

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
KENT MEMORIAL LIBRARY COMMISSION
MARCH 12, 2024
7:00 P.M.
Town Hall Meeting Room, 83 Mountain Road, Suffield CT
Hybrid Meeting**

Chairwoman Boutin called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Corbin Adzigirey, Michael Alexopoulos, Klaire Bielonko (via Zoom), Denise Boutin, James Irwin, Claire Kawalec, Nina Kendrick, Michelle Kynard, Cameron Lisk, Christine Sinopoli and Despina Tartsinis

Also present via Zoom or in person: Selectman/Ex-officio member - Jerry Mahoney and Library Administrator - Beth Chafetz

Chairwoman Boutin wanted to reiterate a few meeting rules prior to beginning the meeting. The following rules should be followed by all:

- Commissioners should raise their hand before speaking and wait to be acknowledged.
- When a motion is on the floor and a commission member would like to contribute, they should ask themselves, before speaking, if what they are saying is contributing to the conversation about the motion. It is important to keep things in perspective and avoid the tendency to think beyond the motion.
- Commissioners should state their full name when they speak in order to make it easier for the recording secretary and for those listening to the recording.

Public Participation

None

Approval of the minutes from the January 9, 2024, Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Commissioner Bielonko MOTIONED and Commissioner Sinopoli seconded to approve the minutes from the January 9, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission as presented and shared by the Chair.

Discussion ensued with Commissioner Irwin explaining why he had proposed such drastic changes to the minutes at the last meeting, despite being aware of the recommendations of Roberts Rules of Order to keep minutes more succinct. He proposed a few minor corrections to the revised version presented by the Chair as follows:

- 1) Under the section Election of Officers as it is labeled on the revised minutes, Section Xa should include the nomination of Michael Alexopoulos by Commissioner Irwin and seconded by Commissioner Tartsinis. Commissioner Alexopoulos declined. This information was inadvertently omitted.
- 2) The Commission had discussed the nomination of a secretary at length. It was determined that the task of taking minutes would rotate through the membership, alternating in alphabetical order, however, that did not happen. This discussion was not included in the minutes.
- 3) The minutes referenced “next steps,” however, there was no type of explanation included. Commissioner Irwin feels an explanation should be included.

Chairwoman Boutin added one additional correction under Public Comment. A grammatical error should be corrected to include the word “was” in the sentence starting with “John Gracey said he *was* curious...”

Commissioner Bielonko restated her motion, which had been seconded by Commissioner Sinopoli.

Discussion continued regarding which proposed changes should be included.

Commissioner Bielonko withdrew her motion.

Commissioner Sinopoli MOTIONED and Commissioner Bielonko seconded, to accept the January 9, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented by the Chair with the following changes:

- 1) Under Section II Public Comment the word “was” should be inserted to read “John Gracey said he *was* curious...”
- 2) Add language to Section Xa that reads “*Commissioner Irwin nominated, and Commissioner Tartsinis seconded, to nominate Commissioner Alexopoulos as Chairperson. Commissioner Alexopoulos declined.*”
- 3) Add “Revised by Denise Boutin to the end of the minutes.

Vote: 10 in favor (Adzigirey, Alexopoulos, Bielonko Boutin, Kawalec, Kendrick, Kynard, Lisk and Sinopoli and Tartsinis) and 1 abstain (Irwin.) Motion passed.

Communications Received

Chairwoman Boutin shared the following:

- Chairwoman Boutin received a phone call 8 days ago from a town resident, Sue Irwin, who wanted to inform Chairwoman Boutin that she had filed three (3) complaints with the State Freedom of Information Commission against Chairwoman Boutin and the Library Commission. The exact nature of the complaints was not disclosed.
 - Chairwoman Boutin explained to the commission members that the Chairperson is responsible for representing the commission if there were to be any type of investigation and if found guilty, the chair is quite possibly liable for any fines, or at least some of the fines that may come with a guilty decision.
- Ms. Irwin also reported that she had requested and received resumes for the newest members of the commission through a FOIA request. All documents she received included personal information such as emails, addresses and phone numbers. It appeared that she wanted to convey this in order for the commission members to be aware.

Selectman Mahoney asked for confirmation that the wife of a current commission member called Chairwoman Boutin to inform her that three complaints had been filed against her. Chairwoman Boutin confirmed that she had received this call. He asked if copies of the complaints had been provided to her or if she had been notified by FOIA of any complaints. She answered no to both questions. Selectman Mahoney continued to ask questions about past behaviors of commission members, supposed ethics violations that had occurred and whether there were any members of the commission, republican or otherwise that had filed any complaints with the Ethics Commission. He also inquired as to whether any member of the Board of Selectmen had acted to remove the person or persons involved from the library commission under the procedure allowed by the Charter. Chairwoman Boutin stated she did not have the answers to any of his questions, however, Commissioner Sinopoli confirmed that no complaints had been filed. Commissioner Bielonko asked questions about the personal information released on the new commission members and whether the correct process was followed.

- Town Clerk – Kathy Dunai contacted Chairwoman Boutin to inform her of the resignation of Kent Memorial Library Commission Member Lester Webb effective March 8, 2024.
- Town of Suffield IT Director, Becky Osleger contacted Chairwoman Boutin yesterday via email requesting to start a dialogue with the library staff about network security issues and needs. Chairwoman Boutin recommended that she start with the Technology Subcommittee, with Chair of the Subcommittee, Cameron Lisk acting as the contact person.

Report of the Library Director

Library Administrator Beth Chafetz commented that it had been an interesting and busy month at the library. She provided statistics for the month of February involving print, door count, website visits, reference questions, Historical Room visits, Instagram posts/connections, Facebook views and the popular One on One Tech Time with Hunter Sangiovanni. She also provided information with regard to various programs and contests held throughout the month and the corresponding attendance numbers.

- Ms. Chafetz reported that 15,000 people came in and out of the library during the month of February. Commissioner Sinopoli inquired as to how the counter operates and whether it can be suspended during certain instances. Ms. Chafetz said she was not positive as to how it operates and whether it can be suspended. She stated it was best to view this number as an estimate.

Ms. Chafetz reported two personnel changes as follows:

- A candidate has been offered the clerk position and will be starting Monday.
- Circulation Assistant resigned and her last day will be Thursday – this is a guaranteed 16 hour union position which the library will be looking to fill soon.

Ms. Chafetz reported on facilities, stating that they are continuing to gather data to determine the programming numbers for the EPA.

Ms. Chafetz said her experience over the last month and a half has been positive and she praised the staff for their hard work during a difficult time. Commissioner Sinopoli said she appreciated that things are running very smoothly at the library and commended Ms. Chafetz for her leadership and management capabilities.

Standing Committee Reports

None

Special Committee Reports

Commissioner Sinopoli provided an update on the Interim Search Committee. She reported that Human Resources Director Karin Ziemba had told her it was a “very hot job market” and as a result, candidates number two (2) and number four (4) had withdrawn and were no longer active. Candidate number three (3) is still active and Ms. Ziemba has scheduled an interview for Thursday, March 20, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. It is scheduled to take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Commissioner Sinopoli requested that the Search Committee arrive at 9:30 a.m.

Commissioner Kawalec questioned Commissioner Sinopoli as to why she had not reached out to anyone on the search committee to discuss their availability for the interview, as this was the first time she was hearing about the scheduled interview, and it would require her to leave work in order to attend. Commissioner Sinopoli explained that the library is currently in a desperate situation and in order to keep the interview process moving, all

members of the search committee should understand that being flexible is necessary. She recognized that the situation is not ideal, but stressed the need to move quickly and work around the candidate's availability. Commissioner Kawalec asked if the same questions used in prior interviews would be used again and also asked if the subcommittee planned to meet prior to the interview. Commissioner Sinopoli said she just received the questions and would need to read through them first. It is unlikely the subcommittee would be meeting due to time restrictions. Commissioner Irwin shared his personal thoughts on the actions of the current chair of the search committee and expressed concerns that the individual was possibly taking liberties and not working in the best interests of the rest of the committee. Selectman Mahoney stated, as a point of order, that it is completely inappropriate to make a comment about what is motivating another commission member to act. Commissioner Irwin agreed and apologized.

Unfinished Business

Funding and Staffing Document

Selectman/Ex-officio member Mahoney referred to a document that he prepared and presented to the commission last month. During that discussion Commissioner Irwin pointed out an error. DRG was incorrectly described as District Resource Group, however, the actual name is District Reference Group. Selectman Mahoney agreed to make the correction and asked that once corrected, the document be provided to the staff and have the document appended to the minute of this meeting tonight in order to make it available to the public.

Commissioner Sinopoli MOTIONED and Commissioner Bielonko seconded to include the document titled "Summary of Library Funding and Staffing" authored by Jerry Mahoney, with the change stating that it is a "District Reference Group."

Commissioner Lisk asked for clarification of the action to be taken. Commissioner Sinopoli clarified.

Vote: 8 in favor (Adzigirey, Alexopoulos, Bielonko Boutin, Kendrick, Kynard, Lisk and Sinopoli) and 3 abstain (Irwin, Kawalec and Tartsinis.) Motion passed.

New Business

Commissioner Adzigirey inquired about the approval of the February 13, 2024 and March 5, 2024 meeting minutes. Chairwoman Boutin explained that both sets of minutes would be handled at the next meeting, unless someone chose to make a motion.

Public Participation

None

Adjournment

Selectman/Ex-officio member Mahoney MOTIONED to adjourn at 7:51 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary

TOWN OF SUFFIELD

SUMMARY OF LIBRARY FUNDING AND STAFFING

Suffield has a tradition of strongly funding KML which continues to the present. While many towns are holding library funding steady or have even *reduced* library funding, Suffield has increased funding for its library by 15% in just the past 2 years. Suffield's funding of KML is in the top 10% of towns with similar socioeconomic status. Suffield funds more librarian positions than most other similarly situated towns. Most towns of similar socioeconomic status do not fund a full-time Assistant Director, but Suffield does. Most do not employ a full-time Children's Librarian, but Suffield does. Most do not employ a full-time reference librarian, but Suffield does.

KML is also supported by fundraising by the Friends of the Library and especially by an endowment. Together, private funding accounts for about 15% of the library's operating budget. KML is fortunate to have these additional sources of income. While there are notable exceptions, the great majority of similarly situated municipal libraries receive only 2% - 3% of their funding from private sources.

The Town of Suffield paid approximately \$5.9 million for KML renovations which were completed in 2019. An additional \$1.8 million was raised through grants, endowments, and other private funding for the renovations, which cost a total of approximately \$7.7 million.

Trends Statewide

The percentage of Connecticut residents with library cards has been in decline for many years. Nearly 60% of residents had library cards in 2008. Now only about 35% of state residents have a library card.¹ Suffield has followed the statewide trend. 64% of Suffield residents had library cards in 2008, while just 32% had library cards in 2023.²

Library staffing has also been declining statewide with a 10% reduction in the past 20 years.³ By way of comparison, KML has more librarians than it did 20 years ago. So,

¹ Connecticut Public Library, Trend Reports, Statistical Trends In CT Public Libraries, 2022, page 6, paragraph 4. In fiscal year 2008-2009 58.6% of residents had a library card, whereas by 2022-2023 only 35.4% did.

² CT Public Library Statistics, 1996–2023, Individual Library Trends Over Time. This data is based on the numbers reported by KML staff to the State Public Library. About 1,350 of the town residents in 2023 were incarcerated and presumably do not have KML library cards. If they are removed from consideration, 34% of Suffield residents had library cards in 2023.

³ Connecticut Public Library, Statistical Trends in Connecticut Public Libraries, 2001 – 2022, Full-Time Equivalent Employees. There were 2,370.8 FTE employees in 2002 and 2,133.9 in 2022. Most of the decline took place in 2010 (2,240.7) and 2011 (2,148.7). There was some rebound from 2014 through 2016 (2,198.3). Staffing declined from there reaching a low of 2,079 in 2021.

whereas the trend across the state has been to reduce staffing, the Town of Suffield has funded increased staffing at Kent Memorial Library.⁴

Suffield is less affluent as compared to other towns in Connecticut than in used to be. Whereas from 1996 through 2003 Suffield was ranked among the 55-62 wealthiest towns in the state, or near the top third, over the past 10 years Suffield has been ranked between the 87-102 wealthiest towns in the state, or out of the top 50%.⁵

Suffield Library Funding Compared with other Similarly Situated Towns

The State of Connecticut groups towns of similar socioeconomic status and need together in District Reference Groups (DRGs). The variables are **income**, (the median family income for families with children in school), **education**, (the percentage of parents with a college degree), **occupation**, (the percentage of parents employed in an executive, managerial, or professional specialty occupation), **family structure**, (the percentage of public school children living in single family homes), **poverty**, (the percentage of public school students from families with incomes eligible to receive free or price reduced meals), **home language**, (the percentage of students whose families speak a language other than English at home), and **school enrollment**.

There are 9 DRGs, A through I. DRG A includes 10 towns, all of which are located in Fairfield County.

There are 24 towns in DRG B, including Avon, Farmington, Glastonbury, Granby, Madison, Simsbury, and West Hartford.

There are 39 towns in Suffield's District Reference Group, DRG C.

With respect to affluence, Suffield's wealth is ranked is 88 out of the 169 municipalities in Connecticut, right in the middle. In our DRG, however, 27 municipalities have a higher wealth rank than Suffield. Thus, 69% of the towns in our DRG are more affluent than Suffield.

⁴ For the fiscal years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004, KML reported 5 Full-Time Equivalent Employees. KML reported 6.3 FTE in 2004-2005, and then 3 FTE in fiscal years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. KML reported 7.75 FTE for fiscal year 2021-2022, a 55% increase as compared to 20 years before. Connecticut Public Library Statistics, 1996-2022, Individual Library Trends Over Time.

⁵ Connecticut Public Library Statistics, 1996-2022, Individual Library Trends Over Time.

			Municipal Funding as a		Gifts & Fundraising	Investment & Endowment Income	Total Operating Budget
	Wealth Rank	Population	Municipal Funding	% of Total Operating			
Andover (R.D.#8)	111	3,150	\$ 106,003	96%	\$3,606	\$ -	\$ 110,143
Ashford (R.D.#19)	133	4,222	\$ 185,000	96%	\$3,142	\$ 511	\$ 193,448
Barkhamsted	99	3,731	\$ -				
Bethany	51	5,277	\$ 306,648	90%	\$34,934	\$ -	\$ 341,825
Bethlehem (R.D.#14)	86	3,409	\$ 113,666	94%	\$6,690	\$ -	\$ 120,654
Bolton	102	4,834	\$ 286,382	99%	\$2,441	\$ -	\$ 289,307
Bridgewater (R.D.#12)	14	1,652	\$ 130,000	58%	\$82,472	\$ 17,527	\$ 223,940
Burlington (R.D.#10)	67	9,710	\$ 422,776	93%	\$26,000	\$ -	\$ 453,768
Canton	75	10,091	\$ 676,597	93%	\$25,912	\$ 2,660	\$ 724,345
Chester (R.D.#4)	100	3,757	\$ 168,366	98%	\$3,644	\$ -	\$ 172,075
Colebrook	44	1,369	\$ -				
Columbia	69	5,258	\$ 439,626	89%	\$17,866	\$ 11,868	\$ 493,213
Cornwall	9	1,573	\$ 60,000	23%	\$154,590	\$ 44,312	\$ 261,632
Deep River (R.D.#4)	60	4,445	\$ 313,194	98%	\$4,000	\$ -	\$ 318,590
Durham (R.D.#13)	62	7,207	\$ 542,912	92%	\$22,877	\$ -	\$ 590,369
Ellington	95	16,977	\$ 715,492	94%	\$16,647	\$ -	\$ 763,782
Essex (R.D.#4)	30	6,793	\$ 442,771	70%/76%	\$180,337	\$ 3,300	\$ 616,759
Haddam (R.D.#17)	58	8,670	\$ 368,010	74%	\$23,739	\$ 103,703	\$ 497,677
Harwinton (R.D.#10)	81	5,562	\$ 193,584	87%	\$21,785	\$ 3,283	\$ 222,544
Hebron (R.D.#8)	91	9,121	\$ 301,267	94%	\$12,243	\$ -	\$ 318,961
Killingworth (R.D.#17)	65	6,239	\$ 200,000	68%	\$61,389	\$ 20,395	\$ 293,721
Lyme (R.D.#18)	15	2,401	\$ 192,618	72%	\$2,375	\$ 72,816	\$ 267,958
Mansfield (R.D.#19)	158	31,949	\$ 1,236,901	98%	\$8,010	\$ -	\$ 1,257,432
Marlborough (R.D.#8)	73	6,109	\$ 411,890	92%	\$30,100	\$ 865	\$ 447,454
Middlefield (R.D.#13)	83	4,248	\$ 310,531	94%	\$19,750	\$ -	\$ 331,508
New Hartford (R.D.#7)	82	6,698	\$ 308,620	73%/65%	\$75,422	\$ 50,000	\$ 461,910
Norfolk (R.D.#7)	38	1,594	\$ 2,500	1%	\$120,661	\$ 540,000	\$ 665,660
Old Lyme (R.D.#18)	16	7,684	\$ 375,000	40%	\$250,506	\$ 314,689	\$ 934,474
Oxford	57	12,941	\$ 613,447	95%	\$2,831	\$ -	\$ 646,165
Pomfret	89	4,307	\$ 120,373	89%	\$15,100	\$ -	\$ 135,695
Roxbury (R.D.#12)	7	2,269	\$ 153,278	53%	\$98,941	\$ 35,846	\$ 289,157
Salem	66	6,746	\$ 226,111	82%	\$14,857	\$ 1,817	\$ 275,183
Sherman	18	3,537	\$ 196,780	52%	\$149,171	\$ 35,000	\$ 382,847
Somers	105	9,843	\$ 531,429	97%	\$2,126	\$ 15,148	\$ 548,162
Suffield	88	15,731	\$ 528,000	85%	\$5,600	\$ 83,500	\$ 617,100
Tolland	85	14,577	\$ 439,558	95%	\$22,641	\$ -	\$ 464,997
Washington (R.D.#12)	5	3,666	\$ 185,500	30%	\$388,471	\$ 34,472	\$ 615,659
Willington (R.D.#19)	128	5,544	\$ 241,875	87%	\$11,995	\$ 400	\$ 272,096
Woodbury (R.D.#14)	55	9,802	\$ 678,227	92%	\$30,244	\$ 20,883	\$ 739,704

Source: Connecticut State Libraries: A Statistical Profile 2022-2023. Wealth Rank more affluent than Suffield, Population, Municipal Funding and Total Operating Budget greater than Suffield are in **bold**. Funding in **Light Blue** is unchanged, in **Red** is reduced, and in black is increased from the year before. The Total Operating Budget for Suffield reported to the Connecticut State Library was \$703,509. That was an error. Finally, Barkhamsted and Colebrook are in DRG C, but neither has a public library. Their residents use the library in Winchester.

	Full-Time Staff	Part-Time Staff	Volunteer Hours/Wk	Assistant Director Pay/Hour	Assistant Director Hours/Wk	Children's Librarian Pay/Hour	Children's Librarian Hours/Wk	Reference Librarian Pay	Reference Librarian Hours/Wk	Unionized
Andover (R.D.#8)	0	7	0	\$ -	-	\$ 16.25	6.0	\$ -	-	N
Ashford (R.D.#19)	1	6	0	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	N
Barkhamsted	0	0	0	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	N
Betheny	3	4	5	\$ -	-	\$ 21.32	35.0	\$ 25.00	32.0	N
Bethlehem (R.D.#14)	1	3	4	\$ 16.73	28.0	\$ 14.50	10.0	\$ 17.51	10.0	N
Bolton	1	6	4	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ 29.97	25.0	Y
Bridgewater (R.D.#12)	1	4	0	\$ -	-	\$ 20.40	21.0	\$ -	-	N
Burlington (R.D.#10)	4	7	20	\$ -	-	\$ 24.58	37.5	\$ 24.07	37.5	Y
Canton	6	15	10	\$ -	-	\$ 37.80	37.0	\$ 34.74	35.0	Y
Chester (R.D.#4)	1	3	0	\$ -	-	\$ 21.38	17.5	\$ -	-	N
Colebrook	0	0	0	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	N
Columbia	3	8	4	\$ -	-	\$ 36.57	35.0	\$ 32.00	35.0	N
Cornwall	1	8	5	\$ -	-	\$ 22.00	20.0	\$ 24.02	30.0	N
Deep River (R.D.#4)	2	7	4	\$ 24.02 *	30.0 *	\$ 24.02 *	30.0 *	\$ -	-	Y
Durham (R.D.#13)	7	4	2	\$ 35.53	35.0	\$ 31.90	35.0	\$ -	-	Y
Ellington	6	13	4	\$ 48.39 *	35.0 *	\$ 48.39 *	35.0 *	\$ 36.99	35.0	N
Essex (R.D.#4)	4	10	37	\$ -	-	\$ 28.58	40.0	\$ 27.88	40.0	N
Haddam (R.D.#17)	2	9	7	\$ 31.00	35.0	\$ 30.00	24.0	\$ -	-	N
Harwinton (R.D.#10)	3	1	4	\$ -	-	\$ 25.81	37.5	\$ 23.67	37.5	Y
Hebron (R.D.#8)	3	12	4	\$ -	-	\$ 24.75	40.0	\$ 20.81	40.0	N
Killingworth (R.D.#17)	2	3	50	\$ 31.06	40.0	\$ 28.00	22.0	\$ -	-	N
Lyme (R.D.#18)	2	4	3	\$ -	-	\$ 21.10	30.0	\$ -	-	N
Mansfield (R.D.#19)	7	15	1	\$ -	-	\$ 40.27	35.0	\$ 40.94	35.0	Y
Marlborough (R.D.#8)	2	12	0	\$ -	-	\$ 30.39	40.0	\$ 31.05	16.0	N
Middlefield (R.D.#13)	3	2	3	\$ 24.76	35.0	\$ 24.76	30.0	\$ 21.92	22.0	N
New Hartford (R.D.#7)	2	9	6	\$ -	-	\$ 21.00	26.0	\$ -	-	N
Norfolk (R.D.#7)	2	7	6	\$ 30.00	40.0	\$ 30.87	25.0	\$ 21.00	24.0	N
Old Lyme (R.D.#18)	5	6	5	\$ 34.11	20.0	\$ 30.75	35.0	\$ 30.24	35.0	N
Oxford	4	11	4	\$ 29.30 *	35.0 *	\$ 29.30	30.0	\$ -	-	N
Pomfret	0	4	2	\$ 19.45	24.0	\$ 19.98	19.0	\$ -	-	N
Roxbury (R.D.#12)	1	8	25	\$ -	-	\$ 22.00	7.0	\$ 21.57	12.0	N
Salem	1	9	0	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	N
Sherman	1	8	10	\$ -	-	\$ 22.00	29.0	\$ -	-	N
Somers	5	6	6	\$ 38.19 *	35.0 *	\$ 38.19 *	35.0 *	\$ 26.10	35.0	N
Suffield	7	10	3	\$ 29.91	32.0 ?	\$ 32.54	37.0	\$ 25.72	37.0	Y
Tolland	5	4	10	\$ -	-	\$ 33.96	35.0	\$ 33.19	35.0	N
Washington (R.D.#12)	5	6	12	\$ -	-	\$17-20	36.0	\$20-\$22	36.0	N
Willington (R.D.#19)	2	6	15	\$ 19.00	9.0	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	N
Woodbury (R.D.#14)	7	8	72	\$ -	-	\$ 32.13	35.0	\$ 33.60	35.0	Y

Towns with municipal appropriations greater than Suffield's are in green. *In Deep River, Ellington, and Somers one employee is both the assistant director and children's librarian. Essex and New Hartford have two library branches. Suffield reported 12 part-time employees, but there were 10 the year before and that is the number used above.

Of the 169 towns in Connecticut, Suffield has the 73rd largest population. Suffield, however, has the 4th largest population in our DRG behind Mansfield (31,949),⁶ Ellington (16,977), and Tolland (14,577).⁷ Oxford, (12,941), Somers, (9,843), Canton, (10,091), and Hebron (9,121), have populations slightly smaller than Suffield, but larger than the rest of the towns in our DRG.

Suffield appropriated \$528,000 in its 2022/2023 budget for KML, the 8th most in our DRG behind Mansfield, Ellington, Canton, Durham, Oxford, Somers, and Woodbury, and ahead of the remaining 31 other towns in our DRG. Seven towns maintained the exact same level of funding for their libraries as the year before with no increase. Three towns *reduced* funding. Therefore, more than 25% of the towns in our DRG chose not to increase their library funding as compared to the year before, including nearly 10% of the towns in our DRG that *reduced* funding. Statewide, about 28% of municipal libraries received “less” funding in 2022-2023 than the year before.⁸ This is consistent with pre-coronavirus levels and therefore unlikely related to the coronavirus.⁹

Of the 7 towns in our DRG with larger municipal library appropriations, Mansfield (31,949/24,219) and Ellington (16,977) have larger populations than Suffield. Canton (10,091), Durham (7,231), Oxford (12,941), Somers (9,843), and Woodbury (9,761) have smaller populations than Suffield. Of the towns with larger budgets than Suffield, Durham (62), Canton (75), Oxford (57), and Woodbury (55) are more affluent than Suffield,

⁶ The U.S. Census counted the students from the UCONN campus who left during the coronavirus epidemic as living in Mansfield. When the students returned to campus in 2022, the Census counted them again. This double counting resulted in the 31,949 census population number. The State of Connecticut estimates that Mansfield’s actual population is 24,219. Mansfield is the most populous town in our DRG either way, so it doesn’t affect our analysis.

⁷ (The state lists Suffield as having a population of 15,731 and Tolland with 14,577. At least 1,350 of the Suffield population are corrections inmates. Accordingly, KML is providing services to no more than 14,381 Suffield residents, so I have listed Tolland ahead of Suffield).

⁸ Connecticut State Libraries: A Statistical Profile 2022-2023, Charts, Local Municipal Funding For CT Public Libraries. The chart identifies libraries as either receiving more funding or less funding than the year before. It does not provide a separate category for libraries receiving the same amount of municipal funding as the year before. Given the numbers in our DRG, I presume the chart includes libraries receiving the same municipal funding as the year before in the category of libraries receiving less funding in the chart.

⁹ According to a graph prepared by the Connecticut State Library, the percentage of public libraries reporting reduced municipal funding in the last four years before the coronavirus was 24%, 38%, 23%, and 31%. That spiked to 42% in the first budget season after the coronavirus before dropping to 29% the following year. CT Public Libraries, Statewide Chart Summaries, July 2021 – June 2022, page 21, Local Municipal Funding for CT Public Libraries. Once again, the chart identifies libraries as either receiving more funding or less funding than the year before. It does not provide a separate category for libraries receiving the same amount of municipal funding as the year before. I presume the chart includes libraries receiving the same municipal funding as the year before in the category of libraries receiving less funding in the chart. Accordingly, I presume that it would be more accurate to say only that these libraries did not receive more funding than the year before, not that they received less.

whereas Mansfield (158), Ellington (95), and Somers (105) are less affluent than Suffield (88).

Every town in our DRG with at least 9,591 residents has a library budget of at least \$400,000. But Columbia, with only 5,258 residents, has a library budget of \$439,626 and Hebron, with 9,121 residents, has a library budget of \$301,267. The population served by Suffield's library is almost identical to that of Tolland,¹⁰ but Suffield provides a 20% larger budget to its library than Tolland, (\$528,000 v. \$439,558).

The town's library budget appropriation accounts for 85% of KML's operating expenses. (This does not include the cost to the Town of the library employees' health insurance, retirement benefits, and other employee benefits). 22 of the town libraries in DRG C rely on their respective towns for a greater share of their operating expenses. This indicates that KML receives private financial support from organizations like the Library Foundation that most towns in our DRG do not receive.

There are municipal public libraries in DRG C, however, that receive a substantially smaller portion of their operating expenses from their municipal government. For example, libraries in Cornwall, Essex, New Hartford, and Sherman rely on the municipality for only 60%, 23%, 63%, and 46% of their operating expenses. Norfolk provides only \$2,500 in funding for its library - less than 1% of the library's operating expenses of \$665,660 - with almost all of the funding coming from gifts, fundraising, and endowment investment income.

This provides some indication that there may be greater fundraising opportunities for KML. Suffield ranked 30th out of 39 in terms of private fundraising. The communities in our DRG that are most successful at private fundraising tend to be wealthier but less populous than Suffield, so what is working in these other towns may or may not translate to Suffield. Nonetheless, there may be fundraising activities in other towns that KML supporters may be able to replicate.

Two towns in our DRG do not have municipal libraries. Barkhamsted and Colebrook residents use the library in Winchester. Both towns have substantially smaller populations than Suffield.¹¹

Staffing

Suffield funds 7 full-time library employees. There is no town library in our DRG with more full-time employees than Suffield's municipal library. There are only 3 other towns

¹⁰ As noted above, the census states that Suffield has a population of 15,731 and that Tolland's population is 14,577. But about 1,350 of Suffield's population are corrections inmates not served by KML. That leaves no more than 14,381 Suffield residents served by our library as compared to 14,577 served by Tolland's library.

¹¹ There are towns in our DRG with populations similar in size to Barkhamsted and Colebrook that have libraries, but they are also substantially wealthier than Suffield.

out of the in our DRG which support 7 full-time employees: Durham, Mansfield, and Woodbury. Suffield funds 12 part-time employees, the 4th most in our DRG behind Canton (15), Mansfield (15), and Ellington (13).

Suffield's compensation for its most recent library director was 15th highest in its DRG.

Suffield is one of only 9 towns in our DRG that employs a full-time Assistant Director for its library. More than 75% of the towns in our DRG do not fund a full-time Assistant Director for their library. In Deep River, Ellington, and Somers, the Assistant Library Director is also the Children's Librarian. In Oxford, the Assistant Librarian is also the Reference Librarian.

Suffield is one of 15 towns in our DRG – 38% - which employ a Children's Librarian on a full-time basis.¹² They are paid between \$21.32 and \$48.39 an hour. Suffield's full-time Children's Librarian is paid \$32.54 an hour or about in the middle of that range. 16 towns in our DRG, or about 41%, employ a Children's Librarian on a part-time basis. They are paid between \$14.50 and \$30.87 per hour.

Suffield is one of 15 towns in our DRG which employ a full-time Reference Librarian. Eight towns employ a part time Reference Librarian.

Suffield is one of 10 towns in our DRG where the library staff is unionized. (The others are Bolton, Burlington, Deep River, Durham, Harwinton, Mansfield, Oxford, Tolland, and Woodbury).

Claims That Suffield Does Not Adequately Fund Its Library Are Unfounded

As the foregoing demonstrates, the Town of Suffield provides funding and staffing for its public library which places it in the top tier of the towns with similar socioeconomic status as determined by the State of Connecticut. Nonetheless, the argument has been made that Suffield does not adequately fund its library based on the claim that the line item for the library budget is not as large a portion of the town budget as it was 10 years ago.

As a threshold matter, it should be noted that the line item for the library in the Selectmen's budget does not reflect the total cost of the library to the town because it does not include the cost of the benefits provided by the town to its library employees.

The line item for the library does make up a slightly smaller portion of Selectmen's budget than it did twenty years ago. In 2003-2004, the line item for the library operating expenses was 3.7% of the selectmen's budget, whereas they are 3.1% of the selectmen's budget in the 2023-2024 budget.¹³

¹² *In Deep River, Ellington, and Somers one employee is both the Assistant Director and Children's Librarian.

¹³ In fiscal year 2003-2004, the line item for the library was 1.0% of the town budget. Except for one year where it was .7% of the town budget, it has been either 0.8% or 0.9% of the town budget every year

That is because the line item for employee benefits – including the benefits provided by the Town to its library employees – continues to take up a larger and larger portion of the budget. Whereas employee benefits made up 15.9% of the Selectmen’s budget in 2009, they now make up 22.6% of the selectmen’s budget, an increase of nearly 7%. Each portion or line item in the budget must add up to a whole 100%. If the employee benefits line item increases its portion of the budget by 7%, that necessarily means that other line items must decrease by a total of 7%. It doesn’t mean that the library is getting less. It just means that the growth in library funding – significant as it has been – is not increasing as fast as the exponential growth in employee benefits.

How Does Suffield Compare With Other Towns Of Interest Which Are Not In Our DRG?

East Granby is in DRG D. It has a wealth rank of 84, a population of 5,218, and provided library funding of \$220,437 in 2022-2023, 82% of its operating budget, which is augmented by gifts or fundraising of \$75,136 and endowment/investment income of \$18,738. There is one full-time employee and 12 part-time employees. The staff is not unionized. The Director earns about \$33/hour, the Assistant Director earns about \$20/hour, and only works 20 hours a week.

East Windsor is in DRG F. Its wealth rank is 124, its population is 11,176, and it provided \$299,750 in library funding in 2022, 73% of the library’s operating expenses. The library had gift or fundraising income of \$28,605 and endowment/investment income of \$80,156. Its Library Director earns \$34.87/hour. There is no Assistant Library Director. There is one full-time employee and 8 part-time employees.

Granby is in DRG B. Its wealth rank is 78, population is 10,953. Granby provided \$518,669 in library funding in 2022-2023, a reduction of more than \$55,000 from the year before. It secured no gift, fundraising, endowment or investment income. It has 4 full-time and 14 part-time employees, one less part-time staff member than the year before. The staff is unionized. The Library Director earns \$49-\$62/hour. There is no Assistant Director.

Windsor Locks is in DRG F. Its wealth rank is 99, population is 12,537, and it provided \$481,027 in funding, 95% of the library’s operating expenses. It now has 3 full-time and 8 part-time employees. A year ago, it had 4 full-time employees and 7 part-time employees, so it appears that one position has been shifted from full-time to part-time. The staff is not unionized.

The Towns In Our DRG, District Reference Group, DRG C

Andover	Ashford	Barkhamsted	Bethlehem
Bolton	Bridgewater	Burlington	Canton

for the past 20 years. It is 0.9% in 2023-2024. The Selectmen’s budget is that part of the town budget other than the Board of Education and Capital funding. Board of Education funding is typically about 60% of the town budget.

Chester	Colebrook	Columbia	Cornwall
Deep River	Durham	Ellington	Essex
Haddam	Harwinton	Hebron	Killingworth
Lyme	Mansfield	Marlborough	Middlefield
New Hartford	Norfolk	Old Lyme	Oxford
Pomfret	Roxbury	Salem	Sherman
Somers	Suffield	Tolland	Washington
Willington	Woodbury		

Regional District #4 (Chester, Deep River, and Essex)
Regional District #7 (Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, and Norfolk)
Regional District #8 (Andover, Hebron, Marlborough)
Regional District #10 (Burlington and Harwinton)
Regional District #12 (Washington, Bridgewater, and Roxbury)
Regional District #13 (Middlefield and Durham)
Regional District #14 (Bethlehem and Woodbury)
Regional District #17 (Haddam and Killingworth)
Regional District #18 (Lyme and Old Lyme)
Regional District #19 (Ashford, Mansfield, and Willington)