

Gloucester Lyceum & Sawyer Free Library
Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 25, 2026 at 5:30 pm
Sawyer Free Library Conference Room
2 Dale Avenue, Gloucester, MA

As the recent amendments to the open meeting law allows, this committee will continue to hold meetings remotely. Adequate alternative access to the meeting is provided through the zoom link below.

And via ZOOM : <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85276115907>

Attendance: *in person:* Fran Aliberte, Christine Araujo, Geoff Bradford, Peter Brau, John Day, Steven Lewis, Jeremy Melvin (joined at 5:35), Kathleen Reynolds, Dawn Sarrouf, Leora Ulrich, Library Director Jenny Benedict, and guest Mayor Paul Lundberg (left at 6:18)
Via video conference: Jason Brisbois, Rick Ciolino, Joe Grella, Jen Holmgren, Peter Lawrence,

Not Present: Cheryl Marks

1. Call to order
2. Welcome and introductions
 - a. Peter B moved to welcome Jason, Rick, Joe, Jen, and Peter L into the meeting. Fran seconded and the motion was approved via roll call.
3. Approval of minutes from July 28, 2026. Peter B offered corrections. Fran moved to approve the minutes as amended and Leora seconded. Peter L, Jen, and John abstained and the minutes were approved via roll call.
4. Treasurer's Report – Joe
 - a. The audit is on-going. Joe will present reports on the first few months of the fiscal year once the audit is complete.
 - b. Investments: Though we withdrew interest and dividends totaling ~\$20,000; the value of our investments remains constant.
5. Transfer to the City
 - a. The Executive Committee voted to recommend the Corporation transfer \$1.3m to the City; of that \$490,000 will be applied to interest.
 - b. Joe moved to authorize the Treasurer to transfer \$1.3m from the BankGloucester Building Account to the City of Gloucester. This transfer will include \$490,000 of interest and \$810,000 of principal. This payment falls within the Library FY2027 budget of \$1m principal and \$500,000 interest. Jen seconded and the motion was approved via roll call. Joe will initiate the transfer tomorrow.
 - c. Joe moved to authorize the Board Treasurer to notify the City of Gloucester Treasurer that final project costs will be \$27,483,468. Future BANs will be based on this number, not the original \$29m (a reduction of \$1,516,532). Jen seconded and the motion was approved via roll call.
 - d. Joe reported on balances with the City. After this transfer we will have paid ~\$15.7m in principal to the City leaving a balance due of \$11,831,144. We will have paid \$862,791 in interest.

- e. Peter B moved to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Dawn seconded and the Report was approved via roll call.
- 6. Fundraising Update – See Corporate Communications below
- 7. ARIS Report – Jenny
 - a. We just passed our one-year anniversary of being back in the building. Jenny commended the staff for their hard work.
 - b. Jenny shared an update on numbers of visitors and circulation. Circulation and foot traffic have increased about 30%. Electronic materials have increased about 13% over last year and doubled over numbers from four years ago. We have just over 11,000 card-holders – up about 2,000 in the past year; staff register about 200 new cards every month.
 - c. Programming: Staff have curated a diverse range of programs. Participation at all age levels of programming is up.
 - d. Meeting Room use: The meeting rooms were used 492 times in FY2026. The software registration program has been useful.
 - e. Public-use computers and internet: Use is up about 45%.
 - f. Staffing: In addition to paid staff we had ten volunteers and seven interns. Through donations we are able to increase youth services, early learning staff, and digital services person in FY2027.
 - g. Friends of the Library: The Friends have disbanded since the move. Which means we no longer have the book sale. Another role they played was providing hospitality (snacks, etc.) for events.
 - h. Jenny thanked the Board for their support through the year. Geoff thanked Jenny for compiling the data.
- 8. Teen Room Modifications – Geoff
 - a. Teen Room staff have requested more office space in the Teen Room. Jenny suggests using surplus state funds to finance modifications to the space. Specifically, moving the circulation desk to the opposite side of the entry and converting the freed-up space to office space.
 - b. The Executive Committee reviewed two possible solutions and voted to recommend moving forward with the less expensive \$19,700 option.
 - c. Discussion: Existing furniture and stacks can be shifted around so the teens will not lose floor space. Jenny shared drawings and a visual representation of what to expect. There is a six-week lead time to receive the necessary pieces; making the change will take one day.
 - d. Peter B moved to authorize Jenny to proceed with the plan as presented. Dawn seconded and the motion was approved via roll call.
- 9. Committee Reports
 - a. Corporate Communications – Fran
 - i. Board recruitment: Fran and John met with Katy Marques. They were impressed with her background and experience. Kathleen moved to accept Katy to the Board of the Library. Peter L seconded and the motion was approved via roll call.
 - ii. Art Auction September 18: Christine is looking for volunteers for September 17 to help with set up.
 - iii. Fundraising: Donations for the current fiscal year to date total ~\$100,000. Our goal for the year is \$1.6m. John suggests the Board create a structure to support fundraising efforts.
 - iv. Grant Writer: We would like to hire a part-time grant writer to research family foundations.

- v. Christine Araujo is the newest member of Corporate Communications.
- b. Saunders House – Geoff
 - i. Structural reinforcement: Replacement of the fire suppression system will begin soon.
 - ii. Middle Street Door: The old door has been removed; the new door is yet to be installed.
 - iii. Grant Opportunity: Jenny submitted an application for a tourism grant for Saunders House and the murals.
- c. Building & Grounds – Peter L
 - i. Peter L walked the grounds with Michael Byrne, head of the Patio Company. They recently did some pruning and removed non-native plants growing in the native plant garden. The fountain is functioning well. They are getting familiar with the irrigation system and watering needs. Plants will be replaced where necessary in the spring.
 - ii. Peter L will meet with Lisa from G2 to brainstorm ideas for Saunders House grounds.
 - iii. Railings: Jenny is working with WT Rich and the manufacturers to address discoloration on the railings.
 - iv. The Patio Company will recommend a salt substitute for winter that will be easier on the plants.
 - v. Saunders House: there was some confusion on whether or not Saunders House grounds were part of the original contract. That has been clarified and work is on-going.
 - vi. Solar: The panels have been installed and have been inspected. National Grid will install a special meter and then the system will be turned on. When Jenny has access to the dashboard she will share that with the Committee.
- d. Lyceum – Steven
 - i. Bylaws update: The Lyceum Committee approved updates to their bylaws. Geoff presented it to the Board for review. He asked that Trustees review the document and be prepared to discuss it at the September meeting.
 - Discussion: We need clarification on the Committee versus the Lyceum “community” in the document.
 - ii. Coming Up:
 - Fall: A panel discussion on AI. They have secured a moderator and two panelists.
 - Spring: Celebration of Democracy

10. Annual Meeting: The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday November 11. Fran will have information on deadlines for inclusion on the agenda.

11. Next Meeting: September 22, 2026

12. 7:00 Adjourn. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Tracy Bowen

Motions Summary

Joe moved to authorize the Treasurer to transfer \$1.3m from the Bank Gloucester Building Account to the City of Gloucester. Jen seconded and the motion was approved via roll call.

Joe moved to authorize the Board Treasurer to notify the City of Gloucester Treasurer that final project costs will be \$27,483,468. Future BANs will be based on this number, not the original \$29m (a reduction of \$1,516,532). Jen seconded and the motion was approved via roll call.

Peter B moved to accept the Treasurer’s Report as presented. Dawn seconded and the Report was

approved via roll call.

Peter B moved to authorize Jenny to proceed with the plan to rearrange the Teen Room as presented. Dawn seconded and the motion was approved via roll call.

Kathleen moved to accept Katy Marques to the Board of the Library. Peter L seconded and the motion was approved via roll call.

Actions Summary

Joe will initiate the \$1.3m transfer to the City tomorrow.

Geoff asked that Trustees review the proposed Lyceum Bylaws and be prepared to discuss it at the September meeting.