asks someone to sign in who "looks disabled" but is not a member of these groups at all? Are you opening your library up to discrimination claims?

-If your disabled patrons don't feel welcome at the library, how is singling them out like this going to help make them feel more welcome? I do not see this as doing anything other than alienating an entire marginalized group of people. Disabled does not mean stupid. It does not mean unfeeling. People know when they are being treated differently and it *hurts*.

Luckily, it looks like an organization contact list was provided to all for staff accountability and behavior issues. With any other group, we deal with behavior issues on a case-by-case basis. We do not generalize an entire group and treat them differently or give them different access rights to the library. I believe we can and *should* do better. UHLS is hosting an equity challenge which most (if not all) of our libraries are taking part in. This treatment of disabled patrons is not equitable. I genuinely fear it will open libraries up to discrimination lawsuits.

I also believe that this is, quite frankly, bad optics. Are you truly comfortable with a policy like this becoming public? I believe there would be public backlash. In a time where libraries are being defunded and censored, we are depending on the public to support our organizations and the freedom to read. We cannot afford claims that libraries are being discriminatory. We must be above reproach and not give our critics a leg to stand on.

Thank you for reading. Please remember that libraries are for everyone,

Sara Hopkins
Director
Brunswick Community Library
4118 State Highway 2
Troy, NY 12180
(518) 279-4023
www.brunswicklibrary.org

Attachment 2: sent by Annie Metzger as a PDF attachment to an email 6/10/25, 4:37 pm addressed to Judith Wines, Director of Adult Services at UHLS; Chris Sagaas, Executive Director of UHLS; Sara Hopkins, Brunswick Library Director; and the members of the Brunswick Board of Trustees Executive Committee (Alix Duggan, Britney Dewire, Annie Metzger, Andrea Wedler)

Ms Wines,

On behalf of the Brunswick Community Library Board of Trustees, we oppose the promotion of a sign-in sheet for use by staff members from day-hab facilities as a method of increasing communication and visibility between library staff and day-hab staff. We are troubled by the implications of such a barrier to entry primarily because this suggestion runs directly contrary to UHLS's public commitment to equity, particularly to ensuring "that libraries truly are for everyone" (UHLS Equity Committee, 2023).

By asking any one group or class of people to sign in at the library, and not all patrons, libraries would be singling out that one group or class as being "other." As the UHLS has repeatedly recognized, libraries are for everyone, equally and equitably, full stop. It is the job of the library and its staff to work to make all patrons feel that they belong in the library. If the first thing that happens on the way in the door is that some are treated one way and others treated a different way, then we are failing at the start. If members of a day-hab group are arriving with a staff member, the library staff should begin from an expectation that the accompanying staff member will perform their duties and help their clients have a successful library experience. The other suggestions brought forth at the 5/15 meeting were good ones:

- For day-hab staff and library staff to work on building relationships and communication channels, which would render the sign-in sheet irrelevant
- For library staff to be trained in communication skills so that they feel comfortable and capable of interacting directly with clients rather than just day-hab staff. The clients, after all, are the patrons; the day-hab staff are working while they are there, and hopefully not enjoying the library offerings to the exclusion of their work.

Additionally, perhaps all staff of UHLS and its member libraries could have additional training on how to get to know and assist the various types of patrons, including those with disabilities, that hopefully feel comfortable coming to use our libraries.

Of further concern, if day-hab staff members do not stop on the way in to introduce themselves, how are library staff to know who needs to sign in and who does not? Imagine if a library staff person were to try to pick and choose who, among groups who walk into a library, might be a staff person with a day-hab group and who might not be? That would be a terrible position in which to put a member of the library staff. If the day-hab staff member stops to introduce themselves, then obviously a sign in sheet is not needed, because then the library staff member knows who they are. If a sign-in sheet were to be used, and a library staff member put in the position to ask someone to sign in and guess wrongly about that person being in the employ of a day-hab group, this could potentially open the library up to a discrimination suit, or at the very least some very bad press. This is in opposition to the goals of the UHLS Equity Challenge.

In sum, UHLS staff should immediately retract the proposal of a sign-in sheet for staff members of day-hab groups because it would unfairly single out members of our community, when an "equitable library community benefits us all" (UHLS Bd. of Trustees, July 2020).

Respectfully,

Alix Duggan, President, Brunswick Community Library Board of Trustees
Brittany Dewire, Vice President, Brunswick Community Library Board of Trustees
Andrea Wedler, Treasurer, Brunswick Community Library Board of Trustees
Annie Metzger, Secretary, Brunswick Community Library Board of Trustees

Attachment 3: Mailed as a physical letter on ARC letterhead from ARC to Brunswick Community Library; formatting and signatures lost during transcription.

June 9, 2025

Sara Hopkins, Director
Brunswick Community Library
4118 State Highway 2
Troy, NY 12180

Dear Ms. Hopkins,

On behalf of The Arc of Rensselaer County, I want to express our sincere gratitude for your thoughtful response to the Upper Hudson Library System's recent recommendation regarding sign-in procedures for individuals supported by agency day programs.

Your decision to decline this recommendation reflects a strong commitment to equity, inclusion, and to protecting the dignity, privacy, and autonomy of individuals with disabilities. By recognizing that singling out certain groups at the library entrance conflicts with the core values of openness, equal access, and belonging, you help ensure the library remains a place where everyone feels welcome. We especially appreciate the care and clarity with which you addressed these concerns, upholding not only the rights of the individuals and families we serve, but the values that define public libraries for the entire community.

We are deeply grateful to the Brunswick Community Library for standing firmly for fairness, dignity, and inclusion. Libraries must always remain places where all people feel welcome, respected, and valued. We are proud to have the Brunswick Community Library as a trusted partner in this important work.

With appreciation,

Carrie Painter
Associate Executive Director
The Arc of Rensselaer County

Donald J. Mullin
Chief Executive Officer
The Arc of Rensselaer County