



Schenectady County Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting  
October 23, 2025 - 6:00 pm  
Swanker Room - Karen B Johnson Library

1. Call to Order, Roll Call
2. Public Comment
3. Consent Agenda
  - a. Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes for September 16, 2025
4. Strategic Planning Update – Library Strategies
5. President’s Report
6. Director’s Report
7. Friends of the Library Report
8. Committee Reports
  - a) Finance Committee
  - b) Planning Committee
  - c) Policy Committee
9. New Business
10. Adjournment

The next regular Schenectady County Public Library Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled to be held on November 20, 2025 at 6:00 pm in the Swanker Room at the Karen B. Johnson Library.

The regular monthly meeting of the Schenectady County Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Thursday, September 16, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Swanker Boardroom at the Karen B. Johnson Central Library.

PRESENT: Brenda Schworm, Vice-President; Tim Burke; Justin Chaires (left at 6:04 pm); Steve McCutcheon; Jude McQueen; Carmel Patrick; Bernice Rivera; Tina Chericoni Versaci

ABSENT AND EXCUSED: Madelyn Thorne; David Fronk; Julie McDonnell

STAFF: Charity Thorne, Executive Director; Beth DeMidio, Director of Operations; Devon Hedges, Assistant Director; Janice Martin, Board Clerk

GUESTS: Diane Wilkinson, President, Friends of the Library; Michelle Ostrelich, Schenectady County Legislature, Vice-Chair, Education and Libraries

Vice President Brenda Schworm called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

#### OATH OF OFFICE

Tina Chericoni Versaci administered the oath of office to newly appointed trustee, Tim Burke.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Christine Witkowski/Scotia - She is looking forward to the roll-out of the library survey, part of the long-range planning process being conducted by Library Strategies. She is confident that the survey will include a diverse population and will be shared online, in paper form and available in different languages through translation services. This is based on the New York State minimum standards dictated by the State Education Department and Library Strategies Consultants.

David Gosda/Niskayuna – He reported that the Joint Automation Project and the Upper Hudson Library System are both installing the Vega Catalog System and it should be available by the end of the year and suggested with all public libraries in the capital district on the same catalog system perhaps JA could expand to include SCPL and UHLS.

Nancy Gifford/Scotia – October 1, 2025, will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of when she was hired at SCPL. Regarding the budget process: in the past, the board of trustees would meet with staff to ask their input; community members would also attend legislative meetings. She asked that the staff and public be included in the 2026 budget process. She mentioned that there has been no update on the Strategic Plan since the July board meeting.

#### CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Bernice Rivera, seconded by Tina Chericoni Versaci. Motion passed.

#### ELECTION OF SCPL BOARD SECRETARY

Brenda Schworm asked for a vote to approve Tina Chericoni Versaci as Secretary of the Library Board of Trustees. The board approved with one abstention from Tina Chericoni Versaci.

#### ELECTION OF SCPL BOARD TREASURER

Brenda Schworm asked for a vote to approve Steve McCutcheon as Treasurer of the Library Board of Trustees. The board approved with one abstention from Steve McCutcheon.

## RESOLUTION 1 -ELECTION OF MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM TRUSTEES

Discussion ensued, and Resolution 1 was amended to add Part A & Part B.

RESOLUTION 1 (Part A) – TO AUTHORIZE A LIBRARY TRUSTEE AND AN ALTERNATE TO VOTE AT THE MVLS MEETING TO BE HELD ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2025. Motion to approve Resolution 1 (Part A) – to authorize a library trustee and an alternate to vote at the MVLS meeting to be held on September 25, 2025, by Tina Chericoni Versaci, seconded by Carmel Patrick. Motion passed.

## RESOLUTION 1 (Part B) – ELECTION OF MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM TRUSTEES

Be it resolved that Madelyn Thorne is designated to cast the votes for Mohawk Valley Library System trustees at the meeting to be held on September 25, 2025, with Brenda Schworm designated as an alternate in the event Madelyn Thorne is unexpectedly unable to attend. Motion to approve Resolution 1 (Part B) – Election of Mohawk Valley Library System Trustees by Carmel Patrick, seconded by Tina Chericoni Versaci. Motion passed.

## RESOLUTION 2 – APPROVAL OF EXPENDITURES

Motion by Carmel Patrick, seconded by Steve McCutcheon. Motion passed.

## MOHAWK VALLEY LIBRARY SYSTEM – FREE DIRECT ACCESS PLAN 2022 (2024 REVISIONS)

Motion to approve the MVLS – Free Direct Access Plan 2022 (2024 Revisions) by Tina Chericoni Versaci, seconded by Carmel Patrick. Discussion ensued and there was a failed vote, 4 Ayes, 2 Nays. After lengthy discussion again, there was another vote by roll call. Motion by Tina Chericoni Versaci, seconded by Carmel Patrick. Burke: Yes; McCutcheon: Yes; McQueen: Yes; Patrick: Yes; Rivera: Yes; Schworm: Yes; Versaci: Yes. Motion passed.

## DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Trustees reviewed the written report by Executive Director Charity Thorne.

## FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

Diane Wilkins reported.

- After Charity’s report to the Friends Board of Directors in August, a huge chunk of time was spent talking about the strategic planning process and how the Friends can support through the surveys.
- The Fall book sale will be held on September 27 and 28, 2025. Some volunteer slots are still available. During the last half hour of the book sale, we offer free books to teachers, principals and principals’ designees. Diane sent an email to all principals in Schenectady County.
- Membership has been increasing. We now have 419 new members.
- New bookstore manager is Crystal Hoyt. She will be managing both stores.

#### FINANCE COMMITTEE

Steve McCutcheon reported.

- Resolution 2 – approved
- Finance Committee meeting on 9/9/25 discussions: security updates/upgrades, high cost of digital media.

PLANNING COMMITTEE – No report.

POLICY COMMITTEE – No report.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Carmel Patrick reported that the City of Schenectady has moved forward with the Poet Laureate. He works at Union College, and his name is Adonis Richards.

The meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 23, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Swanker Boardroom at the Karen B. Johnson Library.

## **Executive Director Report to the Board**

**October 23, 2025**

September flew by with many projects full steam ahead, not least of which is the strategic planning project. As Library Strategies drafted staff and community surveys and shared them with the steering committee for feedback, we also prepared for three in-person focus groups and staff SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results) sessions at the beginning of October. We also seized the opportunity to plan for our first staff development day on October 1, closing all nine library locations so we could gather the team for both the strategic planning sessions and training and development including customer service training, mini refreshers on key functions such as library card registration and searching the catalog, a scavenger hunt to test library knowledge and some book talks. We drew on staff expertise to help lead different portions of the day so the team could benefit from the knowledge of their peers and hope to continue to hold these in-service days annually going forward. Other September activities included:

- A round of visits to branches with County IT and Facilities to review new and outstanding issues and especially placement of public facing technology equipment such as the new print release kiosks and ScanEZ stations. With new staff and public printers ordered, we've been working to refine the layout of our devices for the most intuitive user experience.
- I attended a hoopla training session along with our digital selection team to learn more about some of the reports and features available through our dashboard as we continue to manage our hoopla resources in close coordination with our Overdrive/Libby resources to use each platform to the best effect.
- We worked with County IT to get a final proposal for a new people counting system for all nine locations so we can move forward with implementing improved building traffic systems. Currently many of our locations have only the break beam type of door counters and we are looking forward to the upgraded capabilities of a new system to gather better data on traffic into and out of our buildings. Being able to see our busiest times of day will be especially helpful to inform staffing and scheduling decisions.
- Planning has already kicked off for the 2026 Electric City Comic Con, an interdepartmental effort that we look forward to making bigger and better next year. We invited Erin Laiacona and Jason Lecuyer from the Legislature team as they've offered their special events expertise to assist us and we look forward to collaborating.

- We conducted our first Polaris system upgrade since we launched in December; at the time we went live on the latest available version which was Polaris 7.7 and they recently released Polaris 7.8. There are some really nice improvements in this version that make staff workflows easier for acquisitions and cataloging as well as new filters and outputs for SimplyReporting, the detailed and customized Polaris reports module we gained access to with our own catalog.
- Preparing for the implementation of browsing bins generously funded by the Friends of the Library for our picture book collection at KBJ Main Library. Browsing bins display picture books face out, showcasing the attractive covers and drawing the eye to the collection. We aimed to receive the fixtures in time to begin the work on dismantling the old shelving and installing the new bins while closed on October 1, and we took advantage of the opportunity to reconsider the entire layout of the children's and teen areas. While phased work on this project is still underway as of this writing, we are very excited for the improvements to the space.

## **Public Services**

### **Hon. Karen B. Johnson Main Library**

#### Youth Services

Some programs with the highest participation at the Hon. Karen B. Johnson Main Library in September included a Treasure Hunt through the Children's Section for Langston the Lion and our ever-popular early literacy program Toddler Time with Ms. Cindy-Lou. and a pre-recorded Story Time to Go featuring *No Cats in the Library* by Lauren Emmons read by Youth Services Librarian Miss Laura (who, as always, also teaches a *welcome* song in American Sign-Language). We also hosted a special visit for author Emmy Kastner, presenting her biographical children's book about the life of the author, and Schenectady native, of the classic and award-winning *Frog & Toad series*, Arnold Lobel, titled *Outside In and the Inside Out*. Over 100 kids came to help look for Langston, 72 toddlers and their adults came for Toddler Time, and 55 viewers signed on for Story Time to Go before September ended. 598 patrons came to 18 programs intended for children and 67 people attended six programs presented for tweens & teens.

Work on the collection also began in September, preparing for dramatic changes with the arrival of new Picture Book Browsing Bins! More to come in October . . .



### Adult Services

Our program of speakers presented online in partnership with Library Speaker's Consortium generated a good deal of interest at the end of Summer. Although the live presentations often draw a smaller crowd than the archived programs patrons can view on their own schedules, attendance was strong. 39 adults signed on for author Nichole Maehrer's presentation of her recent novel *On Writing Darkly Charming Villainous Love*, a "magical office comedy about a sunshine assistant and her grumpy evil boss." Another online speaker had 34 attendees for the live program, featuring communication expert Jefferson Fisher sharing advice, actionable strategies, and practical phrases from his recent book, *The Next Conversation: Argue Less, Talk More*. Sensory Sessions, our series for adults who appreciate a welcoming, low-stimulation environment to enjoy games, activities, and crafts was also popular this month.

Near the end of September, hundreds of people came out to the KBJ library, including many who hadn't visited in many years (or really ever!) to help us celebrate Library Card Sign-Up Month. "One Card, Endless Possibilities" was the theme of a special Saturday where the Liberty St. and Clinton St. entrance areas, the front hallway, and the McChesney Room were transformed into a Carnival! Folks were encouraged to try out carnival games with great setups and a fun bingo game to help them see all the sights and sign up for a card if they didn't already have one or renew their registration.

The report on Summer Reading Program participation was sent to MVLS in September. From the last week of June through the first week of September, over 6,000 people attended 423 programs!

### Circulation and Public Services

September was a busy and successful month for the Circulation department, primarily focused on enhancing the patron experience and preparing for new outreach initiatives.

- **New Patron Seating and Display Area:** A new, inviting seating area and book display was successfully created and installed at the front of the building, directly across from the Circulation desk. Staff have noted a significant increase in patron use of this area and have received numerous positive compliments about the enhanced space.
- **Outreach Program Development:** Good progress has been made on the new Books for the Blind program, which is designed to serve homebound residents across the county. The necessary bags for the deliveries have been ordered using MVLS mini grant funds. The focus now is on finalizing the administrative forms and operational procedures. Despite a few minor snags, we are aiming for a launch in November.

### **Phyllis Bornt Branch Library and Literacy Center**

Blind date with a movie continues to gain traction. Patrons took out 20 in September compared to 10 in August.





*Photos: Winners of the summer reading drawing at Bornt and Mont Pleasant were excited to receive their gift baskets for completion of the program!*

### **Mont Pleasant Branch Library**

The branch hosted a Back-to-School Ice Cream social with over 30 participants!



Ali Bailey, adult services librarian, represented SCPL at the Friends N Farmers Fall Festival hosted by Sycamore Collaborative. She also conducted two Basic Computer Class programs this month which was a program the community has been asking for. We are excited to launch this great program again.



## Rotterdam Branch

September was an active month at the Rotterdam Branch, with several new and returning programs drawing strong participation. Miss Steph's Imagination Stations Story Time resumed and continued to be one of the branch's most popular offerings, attracting nearly thirty attendees every Tuesday. The branch also hosted a two-part adaptive dance series led by Studio One Dance, a program designed for seniors and individuals with disabilities but open to participants of all mobility levels. Instructor Ashley Evola was praised for her attentiveness and kindness, and there are plans to bring her program to the Quaker Street Branch in the new year.

A new book club, *Murder by Women: The Golden Age Book Club*, launched in September under the leadership of Adult Services Librarian Allissa Dobson. The club focuses on detective fiction written by women during the 1920s and 1930s, and though attendance at the inaugural meeting was small, it is expected to grow over time. The Nonfiction Book Club also met this month, reading *Say Nothing* by Patrick Radden Keefe, which members unanimously described as an excellent but haunting account of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Creative programming continues to be a hallmark of the Rotterdam Branch thanks to our talented Library Assistant, Jody Monroe. The September CrAFTERwork session featured "DIY Faux Leather Journals with Personalized Pencils," in which patrons used grocery bags and Mod Podge to transform composition notebooks into unique leather-style journals. To complete the project, participants wrapped pencils in decorative strips of wrapping paper to create personalized sets to match their journals. Attendance remained steady at around ten participants, and several patrons shared plans to recreate the journals as holiday gifts. A few even mentioned they would make additional sets at home with their grandchildren.



The ongoing crochet workshop also continues to thrive, with participants developing strong skills and producing impressive projects. One patron, who initially doubted her abilities, has since completed several crocheted pieces including a tote bag and a bumblebee named "Mr. Peabody."



Youth Services Librarian, Miss Steph, also hosted an afternoon art class titled “3-D Monet Ponds,” which had been postponed from the summer schedule. Participants explored impressionist techniques while creating textured pond scenes inspired by Monet’s famous works. The hands-on program encouraged creativity and experimentation, and participants appreciated the opportunity to engage in a more in-depth artistic experience.

### **Quaker Street Branch**

September was equally lively at the Quaker Street Branch. Miss Steph’s Imagination Stations Story Time resumed alongside Rotterdam’s sessions, welcoming back many familiar families. The branch also reintroduced the popular Elementary Spanish with Ivonne, a program that previously enjoyed success in the spring. Participants were enthusiastic about the return of the class, and several patrons from the Rotterdam Branch have expressed interest in hosting Ms. Ivonne there in the future.

Library Assistant Jody Monroe’s CrAFTERwork program at Quaker Street saw growing engagement this month, expanding from two regular participants to eight. The September project featured Diamond Art Bookmarks. The event brought a decorative flourish to the start of the month, as patrons enjoyed working with colorful resin “diamonds” to create shimmering, mosaic-style designs.



In addition to programming, the branch hosted representatives from Congressman Paul Tonko's office for a mobile office session. The visit was well received, and the representatives expressed interest in establishing a regular presence at the branch.

### **Niskayuna Branch**

Adult Services Librarian, Dorothea Trela, launched several new fall programs, including a six-week yoga series and a Qigong session that drew twenty participants. In addition, the branch hosted an Artificial Intelligence presentation led by Mary Carrier from the Mohawk Valley Library System, which attracted nineteen attendees. One participant remarked that the talk was so engaging they stayed for the entire session instead of leaving halfway through as planned.

Crafting programs continue to thrive at Niskayuna. The Everything Fiber Arts group has steadily grown, with upcoming sessions planned to teach cabling techniques

The much-loved Build Zone program returned this month, drawing enthusiastic families. Children and caregivers enjoyed the unstructured building activities and imaginative themes, which continue to strengthen community engagement with the library.

The Niskayuna Branch continues to be a popular gathering place for the community, with many local groups and residents reserving and enjoying the use of the library's meeting room. Throughout September, local artist Barry Finlay's work was on display, adding color and creativity to the branch and drawing positive attention from visitors. The Firehouse Artists also met to share and discuss their work, and Echankar, an offshoot of the New York Satsang Society, held a spiritual session that encouraged thoughtful conversation and reflection. The Friends of the Library met to plan their next international trip, while both the Niskayuna Book Club and the Hummingbird Book Club gathered to discuss their current reads. A Niskayuna resident also used the meeting room to offer an Arabic language class for the first time, which was well received and may become a recurring program. The continued use of the library's welcoming and versatile meeting space highlights its role as a true center for creativity, connection, and community engagement.

### **Woodlawn Branch**

The Woodlawn Branch experienced an exciting and productive September, highlighted by new programming and ongoing community engagement. The branch launched its first-ever Bingo Night on Tuesday evenings, which has quickly become a hit with patrons. Attendees have enjoyed the fun atmosphere and creative prizes, which include snacks such as cookies, crackers, and pasta, as well as a special prize for the final winner.

In collaboration with a local nonprofit founded by two accomplished women, Woodlawn hosted a College Administration Information Session for Schenectady High School students interested in pursuing higher education. The program provided valuable insight into the college application process and was well received by students and families alike.

Youth Services activities also resumed at Woodlawn this month. The Youth Services Librarian, Miss Amy, began her fall programming schedule later in September to allow time for collection updates and display improvements. These new displays in the children's section have successfully drawn more attention from caregivers, and circulation data show that displayed items are being checked out at higher rates. This process also helps identify worn materials for replacement and highlights opportunities to diversify the collection.

A highlight of the month was the return of Ms. Lisa, a beloved local educator and musician, who began a new series of early literacy programs featuring songs and nursery rhymes. Her engaging sessions are scheduled every other week from September through December and have been warmly received by families.

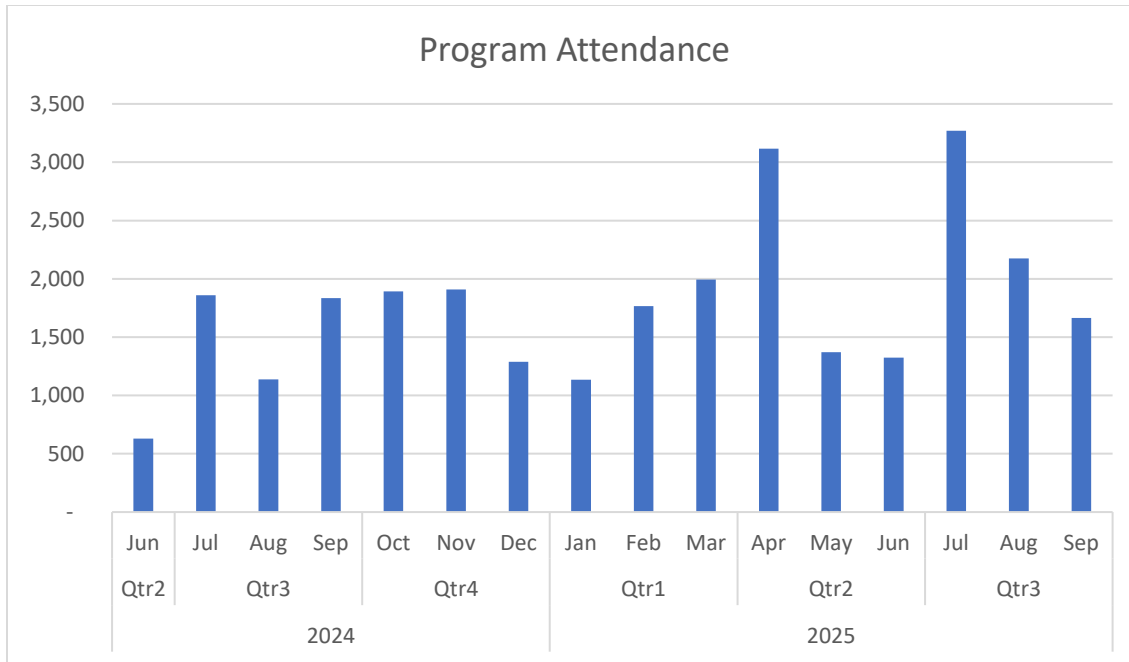
Crafting programs continue to flourish at Woodlawn alongside those at Niskayuna. The Crafting Nest remains an important gathering space for regular participants, where creativity flows as freely as conversation. Attendees enjoy sharing ideas, techniques, and stories while they work, and the sense of camaraderie is as meaningful as the lovely projects they complete together.

### **Scotia Branch**

Scotia held 15 programs in September, which brought out 157 patrons. 59 people came to nine programs presented for adults and 98 people (including three teens!) attended six programs intended for patrons younger than 19. Highlights included the REELS at Scotia Spotlight Cinema Series, Family Storytime, and the fantastic program where kids can grow their confidence and skill through reading to animals, PAWS for Reading.

### **Glenville Branch**

35 adults attended 7 programs intended for adults including the always appreciated Slow Flow Vinyasa Yoga, a great Candle Making program with Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Glenville Library's own Modern Lit Book Club. Story Times with Youth Services Librarian Ms. April brought the crowds with 74 attendees at three programs including a presentation partnership with the Baker School of Dance in Glenville; two more programs had ten additional people attend children's programs. In all, 109 people came out to 12 programs at the branch in September.



09/2025 CIRCULATION	CURRENT	LAST YEAR	CHANGE	FYTD	LAST FYTD	CHANGE2
Bornt	1,062	757	40%	10,441	6,757	55%
Main Library	18,120	14,856	22%	187,358	149,385	25%
E-Resource	14,748	15,848	-7%	146,704	146,750	0%
Glenville	4,589	4,114	12%	42,886	44,479	-4%
Mont Pleasant	1,489	1,446	3%	11,627	11,528	1%
Niskayuna	9,674	8,326	16%	93,146	89,706	4%
Quaker Street	1,805	1,442	25%	15,487	14,653	6%
Rotterdam	6,822	5,359	27%	58,571	55,690	5%
Scotia	3,512	2,657	32%	30,271	27,827	9%
Woodlawn	1,428	1,163	23%	13,513	10,267	32%

### Support Services

The new public printers have come in and IT is getting them all set up for the network and installing the stands underneath them which will hold supplies such as paper and toner and are designed to hold the printer at a comfortable and accessible height for patrons.

We had a successful Polaris upgrade (our first!) go through at the end of the month with no noticeable issues.

Work continues with TBS taking care of any technology bugs that pop up across our locations with our public computer use and printing. We are noticing some issues with the cell network that the credit card readers utilize in some of our locations. Some of the causes are lack of strong cell reception at times out in the Delanson region, as well as interference with the metal sub-structure of some of our newer buildings.

We have developed program flyer templates for staff to use when creating program flyers that don't necessarily need custom graphic design or special marketing and promotion; this allows flyers to be created quickly and easily and for consistent branding across locations despite a variety of staff creating them.

A kick-off meeting was held for Electric City Comic Con in September. We have our committees all set and will be touching base again in November. We settled on Saturday, July 18, 2026 for next year's event. The County has offered their assistance in planning and execution of the day which will open up what we can offer to the public and potentially expand the event footprint beyond the library walls.

To whom it may concern:

When I was a child, my mom always took me and my brothers to visit the library. I always looked at the big books with bold pictures, mostly of Rockets and space travel.

50 years later the library appears similar, except for the computers. I think those years had a massive impact on my current life.

I had a successful military career that I retired from.

I became a nurse

I now live in Titusville, FL where I can see rockets taking off from my front lawn.

Today I thank God my mother took us to the library, the results of what you do here may not take shape this year or next year, but this is a very important long term investment in our community. The stories readings today will ferment in the hearts and minds of tomorrow.

Byron Williams  
Titusville, FL

I'm a Sch'dy native who  
now lives in Florida. I  
was introduced to SCPL  
system in 1954 as a 2nd  
grader. I was never disappointed  
in the quality and professionalism  
of staff. My experience

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today is so reassuring that  
that the SCPL system is  
as good as ever. Thank you  
for being the pillar that you  
are.

A son of Sch'dy,