

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MINUTES
Monday, June 26, 2023, 6:30 p.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Eileen Daly called the Library Board to order at 6:05 p.m. Present, virtually were Board members Kim Cohen, Eileen Daly, Gail Crockett, EJ Greenspan, and Dr. Natalia Menjivar, Library Director Laura Irmscher, and Heidi Reagan, recorder.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - none

3. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA (Items 4 & 8a i, 8a ii.)

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

4. THE MEETING MINUTES of May 22, 2023, were approved as part of the consent agenda.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

It was decided not to hold a meeting on July 24, 2023, and to leave the August 21, 2023, tentatively scheduled. A final decision will be made in August depending on Laura's needs.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. The new Circulation policy, which includes going fine free, will be implemented on July 1 (when the next fiscal year starts). The public announcement will be made on July 5. A FAQ document explaining the new policy will be available to staff. Other ways to spread the news are being considered, including postcards and a press release. We are the 129th library in the state to go fine free. Old fines, but not replacement fees, will be eliminated.
- b. Legislative Update – The eBook bill died in committee, but we believe this will leave us in a good position for next year. We are aware these types of bills might take more than one attempt and several years to pass.
- c. SB2 – An act concerning the mental, physical and emotional wellness of children – as part of this bill funding has been restored for public library incentive grants. All libraries with a well-defined Selection Policy and a clear process to request a reconsideration will be eligible for an approximately \$1200 grant. This is in response to the uptick in book challenges to libraries and we will make sure we are in full compliance.

7. NEW BUSINESS

West Hartford Library was selected to join the inaugural Strategic Planning Cohort with six other libraries. CLC has developed a structure to lead us through the strategic planning process, including regular meetings with Maureen Sullivan, an expert consultant.

8. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- a. Laura Irmischer's Report, submitted:
 - i. Library Administrative Report
 - ii. Budget Report

- b. Current Month Briefing:

WHPL celebrated Caribbean/American Heritage which includes an exhibit, Home Away From Home: Greater Hartford's West Indian Diaspora;
We participated in Celebrate West Hartford! by hosting a booth;
We held the 2nd Annual Gertrude Blanks Storytelling event;
We offered a Juneteenth story time;
We celebrated Pride month with an art show, displays, and crafts for children;
July will just as busy with the Bookwyrms Fest on July 8, and the Book It Fun Run (formerly the Children's Fun Run) on July 15 at Sterling Field;
Nick Hornby has been chosen speaker for West Hartford Reads with a date and location to be determined in the fall.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: The Library Board Meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:08 pm. The next Board Meeting is scheduled tentatively for August 21, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Cohen
Board Secretary
or
Eileen Daly, Secretary Pro Tem
West Hartford Library Board

ANNUAL COMPARISON OF LIBRARY OPERATING INDICATORS

	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23 Q1	FY23 Q2	FY23 Q3	FY23 Q4	FY23
Unexpired library cards (+ 1 year expired)	27,008	26,426	26,538	26,383	20,922	21,005	21,103	21,167	21,283	21,283
Visitors to all locations, counted at entrances	437,580	448,164	299,419	56,124	185,754	56,433	54,479	64,297	63,751	238,960
Website hits to Library Home Page	315,289	308,641	283,992	229,379	257,056	73,806	71,730	78,292	73,040	296,868
Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter followers	10,896	11,104	11,631	12,960	13,365	13,528	13,637	13,777	13,642	13,642
Newsletters viewed via email	214,151	204,944	237,924	220,029	295,181	97,709	88,091	85,671	90,086	361,557
Program (virtual & in person) attendance & museum pass reservations *	29,632	31,642	22,493	7,281	14,674	4,855	3,231	2,946	2,750	13,782
Preschool Literacy program attendance	11,113	12,263	10,191	1,124	4,930	1,397	1,054	2,166	1,924	6,541
Number of loans for physical materials, including renewals	597,763	725,852	511,623	304,655	500,660	146,678	126,394	135,736	134,909	543,717
Number of loans for downloadable materials	59,238	87,809	133,955	131,616	137,679	39,760	36,656	40,005	39,609	156,030
Loans per capita - all items	10	13	10	7	10					11
Wireless sessions	94,820	101,539	68,350	23,492	45,080	15,284	10,280	14,068	14,372	54,004
Number of public computer session logins	47,528	46,560	32,167	4,041	17,340	5,700	5,168	6,008	6,126	23,002
Patron interactions via phone, email or in person (Nat Std) (Reference plus Technology)	74,902	81,189	64,425	52,328	64,547	16,269	13,842	16,684	15,406	62,201
Use of research and learning tools as reported by vendors (Nat Std)	444,368	388,721	414,705	427,057	445,289	95,242	98,167	75,213	68,047	336,669
Curbside Pickup Appointments **				28380	2,094	208	177	426	142	953
Bishops Corner Locker Pickups***					974	456	463	757	583	2,259

*In FY22 we will also include program views.

** New statistic for FY 21

*** New statistic for FY 22

Town of West Hartford
 Library Expenditures
 FY24 August 2023

GENERAL FUND					
Expenditures	BUDGET	ENCUMBERED	EXPENDITURE	BALANCE	% OF BUDGET SPENT
Library Personal Expenses	\$2,752,294.00		295,614.08	\$2,456,679.92	11%
Library Non Personal Expenses	\$652,637.00		182,191.31	\$470,445.69	28%
Social Security Expenses	\$ 206,828.00		20,350.90	\$186,477.10	10%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES FUND 1	\$3,611,759.00		\$498,156.29	\$3,113,602.71	14%

July and August 2023 Administrative Report

Fine Free Launch

On July 1 we implemented our new fine-free policy. We've received some great media coverage that has helped spread awareness:

- [WTNH News](#) segment & interview and articles in the [Hartford Courant](#), [CT Insider](#), [Journal Inquirer](#), and [We-ha.com](#).

The response from the public has been great so far. Patrons have thanked us for going fine-free and staff have noticed an increase in long overdue books being returned, with some of them being overdue for over 200 days. Word is getting out and people are returning to the library.

BookWorm Fest

Our first BookWorm Fest was a huge success! Over a thousand people were at the library on July 7 celebrating Dungeons & Dragons and all things fantasy. Participants and vendors raved about their experience. Discussions are underway about making this an annual event. Tremendous kudos to library staff, volunteers, and Bloomfield Library staff for organizing and running this amazing event.

Faxon Fun

This year's Faxon Fun ran for 4 weeks in July and August. The first session of 1-3rd graders averaged 24 children per day. Activities included Mad Science, Sam from Studio 20 South, tie dye t-shirts, an interactive drumming session, and a visit from the Forest Park Zoo animals. Many grade 1-3 students chose to return over the following weeks to continue Book Buddies for 45 minutes 3 days a week.



The second session of 4th – 6th graders had about 25 children per day. Special programs included Mad Science, the Forest Park Zoo, a Drumming Circle, an opportunity to play around with the VR glasses, and 3D Printing workshops. The program was an enormous success in terms of the children enjoying the activities and the teens gaining valuable work experience.



Faxon Fun is made possible by a grant from the Stanley D. and Hinda N. Fisher Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.



Book It!

Book It!, the first fun run for children sponsored by the West Hartford Library Foundation was held at Sterling Field adjacent to Charter Oak International Academy on Saturday morning, July 15. We had around 100 participants, and despite the heat and humidity, it was incredibly well received and so much fun! Children received a cape, had an opportunity to play in the bounce house, enjoy refreshments and music and have some fun running in 3 different races. Parents stopped by the registration table to thank us for hosting this new event and requested it to be held annually.



Lots of thank yous are in order: Bailey, Karen, and Carol for helping to plan, organize and wrangle children on the day of! Laura and her daughters for working the registration table, Megan and Abigail for helping Karen direct runners, Pramod for the music set-up and picture taking and Kirsten and Amelia for creating the beautiful capes!

We'd also like to thank the CERT team volunteers, the EMTs and Justin and Grounds crew for all their help to make the day run smoothly.



Welcoming Area Library Patrons

With Bloomfield Libraries closed for renovation, we are seeing many Bloomfield patrons visiting our libraries, especially Bishops Corner. Staff have been busy helping patrons feel welcome and become acquainted with WHPL policies. Overall circulation statistics from July were up almost 16% over July 2022, with adult circ up 25.6% and tween circ up 19.3%

Strategic Planning

The West Hartford Public Library is beginning a strategic planning process. We have joined the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC)'s new cohort program. Seven libraries will go through a strategic planning process led by Maureen Sullivan, a nationally-renowned strategic planning consultant. This new cohort model was set up by CLC to help libraries share the burden of the high cost of consultants and partner libraries who are going through the same process to learn from and support each other. The planning process will run from August – December. The framework for the strategic planning process includes research, staff input, community conversations, Library Board guidance, and will culminate in a new strategic plan by the end of this calendar year.

A small group of staff will be asked to join the planning team. This team will do research, meet with the other libraries in the cohort, plan community involvement, and collect stakeholder input. All staff will have several opportunities to share their thoughts on the strategic plan and the future of our library. This fall's staff day will have a session dedicated to the strategic plan, with more details to come.

Recent Media

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

[Art Banner Contest](#)

[Bishops Corner Grandfriends Program](#)

[West Hartford is Great](#)

Staff Updates

Recruitment

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

Sandra DiCicco – PT Librarian, Children's
Kusum Karki – PT Office Assistant, IT
Cherokee Cowherd – PT Office Assistant, Studio 20
Kathleen Wilson - PT Office Assistant, Studio 20
Shanikia Lane - PT Office Assistant, Studio 20
Joseph Landino - PT Office Assistant, IT

August GOAT – Vitalina Veriienko

For August, I nominate Vitalina Veriienko as WHPL's new GOAT. She is a student at Hall High School and page at the Bishops Corner Library. Aside from working at BC, she is a founding member of West Hartford Immigrant Teens. She has attended most if not all meetings and coordinated WHIT's successful Halloween Party, Winter Party, picnics in the park, and graduation celebration. This summer, she participated in a 2-week digital storytelling workshop at the Faxon Library and created a video about her experience moving from Ukraine to the U.S. that I cannot wait to view. Additionally, she is our social media coordinator and always makes sure to stories and amazing group shots and selfies. We are so lucky to have her working at the library!

– Kari



September GOAT – Bailey Berardino



Bailey! Earlier this summer Bailey helped plan and run the Book It Fun Run on what felt like the hottest day of summer. So on this crisp, almost-fall, 93 degree day, it's only appropriate we recognize her great work.

Miss Bailey was the first person I met at the West Hartford Libraries and she later hired me to be a page at the Bishops Corner Library. I always notice how very hardworking she is and is also kind to everyone who comes into the library. That is why I am choosing her to be the GOAT!

-Vitalina

Community Engagement & Outreach

For ten weeks this summer while school was closed, the Faxon branch continued their partnership with Fern Street Church to distribute bags of food to families in the community. 260 food bags were distributed from June 22 – August 30. There are 18 students registered so far to get food bags for this upcoming school year.

Pramod met with Ellen Salzman-Fiske from Golden Door: A Center for Immigrants, Kari Karp, and Jenson Yonjan, an instructor for the Digital Storytelling session. Six West Hartford immigrant teen club members signed up for a two-week, twelve-hour workshop to learn about digital storytelling and created a short video of their coming to America experience. Jenson showed the completed videos from the session. There will be a viewing party and conversation with the teen filmmakers on October 27, 2023, from 3-4 pm at the Faxon Library.

From Our Patrons

Here are some stories and interactions our staff recently had with patrons at the library:

- “First off - as new residents of West Hartford - my family has found the library system (shout out to the Faxon branch, in particular) to be one of the most wonderful aspects of our new home. Coming from Boston, we were quite spoiled with library resources and West Hartford does not disappoint in the slightest!”
- Note from a patron who had donated postcards to the Local History Collection a number of years back. Following Brenda’s suggestion to visit the Local History Room she shared this with her:

“B - I got out of my own way and went to the WHPL and introduced myself to Brett. What a good guy and let me go through the postcards and add some to the collection that I had gotten during the pandemic. I loved Brett’s energy and he likes my collection which I had not seen for several years and is pretty nifty. I will go back to further enjoy seeing my collection.”

Adult Services & Programs

Programs

Some of this summer’s most popular adult programs:

The Age of Rock: From Blues to Punk. 1930-1980 (75 attended in-person)

Brian Torff, once again, gave an absolutely awesome presentation about the Age of Rock. At least fifteen people came up to Maura after the presentation and said how much they loved the program.

Estate Planning Documents: Overview and Recent Law Changes (80 attended in-person)

Attorney Colleen Masse from Czpiga, Daly, Pope, and Perri gave a presentation about Estate Planning. This is the third time the library has had Colleen in to give a presentation. The program went so well that we’re going to have her back in November for another program. Many people weren’t able to register because the program was so full.

Backyard Birding (56 attended virtually)

Catie Resor, from the Connecticut Audubon Society, gave a wonderful virtual program about birds in the Connecticut area. The program was recorded and the link was sent to attendees.

Birds of Prey (80 attended in-person)

The Meeting Room was packed! Mary Beth Kaesar, from Horizon Wings, brought in an eagle, a barn owl, a cooper’s hawk, and two kestrels.

New York Yankees (30 attended in-person)

Marty Gitlin gave a great program talking about all of the great Yankees players throughout the years. Marty has written numerous books about baseball and other topics, like cartooning.

Total Number of Featured Programs: 11

Total Attendance for Featured Programs: 447

Total Number of Series Programs: 11

Total Attendance for Series Programs: 244

Local History

Highlights of some patron interactions over the summer:

- The main topic of request was yearbooks and information about different classes and teachers at Hall High School. The most interesting of these coming from a former student from the 1970s that during his senior year removed the letters spelling Hall High School so it only read “ACHOO” on the sign.
- One of our requests centered around Martha Yeskes, a West Hartford resident that became renown for her doll clothing. Specifically, Martha made clothing for bisque dolls made by Martha Thompson; apparently these dolls and their outfits are quite sought after on the doll collecting scene.
- We also carried out our first Oral History interview with Dan Berman, a vet who has lived in West Hartford all his life, outside of college and his time in Korea.

Partnership Opportunities:

- Brett met with Sheila, the curator at Noah Webster House, to transfer historic photographs of the West Hartford Fire Department to their existing holdings from the DesRoches family re: the WHFD. He also met with new Executive Director, Jeff Mainville, and discussed opportunities for the NWH/WHHS and the LHR to collaborate once their collection comes back.
- Brett met with Dr. Leah Glaser, the head of CCSU’s public history program about potential interns and opportunities to leverage our collections for young professionals to gain experience and make our stuff more visible.
- A meeting is planned in September with James Antonucci, the Hall High Jazz Band director, to discuss what recordings they have from past Jazz Bands and a possible partnership to digitize them and make available via the Jazz Band website.

Branch Libraries

Bishops Corner

Grandfriends is an intergenerational program planned in coordination with the senior center. Kids, parents, and seniors participated in an ocean themed yoga class, enjoyed an afternoon of board and card games, and enjoyed making no-bake treats.

Holds Lockers

Patrons continue to enjoy the convenience of our holds lockers. In July and August, we had 190 deliveries each month, and now have 245 registered locker users.



Faxon

Friday Practice English at Faxon continued to meet. Jennifer Evans from the West Hartford Community Interactive TV came to speak to the class Friday, July 07, 2023. She talked to the students about the TV station, and various programs the station covers for the town, and the volunteering opportunities at the TV station. Sixteen students attended this session. The Thomas F. Kilfoil Memorial Bequest, West Hartford Library Foundation, sponsors Practice English class.

West Hartford Bloomfield health district organized a Naloxone Training at Faxon on Jul 26, 2023. There were 30 attendees for this program. Attendees were provided with a free Narcan kit.



Faxon Movie Night

Due to rain we had to move the date of Faxon's movie night, but the change did not dampen the enthusiasm from the community! The weather was beautiful, and we had around 120 people for *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*. Along with the movie was a table with information and free giveaways from West Hartford Bloomfield Health District, West Hartford Community Police Officers, and the West Hartford Fire Department with the Fire Truck. Free Popcorn was given to the attendees.

Thanks to Karen, Ellen, and Pramod for planning and executing this wonderful and fun event for families. Thank you to Pramod's team of teen volunteers who helped set up the screen and projector.



Children's Services & Programs

Programs

Our friends Frank Gallo and Andrew Tuzhilin, known as Rolie Polie Guacamole since 2006 visited the Noah Webster Library on the evening of August 2 to delight a crowd of preschoolers and their families with their original songs.

The Mystic Aquarium Traveling Touch visited on the afternoon of August 8. Four groups of twenty children each in Grades K-5 viewed an assortment of live invertebrates such as lobsters, horseshoe crabs and shellfish with staff from the Mystic Aquarium.

Students in grades 4-7 participated on the Noah Webster front lawn for our version of the Olympics ... the Chocolate Olympics - to compete in sorting, stacking, relays and more to see who would take home the bronze, silver, and gold medals.

Sensory Explorers Soap & Bubbles for children ages 18 – 35 months took place on the front lawn of the Noah Webster Library several times this summer. Families were asked to dress their children for a mess and what a mess they were! Children dabbled and dunked in liquid soap, shaving cream and more, pushed lawnmowers filled with bubbles, investigated a water table, splash pad, wading pools, and had the best time ever!



Updates

- Our babies are enjoying their new climber and balance bar/mirror in the Infant Room.
- A four-tier display table for Children’s New Fiction has been purchased with the Rovaldi Gift.
- Our newest addition to the Arts & Museum Pass program is the **Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center** which features 85,000 square feet of permanent, indoor exhibitions including life–size dioramas, films, and interactive computer programs.

Teen Services

Programs

Teens were busier than ever this summer, attending programs on chess, digital storytelling, multiple Dungeons and Dragons campaigns,

Their creativity was on full display in programs like bad art, embroidery, Pokemon Terrariums, Paint Night with Pam’s Picassos, tie dye,

In collaboration with Teen, the Studio hosted the first meeting of the Teen 3D Printing Club. Led by a teen volunteer, Kari and I participated in supporting roles, fostering, hopefully, an ongoing environment for the group to experiment with the technology in a setting that’s more open than the more directive learning of a workshop.

In collaboration with Studio 20, local artists, March and Jaimie led our 5-day teen comics workshop. The workshop included a well-structured cumulative series of lessons and exercises, trips to the stacks to encourage participants to explore the library's robust graphic works collection, as well as visiting talks and demonstrations from local artists who've worked in different capacities in the comics industry including Sam, Steve Karp, and Julie Phillips. The volunteers did a fantastic job, and as part of the culmination of this event, the organizers are binding some of the teen's work for the week into a small-run zine anthology that we will make available for participants with a few copies to be left to start the zine collection in the Studio.



Updates

- 23 members of the Mayors Youth Council were selected for the 2023-2024 school year.