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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF
THE KENT MEMORIAL LIBRARY COMMISSION**

April 14, 2026

7:00 PM

Suffield Town Hall Meeting Room

Hybrid Meeting

Vice Chair Sylvestre called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m and commissioners recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Michael Alexopoulos, Julie Bodnar, Denise Boutin, Ray Dalrymple, Claire Kawalec, Nina Kendrick, David Sylvestre, Christine Sinopoli, Fred Sweitzer, Despina Tartsinis (arrived at 7:05)

Absent: Aaron Marcavitch, Greg Sparzo

Also present: Library Director Amy Vessella, Associate Library Director Liz Bologna

PUBLIC COMMENT

none

COMMISSIONER OPENING COMMENTS

Commissioner Kendrick expressed disappointment at statements made during the prior month's meeting, in which a suggested compromise to break the ties for the treasurer position and finance subcommittee chair was misrepresented with cynical accusations of behind-the-scenes deals. Commissioner Kawalec explained that she had felt pressured to give a response. Commissioner Sweitzer expressed that he would like conversations like these to take place in front of the full commission.

Approval of the minutes from the March 10, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission

Commissioner Alexopoulos MOVED to approve the minutes from the March 10, 2026 regular meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission. Commissioner Dalrymple SECONDED. The motion PASSED unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS

None

Commissioner Kendrick MOVED to add “Brief report of the Association of Connecticut Library Board’s webinar: ‘Contemplating Collection Development: Concerns for Library Boards’” to the agenda after the report of the library director. Commissioner Sinopoli SECONDED. The motion PASSED unanimously.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

Director Vessella shared her report, highlighting increased circulation, well-attended programs, and a facilities update. A fire inspection took place on March 24th, and some repairs are in progress. The heating system has been repaired and is fully functional. Director Vessella also reported that there have been 287 community surveys submitted to date, but only one person has signed up for the several focus groups that are scheduled.

Brief report of the Association of Connecticut Library Board’s webinar: “Contemplating Collection Development: Concerns for Library Boards”

Commissioner Kendrick reported on the content of the webinar, highlighting the subjective nature of collection development. The webinar’s presenter, a current public library director and ACLB board member, said that collection development is certainly an art and a science, but it’s also “kind of like vibes.” The presenter discussed some book challenges, including a Barbie book for youth. A patron had expressed concerns about the book because of the quote, “Barbie skipped a meal to fit into her dress.” The presenter commented that this is “not the message we want to be sending young girls” and stated that the book was ultimately removed from the collection. When questioned about how librarians determine the age-appropriateness of books, the presenter stated that they are “trusting the publishers” and also that the “authors weigh in.” The presenter also added that if a book series grows more mature, it can be reclassified. Commissioner Kendrick stated that she reported on this webinar to continue the ongoing discussion of collection development.

Commissioner Boutin questioned the publisher’s age rating system. Director Vessella commented about how librarians do rely on professional reviews and publisher’s recommendations. Commissioner Boutin also asked about the young adult age range. Director Vessella responded that the young adult age range is typically pre-teen through age 17.

Commissioner Sylvestre inquired about patrons’ requests for books. Director Vessella responded that this has been a casual process, and most patrons’ requests have historically been honored.

REPORTS OF STANDING SUBCOMMITTEES

Building and Grounds

Commissioner Sinopoli reported that the subcommittee has not yet met, but she provided some updates. Fire alarm issues are being addressed and there will be a re-inspection on April 20. Emergency exit stairs are awaiting completion. She raised a safety concern regarding a gap in the railing on one of the outdoor ramps, which Director Vessella confirmed must be addressed.

Director Vessella announced that the atrium project is scheduled to begin next week, depending on weather conditions. The project is expected to take approximately three weeks to complete. One of the ramps will be blocked off during this time. Additionally, there is currently no confirmed installation date for the information kiosk.

Finance

Commissioner Dalrymple stated that the subcommittee met on March 5th. During the session, the group reviewed the current budget and various funding sources. There was a consensus among members that more robust information should be provided to new commissioners. Commissioner Alexopoulos added that information about specific duties and responsibilities for new members of all subcommittees would be helpful. Commissioner Dalrymple stated that he plans to have the subcommittee meet on a quarterly basis.

Commissioner Sweitzer initiated a discussion regarding the finance subcommittee meeting minutes, specifically seeking clarification on the process for endowment donations. Director Vessella clarified that all donations go directly to the Commission. To ensure proper oversight, Commissioner Sinopoli suggested that Director Vessella notify the Chair of any donations received. There was discussion about restricted and unrestricted donations. Commissioner Tartsinis then reviewed the gift acceptance policies, noting that gifts exceeding \$1,000 must go specifically to the Commission for review.

Personnel

Commissioner Kendrick stated that the subcommittee had met with Director Vessella on March 19th for the purpose of the library director's performance review and to collaborate on new goals for the upcoming year. Commissioner Kendrick explained that she attended the "Library Director Performance Review and Goal-Setting Meeting" with the town on April 1, 2026 as the representative of the Personnel Subcommittee. First Selectman Colin Moll, HR director Karin Ziembra, and Library Director Amy Vessella were in attendance. Two out of five of Director Vessella's new goals were proposed by the Personnel Subcommittee. All around, the collaborative process was well received.

Community Relations

Commissioner Boutin shared highlights from the March 31st meeting, in which last year's Suffield on the Green event was discussed. The main goal for this year's event is to expand sign-ups for library cards. The group also talked about having a raffle. Commissioner Boutin stated that there will be a sign-up sheet for commissioners to volunteer a couple hours of their time for the event.

Commissioner Tartsinis MOVED for the Commission to approve a \$65 expenditure to fund the booth rental. Commissioner Bodnar SECONDED. The Motion PASSED unanimously.

Commissioner Tartsinis recognized that these subcommittee meeting minutes should have been on the agenda for approval. They will be put on next month's agenda, to allow commissioners time to review.

There was discussion about new sections listed on the agenda, and how agenda items for regular meetings are delineated in the by-laws.

Historical

Nothing to report

Policy

Commissioner Sylvestre stated that the subcommittee has not met yet. In the near future, he hopes to address some of Director Vessella's policy proposals from last year. He also said if commissioners have any policy suggestions to let him know.

Technology

Nothing to report

NEW BUSINESS

none

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Commissioner Sweitzer wanted clarification about the order of public comment and commissioner comments sections of the agenda. He also apologized about his statement at the last meeting causing offense. He explained that sometimes actions are intended one way and received in another way, and he encouraged all to think about the difference between intent and impact.

There was a lengthy discussion about transparent, orderly, procedural meeting processes, with consideration of a commissioner's freedom to comment and discuss. Vice Chair Sylvestre called a POINT OF ORDER when disagreements intensified regarding commissioners' freedom to comment versus strict adherence to the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Tartsinis MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Commissioner Kawalec SECONDED. The motion PASSED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Nina Kendrick
April 20, 2026