

**Southeast Steuben County Library  
Board of Trustees  
Regular Monthly Meeting  
December 21, 2023**

**Trustees Attending:**

President: Barbara A. McLean  
Treasurer: Jeffrey Scott  
Gail Bardhan  
Lyndsie M. Guy  
Nogaye Ka-Tandia  
Kathryn C. Mack  
Kate Paterson  
Louise Richardson  
Svetlana Short

**Absent:**

Vice President: Julie E. Fromer  
Secretary: Jamie Curtis  
Barry W. Nicholson

**Guests:**

Pauline Emery, Library Director  
Brad Turner, Assistant Library Director\*  
Lori Reenan, Business Manager

**Call to Order:**

President Barbara A. McLean called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

**Public Comment:**

There was no public comment.

**Slate of Officers:**

On behalf of the Policy and Personnel Committee, Barbara McLean proposed the following slate of officers for 2024:

President – Barbara McLean  
Vice President – Lyndsie Guy  
Secretary – Jamie Curtis  
Treasurer – Jeffrey Scott

On the call for nominations from the floor, there were none.  
Trustees voted to approve the slate unanimously.

\*Observed the meeting via Zoom.

**Consent Agenda:****Minutes of the November 16, 2023 Regular Meeting  
November 2023 Financial Reports**

On a motion by Nogaye Ka-Tandia, seconded by Svetlana Short, trustees voted unanimously to accept all items on the Consent Agenda.

**Director's Report:**

Library Director Pauline Emery called attention to library usage records for November 2023 and for the year-to-date. Usage was up year-to-date in all categories except for database use. Nearly 11,900 library visits were recorded in November. Combined physical and digital circulation was 16,444 for the month. "Everything is up and it's great to see. These are good trends that will continue."

Hooked on Books Book Club, a program for independent readers in elementary school will be held Wednesday afternoons in January and February. Crafty Corner, another in the lineup of children's programs, will be held Tuesday afternoons. Other program highlights include an author talk with Barbara Hall Blumer about her book, *People Wall '76; The Mural in City Hall*. Digital artist Jess Humphrey's images are on display in the library lobby. Veterans Crisis Line volunteers were on hand recently to raise awareness about their services. "Veteran's resources are listed on our website," Pauline Emery noted. A Children's Christmas Party December 16 drew about 80 attendees, and the Friends of the Library's "Holiday Shoppe" will be hosted in the Reading Room through December.

Public elevator upgrades have been scheduled for next week.

**Finance:**

(See Financial Reports for November 2023.)

The Finance Committee met on December 14.

Treasurer Jeffrey Scott said income for November was \$8,485 better than budget, mostly due to donations via FLX Gives. Expenses were \$1,755 over budget. "Hoopla subscription costs rose." The Finance Committee approved the 2024 library budget and recommends full library board approval. Already approved by voters, the tax levy of \$911,119 will fund 63 percent of library operations in 2024.

**Bequest Resolution:**

Jeffrey Scott said the following resolution was recommended by the Finance Committee. "It transfers interest funds that came in a separate check from the Caroline Desara bequest." Trustees voted unanimously to approve the following:

RESOLVED, that the Southeast Steuben County Library transfer \$250.40 bequest funds interest temporarily held in the Capital Reserve Account at Community Bank, Corning NY to the library's endowment held by Schwab Investments and managed by Fischer Investments in Rochester, N.Y.

**Tax Resolution:**

Barbara McLean turned attention to the upcoming library levy vote scheduled for May 21, 2024. She thanked Trustees for attending a Zoom workshop on December 14 with Southern Tier Library System Director Brian Hildreth. A recording is available. She said the library was considering presenting a "somewhat substantial increase" that will affect the 2025 budget.

The library sees a budget gap ahead, not just because of the loss of a tenant, but due to outstanding building maintenance issues. "We have a healthy endowment, but in order to protect it, we just can't keep going back to that trough, because it will run dry," Barbara McLean said, adding, "What we are proposing is that we go to the public."

The option of issuing a bond rather than proposing a levy increase was explored and found to be more complex and more costly to taxpayers. If approved by voters, the proposed levy request of \$1,479,119 would help fill the funding gap going forward, without draining the endowment. In October, trustees approved overriding the New York State Tax Cap without proposing a new levy amount. Similar resolutions were approved in previous years to satisfy a timing requirement in case an override was actually needed.

In response to a question from Kate Paterson, trustees were assured there was no penalty or withheld benefit under current law for proposing a levy increase above the cap.

Barbara McLean predicted, "This will be a large undertaking and trustees must be prepared to work hard to get this done."

Trustees discussed various implications of the levy proposal. When discussion ebbed, Svetlana Short made a motion to approve a resolution needed to place the levy request on the May 21, 2024 ballot. Kathryn C. Mack seconded.

WHEREAS, the Board wishes to raise funds pursuant to New York State Education Law Section 259(1); and

WHEREAS, the Board would like the following resolution to be placed upon the ballot at a special election of the Corning-Painted Post Area School District:

"Shall the sum of \$1,479,119 (One Million, Four Hundred and Seventy-Nine Thousand, One Hundred and Nineteen Dollars) be raised by annual levy of a tax upon the taxable property within the Corning-Painted Post Area School District for the purpose of funding the Southeast Steuben County Library."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board requests that the Corning-Painted Post Area School District place the following resolution before the voters of the District at a special election on May 21, 2024:

"Shall the sum of \$1,479,119 (One Million, Four Hundred and Seventy-Nine Thousand, One Hundred and Nineteen Dollars) be raised by annual levy of a tax upon the taxable property within the Corning-Painted Post Area School District for the purpose of funding the Southeast Steuben County Library."

RESOLVED, FURTHER, that the Board authorizes and directs the Director of the Southeast Steuben County Library to complete the aforementioned resolution by providing a special election date at the time of submission to the District administration.

After further discussion, trustees present voted as follows:

Barbara A. McLean - Yes  
 Jeffrey Scott - Yes  
 Gail Bardhan - Yes  
 Lyndsie M. Guy - Yes  
 Nogaye Ka-Tandia - Yes

Kathryn C. Mack - Yes  
Kate Paterson - Yes  
Louise Richardson - Yes  
Svetlana Short - Yes

The resolution was approved 9 – 0, with three trustee absent.

### **2024 Budget Vote:**

(See adopted 2024 Operational Budget and 2024 Building Budget)

Barbara McLean went over the proposed 2024 Operating Budget. An additional \$15,000 was earmarked in 2024 for Maintenance and Building Repair bringing anticipated costs to \$25,000, with higher HVAC maintenance costs driving the budget line increase. There were also increased budget allocations for Hoopla, a streaming service that has seen increased use, and for other digital content.

Trustees discussed various new costs including Wi-Fi hotspots that were previously grant-funded, and EIDL loan repayment. Turning to the Building Budget, expenses were sure to outpace income by more than \$33,000 due to the loss of a tenant. These costs will be covered in 2024 with reserves and endowment earnings, but that practice cannot be sustained.

After additional discussion, and with no changes proposed, Barbara McLean called for an approval vote on the proposed 2024 budgets.

Trustees present voted unanimously to adopt the 2024 Operational Budget and 2024 Building Budget.

### **Policies and Revisions:**

On behalf of the Policy and Personnel Committee, Barbara McLean called for consideration of two new policies and three revisions to existing policies, all recommended by the Committee, as follows:

- a. Video Surveillance Policy
- b. Public Comment Policy
- c. Collection Development Policy Revision
- d. Challenged Material Policy Revision
- e. Social Media Policy Revision

Opening discussion, Barbara McLean explained that the proposed Video Surveillance Policy was crafted in response to a recent so-called “1<sup>st</sup> Amendment Audit” visit. Pauline Emery explained the proposed policy protects the library and library users from outside individuals asking for surveillance footage.

After brief discussion, trustees approved the following policy unanimously:

### **SOUTHEAST STEUBEN COUNTY LIBRARY VIDEO SURVEILLANCE POLICY**

SSCL strives to maintain a safe and secure environment for its patrons and staff. Therefore, the Library installed video surveillance cameras throughout the building and property, as is legally permitted, to provide an additional level of security for its patrons and staff and to protect Library property. Since the Library also provides space to commercial tenants, this policy will apply to cameras installed in those areas for added security.

#### **Patron and Employee Privacy**

Reasonable efforts will be made to safeguard the privacy of patrons and employees. Video cameras will not be placed in prohibited areas, such as restrooms. Furthermore, the intent of the Cameras is to provide security, not to view confidential patron record information.

#### **Signage**

Signage will be posted at library entrances stating: "This area is under video surveillance."

#### **Use and Disclosure of Video Records**

Video recordings are considered library records and shall only be disclosed as allowed by law and in accordance with this policy. Only the Director or an employee designated by the Director will be authorized to review or disclose Video Records or to operate the Video Surveillance equipment. Video records shall be considered confidential and may only be disclosed as the Director deems necessary for the proper operation of the Library, including, but not limited to the protection of the health and safety of the public, patrons, or staff.

#### **Video Record Retention**

The Library will retain video records for a time period deemed reasonable by the Director.

Adopted by the Southeast Steuben County Library  
Board of Trustees on December 21, 2023

Introducing the proposed Public Comment Policy, Barbara McLean noted that two libraries in the Southern Tier Library System had been subject to book challenges within the past month. "This updates our policies in case we do get a challenge."

Trustees discussed a public hearing December 11 at the Palmer Opera House in Cuba, NY during which challenges to books in Cuba Circulating Library's collection were aired. Pauline Emery, Barbara McLean and Louise Richardson were among the many attendees. They reported that Cuba Library's public comment policy, on which the proposed policy was based, had been helpful at that meeting.

Trustees voted unanimously to adopt the following policy:

### **SOUTHEAST STEUBEN COUNTY LIBRARY PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY**

The Southeast Steuben County Library Board of Trustees incorporates an opportunity for Public Comment during its regular board meetings in accordance with New York State's Open Meetings Law. Residents of the Library's service area may use this time during meetings to verbally address the board. The Library Board reserves the right to determine the manner in how public comments are received to maintain a fair, respectful, and well-managed meeting. The following Rules and Procedures apply to the Library's Public Comment section of the meeting Agenda:

#### **Rules and Procedures for Public Comment**

- Participants must sign in and identify community of residence
- Participants must be a resident of the SSCL service area

- Residents will be recognized in order of sign-in
- Residents will be allotted a maximum of 3-minutes to speak
- A resident can only speak once, and only use their 3-minutes to speak
- Residents must limit their comments to library-related matters
- A designated library trustee will preside over the meeting
- A designated trustee will introduce each resident and keep track of the time.
- The Library Board may limit the total amount of time allowed for Public Comment
- The Library Board may only listen to residents during Public Comment
- The Library Board may not address an issue, or answer questions during Public Comment
- The Library Board may not vote upon any issue raised during Public Comment unless specified on the agenda.

Adopted by the Southeast Steuben County Library  
Board of Trustees on December 21, 2023

After brief discussion, trustees unanimously approved the following revised Gifts Policy, pertaining to gifts of materials to the library. [Preexisting language italicized]:

*All materials presented to the Library as gifts are subject to the same scrutiny and review as those purchased. The Library reserves the right not to add gift materials to the collection. Gifts or donations not added to the collection may be donated to the Friends of the Library for resale.*

The Library accepts gift materials with the explicit understanding that those which are useful to the Library's collection will be retained, and other materials may be disposed of in accordance with the Library's policy. Suggestions of specific titles or subjects are welcome when memorial donations or "honor" donations are given, but the final decision rests with the Library.

*Revised by the Southeast Steuben County Library  
Board of Trustees on May 19, 2016*  
Revised by the Southeast Steuben County Library  
Board of Trustees on December 21, 2023

Trustees discussed an addition to the existing Challenge to Library Materials Policy, adopted February 17, 2022. The revision will add a limit on the number and frequency of reviews.

Trustees added the following limit to the Challenge to Library Materials Policy by unanimous vote:

The Library Board places a limit on Challenges to Library Materials. The Library will only process a complaint form once every 36 months (3 years) for a specific Title or Author considering all material formats (Format examples: book, eBook, audiobook, large print book, movie, or musical tracks). The Library Board Decision is final.

Added by the Southeast Steuben County Library  
Board of Trustees on December 21, 2023

Trustees considered removing a flow chart entitled "Social Media Response Decision Tree," from the existing Social Media Policy, adopted on September 22, 2022. The chart, originally appended to the policy, was removed by unanimous vote of the Library Board of Trustees.

### **Committee Updates:**

- **Facilities** –On behalf of Committee Chair Barry W. Nicholson, Pauline Emery said the library's public elevator would be updated with a new motherboard soon. Committee members met with Hunt E|A|S and were briefed about progress on its Young-Adult space conceptual design. The addition of a Young-Adult space on the second floor may get underway in 2025. The project may be eligible for grant funding.
- **PR/Advocacy** –Barbara McLean said there would be much work for the committee and for all trustees as the May 21<sup>st</sup> levy vote approaches. The Committee was working on a Request for Proposals for library website redesign.
- **Fund Development** – Chair Louise Richardson said the library fared "pretty well" on FLX gives, with more than \$9,000 in donations, thanks to a large match from the Friends of the Library and a large gift from an individual donor. Assistant Director Brad Turner reported that the Annual Appeal had taken in \$57,000 so far, with more than three months left in the drive.
- **Friends of the Library** – On behalf of Friends Liaison Julie E. Fromer, Pauline Emery said the Friends of the Library's Holiday Book Shoppe sale has been very popular and was ongoing. Books Sandwiched In, the Friends' series of book reviews by local notables, starts in January and will be held at the Congregational Church and streamed online.
- **Strategic Planning** – Chair Lyndsie M. Guy said she was hoping to recruit new Committee members. The Committee will meet to lay the groundwork for a new strategic plan, with activities ramping up following the May 21 levy vote.

### **Other business:**

Louise Richardson gave a brief review of the Cuba Circulating Library's December 11 Public Hearing. "The turnout was incredible. There were about 250 people there." To all appearances, book challengers were vastly outnumbered by local library supporters and interested residents.

### **Adjournment:**

Barbara McLean adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Library Board of Trustees was scheduled for January 18, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. in the library.