

Mohawk Valley Library System
Annual Meeting
October 8, 2025

MINUTES

MVLS Trustees: Bill Bonner, April Davies, Katherine Hawkins, Terry Pavoldi, Susan London, Jane Borrelli

MVLS Staff: Wade Abbott, Mary Carrier, Kate Clingan, Beth Rienti, Eric Trahan, Sharon OBrien

Library Trustees, Library Directors and Staff, and Friends

Fulton County

Gloversville Barbara Madonna, Nicole Hauser, Sally Ostrander, Shari Peto, Charlotte Will, Susan Shrader, Valerie Venturini, Sonny Duross, Greg Niforos

Northville Jane Borrelli

Montgomery County

Amsterdam John Naple, Tom Twente, Dan Gentile, Nicole Hemsley, Leah Fitzgerald, Mary Donohue

Canajoharie Mary Alexander

Fort Hunter Judi Steiger, Letah Graff, Lynn Otto, Glenda Eager, Kara Travis

Fort Plain Whitney Hubbard, Jacob Trahan, Sam Zimmerman

Fonda Linda Bell, Bonnie Myers, Pat Galeazza, Carol Stuff, Phyllis Smith, Wendy Sullivan, Mackenzie Eggleston, Lori Simonds

St. Johnsville Diane Empie, Stephanie Cuomo

Schenectady County Cindy-Lou McKeon

Schoharie County

Cobleskill Kim Zimmer, Becky Leggieri, Amy Mele, Heather Heckman, Denise Klug

Middleburgh Terry Pavoldi, Diane Stewart, Carrie Foland

Sharon Springs Jeanne Irwin, Patsy Nicosia, Margaret Kindling, Kerry Parsons

Schoharie Yvonne Keller-Baker, Jennie Mosher

Director Eric Trahan welcomed everyone to the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Mohawk Valley Library System, a celebration of libraries! He thanked everyone for coming here and taking the opportunity to get to know one another better. It's become a tradition to have these annual meetings in our libraries (we'd love to have it at your library!) and tonight we are at the Fort Hunter Free Library. Eric introduced Judi Steiger, the director of the Fort Hunter Free Library. Judi welcomed everyone and invited us all to take a look at the library itself.

Eric wanted to discuss the four goals that MVLS set during our most recent planning process:

1. **MVLS Empowers Libraries with the Vision & Knowledge for Secure Futures:** Eric is always talking about the importance of going to your community for an annual budget vote. This year, our libraries added \$338,000 to their budgets with annual budget votes! Over the last ten years, that's \$2.2 million!
2. **MVLS Empowers Libraries with the Skills, Tools, & Resources for Serving All:** This year, our central library, Amsterdam, has been working hard to provide new resources, such as Educate Station, that all of our libraries can use. At MVLS, we try to provide lots of items that can circulate to any of our libraries, like the Big Play and STEM Kits.
3. **MVLS Empowers Libraries with Collaboration for Outstanding Library Service:** At our Spring Symposium this year, we talked about documenting institutional knowledge, and tonight libraries will be sharing some steps they've taken in that direction.
4. **MVLS Empowers Libraries with Inspiration & Methods for Telling the Library Story:** Tonight is all about telling the library story. The MVLS Annual Report is on the tables and available online, we'll be hearing from some of our libraries shortly, and displayed the walls are the posters that libraries helped us create to reflect on their year.

Eric then introduced MVLS Staff. It is an honor to be here with you all tonight! Bill Bonner, MVLS Board President, introduced members of the MVLS Board of Trustees who are here tonight. Bill also recognized all the member library board members in attendance tonight. Bill wanted to note a few accomplishments that the MVLS Board undertook this year: a number of bylaws amendments, updated conflict of interest and ethics policies, and an updated MVLS board elections process, as well as a self-review of the MVLS Board and a review of the MVLS director and staff. Eric then introduced the member library directors and staff in attendance, the people who make our libraries run every day.

MVLS wants this annual meeting to be a learning opportunity where we can learn from each other. As an example of that, we have our 2025 Award winners. We will be giving out four awards this year!

The first is the Harold & Junice Wusterbarth Volunteer Service Award, which honors a volunteer or trustee. In 2023, this award went to Jean LaPorta from the Gloversville Public Library. This year, the award winner is someone from the Frothingham Free Library who has been there for many years and could have won this award in any one of them. This year's award goes to Bonnie Myers from the Frothingham Free Library! Interim director Linda Bell spoke about Bonnie, who is as much a part of the library as the foundation of the building. She knows everything about the library, has helped to train many directors, and Linda doesn't know how anyone in Fonda would have made it without her. She IS the Frothingham Free Library, the face of it every day to their patrons. Linda thanked Bonnie for everything she does.

The second award tonight is the Library Recognition Award, which honors a library program. In 2023, the award went to the School's Out initiative at the Gloversville Public Library. This year's winner is Story Squad with Meg from the Sharon Springs Free Library. This program reaches a fantastic number of participants in the Sharon Springs community. Accepting the award on behalf of the Sharon Springs Free Library is board member Margaret Kindling. This program was Director Meghan Keaney's brainchild. She partnered with the Sharon Springs Summer Rec program to get children into the library and excited about reading, and Margaret is so pleased to recognize that hard work with this award.

Our third MVLS Award tonight is the Outstanding Library Staff Award, which honors a staff member at an MVLS member library for outstanding efforts and/or results in providing library service to community members. Last year, we had two staff winners, Courtney Little from The Community Library, Cobleskill and Samantha Zimmerman from the Fort Plain Free Library. This year, we also have two winners! The first winner tonight is Sally Ostrander from the Gloversville Public Library. Gloversville director Valerie Venturini introduced Sally, who she is thrilled to honor with this award. Sally started out as a part-time clerk and is now the supervisor of the circulation clerks. She has worn many hats in her time at Gloversville, and has always shown that she is up for a challenge and willing to step outside of her comfort zone to help make the library work.

The second Outstanding Library Staff Award winner tonight is Mary Alexander from the Canajoharie Library. Mary Carrier from MVLS introduced Mary Alexander, whose nomination was sent in by Cory Seymour of the Canajoharie Library. Mary Alexander has been the Curator of Education and Public Engagement at Canajoharie for the past six years. During her time there, Mary has brought in programs and performers for all ages, as well as hosting popular Cabin Fever virtual programs for MVLS and giving guided museum tours. Canajoharie library is very fortunate to have her on staff. Mary Alexander thanks MVLS for this award, and is very excited to use the award money to buy a new rug for her storytime program. She wanted to take a moment to give kudos to all the social media folks out there, she loves to see what libraries are putting up online, and she is the one commenting from the Canajoharie Library account on all of your posts!

Eric invites everyone to come up and talk about what they are doing to secure their library's future. Judi Steiger from the Fort Hunter Free Library came up to talk about securing her future with the people they have. FTH has recently hired a new person who is working on her library degree, showing the importance of building your bench to work towards sustainable staffing. Letah has been putting together incredible programs with amazing turnout. One example is a book-folding workshop on November 5th, and we can see an example of that craft in the beautiful centerpieces on the tables that Letah made. Judi says it's the people who make the library what it is.

Next up is Nicole Hemsley from the Amsterdam Free Library. AMS is doing a lot to prepare for the future. They're nearing the end of Phase 1 of their construction project, but she agrees with Judi, the success of the library is the staff. Working through the challenges of construction is a lot, but her staff works together as a team and gets it done. Nicole also wants to give credit to her amazing Board. Mackenzie Egelston from the Forthingham Free Library spoke next, and agrees with Nicole and Judi about the importance of the library staff. She is one of the many part-time staff members at FON, and their Board at FON is also extremely involved in the library. FON recently celebrated their 80th anniversary, and this year they applied for their second construction grant ever. They are so excited

about the changing future of their space!

Next up is Mary Alexander from the Canajoharie Library. Canajoharie just hired a new executive director of the museum and library, and are excited to see the changes to come. They've been looking into rebranding and redoing their logo; they just turned 100 and are excited about the next 100 years. From the Fort Plain Free Library, Jacob Trahan spoke about how he sees the future of their library in the children who show up to programs. This past May, they introduced a program called Camp Curiosity, where a volunteer taught kids about science. It's exciting to see the kids who come to these programs and then develop a lifelong love of the library. Jacob also wanted to call attention to the volunteers who helped with their book sale this year. At FTP, they keep donated books in the basement, and they enjoyed seeing all of the young people in the library community who stepped forward to volunteer to carry very heavy boxes upstairs.

Jeanne Irwin from the Sharon Springs Free Library spoke about how inspired their director, Meghan Keaney, was by the Spring Symposium discussion of succession planning. Meg has put a lot of the pertinent information together for the library – which is timely, as Meghan will be leaving the library to pursue her masters in Library Science. This year, SHS also completed their outdoor pavilion and will be having the dedication this week!

From the Schenectady County Public Library is Library Assistant Cindy McKeon. At SCPL, they are making a conscious effort to make areas more comfortable for patrons. They brought in new furniture, charging stations, and new shelving, and moved some of their collections around to make the space more convenient and fun to be in. Cindy says she loves being a youth librarian and is always thrilled to see all the things like school visits and Toddler Time that bring kids into the library.

Kim Zimmer from The Community Library in Cobleskill spoke about how important the Friends group has been in Cobleskill. When Kim started, they had only a handful of Friends members, and they are now over 50 strong! They've grown and started to take on new types of fundraisers to bring more money to the library. The Friends group in COB provided a lot of the prizes for things like Summer Reading and Battle of the Books. They also have been very helpful with providing food for programs. This year so far, they've given \$9700!

From the Gloversville Public Library, Barbara Madonna and Valerie Venturini spoke about the lessons learned from their budget failure last year. The most important thing to them was to regroup after the loss and look to the community to figure out next steps for moving forward. They ended up hiring a consultant, and their board really went all-in on working towards making their future secure. The important part about sustainability for the library for them is finances, but they couldn't have done it without their amazing staff, board, and Friends.

Program Director Jennie Mosher of the Schoharie Free Library spoke about working to reach their community with programming. They work hard to offer something for everyone. They put up tents on their lawn every summer, and she thinks that when people see the tents go up, they know that something is going on at the library and they want to be involved. This year they've been working hard to make connections with other organizations in the community like the Joshua Project, SCHOOL, CREATE Council for the Arts, and the Youth Bureau.

From the Margaret Reaney Memorial Library, Diane Empie spoke about the changes that they've been making in St Johnsville. Right now, she is working to make the building handicapped-accessible. It's been a challenge, but she is confident that they can get it done. She wants to thank in particular the MVLS staff and the other library directors for all of the support they have given to her since she

started. She appreciates how she has been welcomed by this community.

From the Middleburgh Library, Terry Pavoldi spoke about Middleburgh focusing on cultivating volunteers. They used to have a difficult time bringing in trustees, but this year they had so much interest that they were able to increase the number of seats on their Board! They have a very strong homeschool group at the library, and as the kids age, they have turned into a reliable source of volunteers. She looks forward to having them as library volunteers and patrons for a long time.

This brings a close to the formal part of the Annual meeting, and Eric invites you to enjoy dessert and mingle with your fellow library folks.