



BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

October 6, 2020 Agenda

1. Call to order – 6:30 PM.
2. Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Adoption of agenda.
4. Minutes – approval of the September 1, 2020 meeting minutes.
5. Public comments.
6. Finance Officer’s report.
7. Correspondence.
8. Library Director’s report.
9. Committee reports.
 - Program Planning.
 - Library Courtyard.
10. Old business.
 - Library registration (submitted April 2, 2018).
 - Charter application (submitted July 13, 2020).
 - 2019/2020 State aid for library construction grant (submitted September 27, 2019).
 - 2020/2021 State aid for library construction grant (submitted August 28, 2020).
 - 2020 Challenge Grant - senior program status.
 - Reopening plan.
 - Student use of Proudfit Hall.
 - Light at top of basement stairs.
 - Town budget request.
 - Snow removal.
11. New business.
 - NYLA (Attachment #1).
 - Other business.
12. Public comments.
13. Next meeting – November 3, 2020.
14. Adjournment.

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The Voice of the Library Community

New York Library Association

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September 15, 2020

Bancroft Public Library
PO BOX 478
SALEM, NY 12865

Greetings Library Advocate,

The New York Library Association (NYLA) is pleased to stand alongside the Flower Memorial Library in Watertown in their defense of a challenge submitted by a community member to the NYS Department of Education to Education Law 259(1)(a). This law is used by libraries throughout New York State to secure sustainable funding and, if the community member's challenge is successful, would block municipal public libraries from accessing school district ballots for funding referenda.

In 2019, a local anti-tax activist challenged the Flower Memorial Library's (Watertown, NY – North County Library System), use of 259(1)(a) to place their budget proposition on a school district ballot. The dispute was submitted to the New York State Commissioner of Education (in keeping with required procedures). The trustees of the Flower Memorial Library rose to this challenge and took up the defense of this critical funding mechanism in the name of all of New York's libraries.

NYLA was then contacted by the Flower Memorial Library for legal assistance. The library has incurred over \$20,000 in legal fees defending itself, which are expenses that are completely outside of the libraries operating budget and means. Given the potentially devastating statewide effects of an adverse decision, the NYLA Council unanimously voted to support the Flower Memorial Library's legal defense costs.

Though the suit specifically challenged the authority of municipal libraries, such as the Flower Memorial Library, to present budget resolutions to school district voters under 259(1)(a), the nature of the challenge also has wide-ranging implications. **An adverse decision would have been disastrous for all municipal libraries that use the same ballot access procedures in 259(1)(a).**

Though NYLA is grateful that the petitioner vacated their challenge, we remain troubled by the circumstances of this action. **The anti-tax activist who pursued this matter created a playbook for future legal challenges – threaten a small, local library with limited resources to attempt to effect statewide policy changes through the courts.**

I am writing to request that the board of the Bancroft Public Library accept this letter as an official correspondence and kindly consider making a donation to the NYLA Legal Defense Fund. If each library organized similarly to the Flower Memorial Library, who utilizes the exact same funding mechanism which has been challenged, donated \$500 – we can completely address this current appeal for legal aid. Your support will ensure NYLA is properly positioned with the necessary resources to respond to future legal issues that could impact libraries like yours⁴.

⁴ NYLA is a 501c(3) non-profit organization, and it is completely permissible for libraries of all types to make donations in support of its efforts.



(over)


NYLA's ability to continue aiding libraries facing legal issues of statewide concern is predicated on sustaining our robust Legal Defense Fund. NYLA Council voted to authorize \$20,000 to cover the legal expenses incurred by the Flower Memorial Library and through the generous support of our members and advocates – NYLA raised nearly 30% of these costs. **We need your support to ensure NYLA remains proactive, rather than reactive, for future fights.**

If you have any questions regarding the Flower Memorial Library case, or the NYLA Legal Defense Fund, or to request that your library be invoiced for a donation in a specific amount, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Johannesen, CAE
NYLA Executive Director



Sarah Weir
President, Board of Trustees, Flower Memorial Library

Donations can be made via credit card online at:
nyla.org/pay