

RECEIVED

By Michele Urch at 12:38 pm, Oct 19, 2026

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

October 13, 2026

7:00 PM

Suffield Town Hall Meeting Room

Hybrid Meeting

Chair Sparzo called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Commissioners recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Michael Alexopoulos, Julie Bodnar, Denise Boutin (joined via Zoom 7:05), Ray Dalrymple, Nina Kendrick, Aaron Marcavitch, David Sylvestre, Christine Sinopoli, Greg Sparzo, Fred Sweitzer, Despina Tartsinis

Absent: Claire Kawalec

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

COMMISSIONER OPENING COMMENTS

Commissioner Alexopoulos apologized for missing recent meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tess McCool (Suffield resident) commented on the agenda item about the report of collection content balance and provided commissioners with a list of questions that should have been considered in compiling the report.

Approval of the minutes from the September 8, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission

Commissioner Marcavitch MOVED to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2026 regular meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission. Commissioner Sylvestre SECONDED. The motion passed 9-0-2 (abstentions: Sweitzer and Boutin).

Approval of the minutes from the June 11, 2026 Finance Subcommittee Meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission

Commissioner Dalrymple MOVED to approve the minutes of the June 11, 2026 Finance Subcommittee meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission. Commissioner Tartsinis SECONDED. The motion PASSED unanimously.

Approval of the minutes from the August 20, 2026 Community Relations Subcommittee Meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission

Commissioner Tartsinis MOVED to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2026 Community Relations Subcommittee meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission. Commissioner Boutin SECONDED. The motion PASSED unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS

None

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

Director Vessella commented on statistics for the past month, and noted that September programming slows down a bit compared to summer. Pirate week was very popular. Fifteen laptops for the ConneCT initiative were delivered on September 1st. There has been an increase in incidents involving middle school students during after school hours. Commissioner Sinopoli asked for more stats about the programming, specifically attendance. She also mentioned that the issues with the middle schoolers affect other area businesses as well. Commissioner Sweitzer appreciated the library staff presence at the farmers' market. Commissioner Kendrick inquired about the release of Director Vessella's executive summary of the survey. Director Vessella stated she should be able to have it out in a week or two, and will email the Commission if there are further delays.

REPORTS OF STANDING SUBCOMMITTEES

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Further discussion regarding middle schoolers' behavior after school, etc.

Commissioners, Director Vessella, and Associate Director Bologna had a lengthy and detailed discussion of the ongoing issue of middle schoolers' behavior inside and outside the library during after school hours. It can be very disruptive and the middle schoolers' do not always respect library staff authority. It seems the worst of it is the responsibility of about four students who instigate others. It was suggested that some of the behaviors (e.g. not leaving when told; throwing rocks at dumpsters near vehicles) could actually be considered crimes. Commissioner Alexopoulos gave a brief history of the issue mentioning a special subcommittee that had been formed a few years prior to address this. Director Vessella urged the Policy Subcommittee to meet to align KML policy with state policy on the age that children can be left unattended. The action plan is as follows: Commissioner Bodnar will reach out to the police department; Chair Sparzo will reach out to the principal at Suffield Middle School; Commissioner Sweitzer will reach out to the director of Youth Services.

NEW BUSINESS:

Presentation and discussion regarding content balance in the collection

Commissioner Kendrick presented her report entitled, "Kent Memorial Library: Collection Analysis Report." In summary, Commissioner Kendrick used artificial intelligence (AI) to run the entirety of the inventory of these subcategories of the collection separately: Juvenile Picture, Juvenile Nonfiction, Young Adult Fiction, Young Adult Nonfiction, Adult Nonfiction, with various

prompts about evaluating the balance of materials containing liberal/progressive viewpoints and themes and materials containing conservative viewpoints and themes. The 2026 quarter three inventory list had been sent to the Commission by Director Vessella. According to the AI report, overall a large part of the collection is considered neutral. However, liberal/progressive materials substantially outnumber conservative materials in current, controversial and ideologically-driven topics in all subcategories analyzed. Commissioner Kendrick stated that demand for materials plays a part, but does not explain the magnitude of the disparity. She called for solutions addressing favoritism of liberal/progressive viewpoints and suppression of conservative viewpoints in purchasing decisions and display choices.

Lively discussion and debate followed this report, with many commissioners thanking Commissioner Kendrick for her work. Director Vessella asked for a complete methodology and all prompts inserted into AI. Some commissioners acknowledged that this has been an ongoing issue, a problem that needs to be addressed, and is supported by feedback from the community needs survey. The following concerns were expressed: the Commission did not agree to this; this should be the work of the professional staff; definitions of “conservative” and “liberal” are debatable; AI prompts can be constructed to produce desired results. The following support was expressed: this is a starting point for further discussion; this is research that anyone has the freedom to do; it shouldn't be “only the experts” that have an opinion; weighing in on balance is completely within the purview of the Commission. The Commission will hear Director Vessella's feedback at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kerri White (Newgate rd) stated that she is a Friends of the Library board member. She has done research about how the staff chooses books: there are space limitations; books are chosen with great care; patrons' preferences are considered. White expressed much appreciation for the staff.

Bob White (Newgate Rd) inquired about circulation numbers for Trump and Obama books. He stated that it is the duty of the commission to employ the Library Director. He also commented on Personnel Subcommittee involvement and processes in previous years. He stated it would be a huge benefit to patrons if the Commission focuses on updating the long term plan.

Tess McCool stated that there is always imbalance in a library collection. The aim is to be balanced but this is not always possible. She thinks that using AI is problematic and contains biases. She commented that talking about balance is fair game. Balance and having varied views is always the goal, but encouraged commissioners to not only look at AI to assess this. She could not find a juvenile book about Amy Coney Barrett to purchase despite searching. Sometimes books with certain viewpoints do not exist.

John Gracey (Divine Rd) discussed the topic of deferring to professionals. He questioned the

methodology of Commissioner Kendrick's report, and stated that he believes a report about library funding years prior by a liaison to KMLC was skewed.

Fred Sweitzer commented that the conversation about the library report was very upsetting to him. He said that he got carried away with rhetoric and he apologized.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Marcavitch MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 p.m. Commissioner Dalrymple SECONDED. Motion PASSED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Nina Kendrick
October 19, 2026