



Library Board of Trustees Meeting – APPROVED 11/18/2025  
*October 21, 2025, in person, livestreamed, and recorded*

**ATTENDEES:**

*Presiding Officers:*

- Charlie Pensabene, President
- Katie Sheehan, Vice-President
- Camie Engel, Secretary
- Nichole Krisanda, Treasurer
- Mari Harris, Trustee (attended remotely)
- Kayla Kutzscher, Trustee (attended remotely) (exited 8:43 p.m.)
- Amanda Miller, Trustee

*Library staff, Community Partners & Members of the Public:*

- Jill Dugas Hughes, Library Director
- Jenna Schmonsky, Administrative Assistant (exited 8:02 p.m.)
- Julie Ann Price, Friends of the East Greenbush Library President (exited 8:02 p.m.)
- Jenn Romer, Friends of the East Greenbush Library (exited 8:02 p.m.)
- Tom Grant, Rensselaer County Legislator (exited 8:02 p.m.)
- A member of the public (exited 8:02 p.m.)
- Albert Yasus, Jr. (entered 7:29 p.m.; exited 8:02 p.m.)

A Library Board of Trustees meeting of the East Greenbush Community Library was held on October 21, 2025, at the East Greenbush Community Library and was livestreamed. It began at 7:00 p.m. and was presided over by Charlie Pensabene, President with Camie Engel as Secretary. The meeting was recorded.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

- C. Pensabene called the Library Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**REVIEW OF AGENDA:**

- The agenda was reviewed.
- C. Pensabene noted that item #6 on the agenda, approval of Special Board Meeting Minutes from October 16, will be voted on at the November Board Meeting. Draft minutes will be posted on the website.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Five written public comments read aloud by C. Pensabene:

- Kirk Dixon: My wife and I live close by and attend the Y and the Library. We were informed of the recent Times Union article yesterday, and we are submitting these comments late. We are opposed by the attempt to use eminent domain to acquire land without any effort to identify alternative solutions. While we appreciate the need to upgrade the police department's headquarters, the lack of transparency is unacceptable, and lack of building and engineering design details demonstrate contempt to taxpayers and the Library patrons. For example, where would the police enter/exit from the site? On Michael Rd? On Community Way? On Luther Road? If the latter, another traffic light would need to be installed because the risk of pedestrian/vehicle accidents would increase. The County was able to relocate the DMV and other county offices using an existing building off of Route 4, knocked down walls and reconfigured so that building could meet their needs. Is the Town of East Greenbush incapable of conducting a similar search of pre-existing properties to serve the police department's needs? Buildings should not be built to serve a politician's legacy or ambitions.
- Olivia Gudeahn: Good evening, I am emailing in regards to the proposal of building a police station on the library property. I think this is a very bad idea. As a library & information science student and someone who has worked in libraries, I can see this decision negatively impacting patrons. In a world where the library has become a safe space for all people, building a police department on the property could make regular users of the library feel unsafe. Libraries offer many resources to often underserved members of the community, and these same people may hold negative attitudes toward the police, hence, they could stop using the library out of fear. No one should feel deterred from an essential service like the library. Everyone deserves to feel safe at the library. I will close this email by sharing a point from the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights: V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views ("Library Bill of Rights", American Library Association, 2006). No matter how direct or indirect, building a police department on library property will be in violation of this key tenet of the ALA's Bill of Rights. Thank you for your consideration.
- Natalie Phoenix: Please do not allow a police station to be built by the library. First and foremost, the roads there are not designed for increased traffic. That corridor gets extremely crowded at arrival and dismissal of the high school. Heading over to the route 4 traffic circle, traffic gets worse. Route 4 is not designed to be heavily trafficked, but we keep adding to the congestion. Additionally, the Library, as well as the YMCA, are safe, communal spaces. Having the police station located there would not contribute positively to that environment. While I respect what police do, I don't think having the station there would promote the same uplifting community feeling there. Lastly, there's so little green space left in East Greenbush. Why not rebuild on properties where there is usable but relatively abandoned space? The Market 32 plaza always seems to have availability, and there are more properties like that in East Greenbush. It's frustrating to see new buildings being built on beautiful land, and then driving a bit further and seeing empty businesses.

Burger King has looked abandoned since they closed, for example. I sure hope all this will be considered.

- Kendra Phoenix: There should not be a police station built on library property. Libraries are supposed to be safe places for all people, and police have a strong history of discrimination and hate towards all minorities. Libraries provide services of all kinds to people who need them, and they should feel safe accessing the resources they provide. Putting police on the property would put a barrier to these resources, and people would no longer feel comfortable using them. Keep the library a safe place for all people.
- Natasha Polsinello: Why aren't there any Halloween activities for Elementary school aged children? I see either real young or grades 6-12 but nothing for 1st through 5th. Unless I missed something. Our 5th grader just took a field trip to the library. It's a little disappointing.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- **MOTION #2025-10-70:** C. Engel made the motion to approve the minutes of the September 30, 2025, Library Board Meeting, as amended. Seconded by A. Miller. The motion was carried with 7 in favor, none opposed.
- **MOTION #2025-10-71:** A. Miller made the motion to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2025, Special Library Board Meeting. Seconded by K. Sheehan. The motion was carried with 7 in favor, none opposed.
- **MOTION #2025-10-72:** A. Miller made the motion to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2025, Public Hearing for the 2026 Proposed Library Budget, as amended. Seconded by K. Sheehan. The motion was carried with 7 in favor, none opposed.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT (N. Krisanda):

- The year is 77.5% complete, and the library remains in good financial standing and within budget overall. Some line items are over or under budget. For example, Technology and Communications is under budget, though some one-time costs are expected later in the year. Books and Materials are over budget due to higher costs for Hoopla, online subscriptions, and digital book usage. Facilities is over budget, but we're monitoring it closely. Expenses were lower during this period because there were no snow removal and less landscaping compared to earlier in the year.
- **MOTION #2025-10-73:** C. Engel made a motion to accept the Off-Warrant in the amount of **\$54,853.99** for the period of September 18, 2025, through October 10, 2025, as presented. Seconded by C. Pensabene. The motion was carried with 7 in favor, none opposed.

- **MOTION #2025-10-74:** A. Miller made a motion to authorize the president to sign the Warrant for the period of September 18, 2025, through October 10, 2025, in the amount of **\$24,576.02**. A. Miller raised a question about a large payment to Brodart. It was explained that Brodart is not closing — Baker & Taylor is. Their closure is a big issue since they're one of only three main book distributors. The library has already stopped using Baker & Taylor because of delays, so the impact will be small. Amazon is now a library distributor. Baker & Taylor manage the data for all New York State libraries. The library is in the process of backing up our data as a precaution. Seconded by K. Sheehan. The motion was carried with 7 in favor, none opposed.
- **MOTION #2025-10-75:** C. Pensabene made a motion to approve the October 10, 2025, Financials with 77.5% of the year completed, as presented. Seconded by C. Engel. The motion was carried with 7 in favor, none opposed.

#### **2026 BUDGET:**

- The 2026 budget was presented at the public hearing. The cost per \$1,000 of assessed value has been updated based on the new property assessments. Overall, the dollar impact on taxpayers is about the same, but the percentage has changed. The new tax rate is \$0.70 per \$1,000 of assessed value. This corrected number has been updated in all public documents and presentations.
- **MOTION #2025-10-76:** C. Pensabene made a motion to approve the proposed 2026 budget in the amount of \$2,878,395, which includes a tax levy of \$2,080,250, to be presented to the public for a public vote on Monday, November 17, 2025. Seconded by K. Sheehan. The motion was carried with 7 in favor, none opposed.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT (J. Dugas Hughes):**

- Continue building community connections through partnerships and programs.
- Library will again serve as a Project Linus drop site, supporting volunteers who make comfort blankets for children in need.
- Books-by-Mail for homebound residents remains popular.
- Collaborated with Unity House to provide emergency backpacks for individuals in crisis.
- Library staff participated in East Greenbush Town Day, reaching over 200 residents.
- ENL programs featured in New York State Libraries' immigration resources guide.
- Welcomed fifth-grade classes for tours and library card signups; will host Red Mill next month for the first time at this grade level.
- Focus on engaging the "tween" demographic as they transition from the children's to teen sections.

- Welcomed two new staff members: Molly, Library Assistant in Youth Services and Reni, Head of Adult and Information Services.
- Recruitment underway for a new full-time Library Clerk; several interview rounds completed.
- Part-time Maintenance position remains open; recruitment has been slow, as this is a challenging role to fill.
- Received \$250,000 SAM (State and Municipal) Facilities Grant, sponsored by Assembly McDonald, to support the bathroom renovation project.
- Project has been in the works for several years; now moving to the next phase with DASNY review and board requirements.
- Grant timeline extended to 2027, three years from the start of the award.
- Originally applied for the roof project, but funding rules prevented double funding; project shifted to bathroom renovation.
- Project estimated at \$365,000; SAM grant covers a significant portion.
- Recommendation: do not start the project until DASNY review and updated funding confirmation are complete.
- Library open 29 days; welcomed over 21,000 visitors (13% increase from last year).
- Website visits increased; drive-through use continues to decline.
- Borrowing patterns:
  - Physical borrowing dipped by ~3%.
  - Digital borrowing is up 6% year-to-date, now 37% of total use (including streaming and databases).
- Program attendance:
  - Over 2,100 attendees in September (48% increase from last year).
  - Year-to-date attendance is up 24%, with strong growth in youth programs.
  - Meeting room use is up 36% with 80 community/outside group bookings.
  - Library card sign-ups: 177 new cards in September (34% increase over last year).
  - Computer use is up 26%; Wi-Fi use steady.
- Overall: library active, productive, and engaging both inside the building and in the community.

#### Possible reasons for trends:

- Expanded outreach via Patron Point emails to all cardholders.
- Increased presence at community events (e.g., Schodack Island, Night at the Library).
- Focused efforts on school-age demographics and youth programming.
- Word of mouth and consistent communication boost awareness.

M. Harris raised a question about Hoopla. In response, Hoopla is under review because its cost-per-use model can get expensive, especially for popular titles, and much of its content—including AI-generated material—is unvetted. Some titles overlap with Libby, which uses a licensing model rather than cost-per-use. Libraries are considering reallocating Hoopla funds to Libby, possibly using Libby’s new short-term cost-per-circ model for high-demand titles. Alternative digital platforms are being explored, including a low-cost Upper Hudson subscription for anime and comics. Overall, the library is monitoring systemwide options and industry changes, including new offerings from Amazon, while trying to manage budget and collection quality.

J. Dugas Hughes thanks staff for their positivity and dedication. Despite challenges and questions, they stay focused on serving the community and the library’s mission. She also thanks the Friends for a phenomenal event.

**PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM:**

- **MOTION #2025-10-77:** C. Pensabene made a motion to approve the October 21, 2025, Personnel Memorandum, as presented. Seconded by K. Sheehan. The motion was carried with 7 in favor, none opposed.

**LIAISON REPORTS:**

**Upper Hudson Library System (Camie Engel):**

- Nothing to report at this time.

**Friends of the Library (Julie Ann Price & Jenn Romer):**

**Book Sale:**

- Not as successful as spring sale; about \$2,000 less; possible reason: signage issue, reducing exposure. Total raised: over \$8,000.
- More inventory than spring; ended with leftover stock in two rooms. Plan in place to avoid this issue next year.

**Night at the Library Event:**

- Amazing community-supported event, raising \$12,000—surpassing the \$10,000 goal.
- Strong engagement: 40 of 50 auction items bid on; 1,500 raffle tickets sold.
- Half of funding from sponsorships, half from raffles and auction.
- Event broke even and stayed under budget; overall financially successful.

**Friendsgiving & Other:**

- Focus on engaging the community and encouraging people to vote.
- Promote awareness of the Friends group and invite participation in meetings.
- End-of-year appeal planned, but will be softer following recent large fundraiser.
- Membership recruitment to follow.

- Library continues to serve as a great community space, and Friends are accepting grants.

J. Ann Price & J. Romer thanked everyone for their support.

**Town of East Greenbush (Charlie Pensabene on behalf of Jim McHugh):**

- The Town is holding a public hearing on November 12 to discuss the police station.

**Rensselaer County (Tom Grant):**

- ATEC groundbreaking previously scheduled for October 16, is now scheduled for October 23.
- The County Executive's proposed budget includes a 9% real property tax cut, which is a positive development.
- The legislature would like to honor Mary Ann Wheldon for her years of service with a resolution or recommendation and is requesting any biographical information she is comfortable sharing.

T. Grant commented on the public hearings. The community engagement was excellent; the meetings ran smoothly, and everyone felt heard and respected. It really reflected what the library is all about and sent a positive message to the community.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** No unfinished business currently.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Trustee Election Information**

- There will be a Trustee Candidate Virtual Forum on October 28 at 7:30 p.m.
- The November newsletter will include the Trustee candidates.
- The Trustee Election is on November 17 from 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.
- There will be 3 open positions (two five-year positions, one two-year position).
- The library has five applicants: Jordan White, Douglas Morrissey, Albert Yasus, Jr., Sarah Boggess, and Crystal Derico.

**Establish Nominating Committee**

The members of the Nominating Committee are Amanda Miller, Charlie Pensabene, Kayla Kutzscher, and Nichole Krisanda with Amanda Miller serving as chair. The committee will develop a slate of candidates for the upcoming year, to be presented at the December board meeting.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

- **MOTION #2025-10-78:** C. Pensabene made a motion to enter executive session to discuss contractual and legal matters at 8:09 p.m. Seconded by A. Miller. The motion was carried with 7 in favor, none opposed.

**Kayla Kutzscher exited meeting at 8:43 p.m.**

- **MOTION #2025-10-79:** K. Sheehan made a motion to exit executive session at 9:19 p.m. Seconded by A. Miller. The motion was carried with 6 in favor, none opposed.

**ADJOURN:**

- **MOTION #2025-10-80:** Motion to adjourn the October 21, 2025, Library Board meeting was made by C. Engel at 9:22 p.m. Seconded by C. Pensabene. The motion was carried with 6 in favor, none opposed.

Recorded by: Jenna Schmonsky, Administrative Assistant  
Respectfully submitted by: Camie Engel, Secretary

APPROVED