



BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 24, 2025 REGULAR MEETING

Present: S. Alfieri, K. Brown, J. Davis, T. Griffin, M. Gualtieri, P. Kinder, K. Kriss, B. Sayet, C. Seeman, G. Smith, P. Williams

Staff: C. Special, N. Kennedy

Not Present: H. Campos, J. Iovino, D. Moreno, W. Vincent

Call to Order: Ms. Kinder called the regular meeting of the Otis Library Board of Trustees to order at 5:00 pm. A quorum was present. There were no changes made to the agenda. The minutes of the regular meeting held October 27 were reviewed (motion to accept made by Ms. Kriss; seconded by Mr. Griffin, all approved; motion passed).

Reports:

President: Ms. Kinder thanked the board members who attended O'tis a Festival to volunteer. She shared that many positive comments were made by the community about the event.

Director: Ms. Special asked if anyone had questions regarding the report she submitted prior to the meeting. She noted that partnerships continue to thrive and that Otis is consistently working to broaden its reach to new collaborators. She also shared that Rick Jacobsen of Literacy Volunteers is developing a survey for the MLL collaborative to identify our immigrant population, services provided and needed, etc., with hopes for a strong response rate. Citizenship programming remains successful, and staff continue to stay active in the community, participating in trainings and roundtables. Staff are still working toward the goal of completing 175 hours of community service before the end of the year. Additionally, Ms. Special reported that a local family is collecting donations in the library to distribute to St. Vincent de Paul Place.

Ms. Special stated that they have not yet received an update on whether programs will receive funding from the American 250 Norwich Committee. However, Ascend Bank donated \$7,500, and she thanked Mr. Seeman for his

advocacy. She reported that the library has lost its passport acceptance services due to the Department of State's decision to remove all 501(c)(3) organizations from eligibility. Otis has appealed the decision but is currently limited to offering passport photos only. Because the Norwich post office struggles to keep up with demand, they often refer people to the library. Losing this service this will result in a significant loss of revenue for the library. She noted that VITA will return in February, which is a highly utilized and much-needed community program. Otis has also adopted a family for holiday gifts through Norwich Human Services, supported by funds donated throughout the year during staff dress-down days.

Ms. Special announced that a new cultural corner will debut in the atrium in January. The idea came from Bassem Gayed, and the display will highlight a different country or culture every two weeks and include books, informational materials, activity sheets, and more. Mr. Gayed has invited Global City Norwich to collaborate on the project.

Ms. Special reported that the transition to the new 401(k) plan is about halfway complete and is expected to be finalized by January 20, 2026. John Mancini of Ascend Bank sent a letter regarding the extension of Otis's line of credit, which Ms. Special expects will be renewed. She thanked board members who attended the webinar hosted by the Association of Connecticut Libraries. She also shared that Circulation Manager Sally Gagnon and Assistant Director Jessica Franco will be leaving the library in December, prompting a long-needed staffing restructure. Two new positions will be created, allowing opportunities for current staff to advance.

Ms. Special informed the board that Ascend Bank will no longer cover Otis's snow-removal expenses. Although the bank provided a quote from its vendor, this will represent a new budgetary consideration for the library. She added that the city's budget request letter has been received, and Otis's budget request is due on December 19.

Ms. Special also reported that Ingram, the library's primary book distributor, has slowed its operations following the closure of Baker & Taylor. As a result, Otis is diversifying its purchasing sources. She noted that LION, the consortium to which Otis belongs, is losing a member library, which will increase costs for the remaining libraries. LION is working to recruit three smaller libraries to join the consortium to help reduce costs for everyone.

Mr. Smith referred to the submitted report and asked about the Dungeons & Dragons program. Ms. Special explained that it remains extremely popular with both young adults and adults, and that a library partner facilitates the sessions. The program consistently has a waitlist, and Mr. Smith remarked that it is a great way to engage younger demographics in library activities.

Finance: Mr. Seeman presented the financial reports. Mr. Seeman reported that there was \$17,000 loss for the month of October and loss YTD is \$52,000. The salaries line is under from last year but that is due to a timing issue. Mr. Seeman shared that with the loss of passports and two staff members, the budget may be affected. (Motion to accept made by Mr. Davis; seconded by Mr. Griffin, all approved; the motion passed).

Nominating Committee: Mr. Sayet suggested bringing Keith Fontaine onto the board. He is with Hartford Healthcare. (A motion to bring on Mr. Fontaine was made, all approved; the motion passed). Mr. Sayet will contact him.

Fundraising and Development: Ms. Alfieri referenced the development report that was submitted prior to the meeting. Ms. Alfieri shared that the development committee met on November 10 and discussed new ideas for fundraising. The annual appeal was mailed out and there have already been many responses. Giving Tuesday is coming up on December 2.

Friends of Otis Library: Mr. Davis shared that the book sale made about \$4,473 and the fundraiser at Illiano's made \$400, and \$5,500 is coming to the library.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Ms. Special shared that O'tis a Festival brought in about \$200 more in revenue this year compared to last year. Ms. Kinder asked the board if they felt a meeting was necessary in December since it takes place the week of Christmas, and it was decided that the meeting will remain the same.

Adjournment: With no further items for discussion, the meeting ended at 5:29 pm. (Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Sayet; seconded by Mr. Davis, all approved; the motion passed).

Respectfully submitted,

Naomi Kennedy