



## A NEWSLETTER FOR LIBRARY TRUSTEES WITHIN THE PIONEER LIBRARY SYSTEM

Spring 2011 Edition

### What's Public and What's Not? Open Meetings Law Basics

*Excerpts from the Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State, 2010 Edition, by Jerry Nichols*  
Full handbook available online at:  
<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/pltrust/>

All public libraries in New York State—including association libraries—are subject to the Open Meetings Law. This law requires that library board meetings be properly posted and advertised and open to the public. In addition, working sessions of the board (even if they are not formal meetings) must be advertised and open if a quorum of the board is expected to attend. Notice of all board meetings must be sent to the news media, noted on the library's website, and posted in a public place such as the library bulletin board.

What about discussions of a "sensitive" nature?

Boards often use executive sessions to discuss matters with which they feel uncomfortable in a public setting yet are not defined within the Open Meetings Law. **This is not only inappropriate, it is illegal.**

Executive sessions—meetings from which the public and the news media may be excluded—may be convened during an open meeting for a **limited number of specific purposes**. Those which usually apply to libraries are:

- Discussions regarding proposed, pending or current litigation;
- Collective [bargaining] negotiations pursuant to Article 14 of the Civil Service Law (the Taylor Law);

- The medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation;
- The proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition of securities, or sale or exchange of securities held by such public body, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value thereof.

Can our board hold an executive session in between board meetings?

No. An executive session is convened only as part of a public board meeting, not as a separate meeting. The board must vote to enter executive session and state the general nature of the session for its minutes. The board is permitted to take formal action and vote on any matter in executive session except the appropriation of public monies. However, such actions must be detailed in minutes of the executive session. It is usually advisable to adjourn from the executive session and return to the regular meeting to take any formal action or approve specific resolutions.

More information can be found at <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/coog/openmeetlaw.html>

#### **Save the Date.....**

#### **District and Funding Options for Your Library**

A workshop for library trustees and staff  
with Libby Post of Communication Services  
**Thursday, May 5, 2011**  
6-8:30 pm (light supper served at 5:30 pm)  
PLS Headquarters in Canandaigua  
Mailing with registration info. coming soon

## Oaths of Office for Public Library Trustees

*"In these times of increased public expectations for accountability, many publically funded institutions are under additional scrutiny."*

-New York State Librarian Bernard A. Margolis

New York State Public Officers Law requires that public officials take an Oath of Office and file it within a timely fashion. Many library trustees are considered to be public officials.



Appointed and elected trustees of public libraries (village, town, city, school district and special legislative) must take and file an oath of office.

Oath of office requirements do not apply for trustees of association libraries.

What happens if your library board is not in compliance? If the oath of office is not taken and filed with your county clerk within 30 days after commencement of the trustee's term, the position is deemed VACANT. Town library trustees have the option of filing the oath with either the office of the county clerk or the town clerk.

Additional information about oaths of office may be found at <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/pltrust/oath.htm>

## Ways to Increase Your Operating Budget

Securing adequate funding for the library is the library board's number one job and its chief responsibility. The library is an essential community resource and trustees must be closely involved in the search for support. New York State law provides a number of mechanisms for libraries to increase or stabilize their funding.

## Pioneer Trustee Success Stories

February was designated "Love Your Library" month and the trustees of the Williamson Free Public Library in Wayne County made a special effort to connect with the community.



Williamson Town Supervisor Jim Hoffman stands near the "Love Your Library" table at the library

Staffing a table in the library, trustees Pete Wright, Nancy Orbaker, Rebecca

Reinhardt, Mike Herbert and Amy Prater, collected testimonials from library patrons about why they love their library. 200 postcards with messages like "I love our small town library! Williamson Library helps bring our community together!" were collected and delivered to state legislators in Albany on March 1st as part of the New York Library Association's Library Advocacy Day. The library board also received special mention for their efforts in the Supervisor's column in the Sodus-Williamson Pennysaver.

Is your library board doing something "above and beyond" to get the word out about how critical library services are in your community? Send your stories to [cguthrie@pls-net.org](mailto:cguthrie@pls-net.org) for the fall issue of Trustee Talk.

They include district options—school district and special legislative district—and the placement of propositions on school district or municipal ballots.

A trustee workshop in May will address all of these options (see bottom right corner of the front page of this newsletter for details).

## New York State... Long a Leader in Library Excellence

It was the New York State Library that took the lead in the late 19th century to expand the services and activities of state libraries. State Librarian Melvil Dewey who served from 1888 to 1905 believed that state libraries were the best agencies for supporting the development of public libraries across New York.



As part of this tradition of promoting success for libraries and improved service for patrons, all public libraries in New York State must adhere to Minimum Public Library Standards as outlined in NY Code of Rules & Regulations, Title 8—Education, Commissioner's Regulation 90.2.

NYS Minimum Public Library Standards:

Each library.....

- #1 Is governed by written bylaws which outline the responsibilities and procedures of the library board of trustees
- #2 Has a board-approved, written long-range plan of service
- #3 Presents an annual report to the community on the library's progress in meeting the goals and objectives
- #4 Has board-approved written policies for the operation of the library
- #5 Presents annually to appropriate funding agencies a written budget which would enable the library to meet or exceed these standards and to carry out its long-range plan of service

#6 Periodically evaluates the effectiveness of the library's collection and services in meeting community needs

#7 Is open a minimum weekly number of hours (based on service population)

#8 Maintains a facility to meet community needs, including adequate space, lighting, shelving, seating and restroom

#9 Provides equipment and connections to meet community needs including, but not limited to telephone, photocopier, telefacsimile capability, and microcomputer or terminal with printer to provide access to other library catalogs and other electronic information

#10 Distributes printed information listing the library's hours open, borrowing rules, services, location and phone number

#11 Employs a paid director in accordance with the provisions of Commissioner's Regulation 90.8 for director's educational level

Helpful information for meeting minimum public library standards can be found at <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/helpful.htm> or contact the Pioneer Library System.

### Quotable Facts About America's Libraries 2010

- 62% of adults in the U.S. have public library cards (Harris 2010 survey)
- There are more public libraries than McDonald's in the U.S.—a total of 16,604 including branches
- 98.7% of public libraries provide public access to the Internet
- More than 65% of public libraries provide services for job seekers

Sources: ALA Office for Research & Statistics,  
ALA Public Information Office



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**Trustee Talk is a publication  
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## **Upcoming Workshops & Events:**

April 29th & 30, 2011

Library Trustee Association of New York State 2011 Trustee Institute  
Albany, New York at the Downtown Crowne Plaza Hotel  
More information available at [www.librarytrustees.org](http://www.librarytrustees.org)

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Visit [www.pls-net.org](http://www.pls-net.org) and click on Calendar of Events for details and to register online