Olivia Rodham Memorial Library Trustees Report for 2021

The library trustees met monthly throughout 2021 to advise and support the work of the library director, Kris Finnegan, and her assistant. As one can see from the detail supplied in the library director’s annual report, the library is alive and well, despite the strictures of the Covid pandemic. Circulation increased by more than 30 percent, and patron visits and web traffic also were up. The role of a free public library as an essential community resource is clear.

We were able to benefit from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which gave a grant to every public library in the country, based on town population. We used our grant of $2,756 to purchase two outdoor picnic tables and shade umbrellas for the grassy area behind the library, a large-format printer, and shelving for book storage in the lower level.

In addition to keeping a close eye on the library budget, building needs, and other local matters, trustees attended several valuable Zoom programs and webinars that connected us with libraries all over the state of New Hampshire and the country. These meetings were helpful to us as we evaluated our own policies, to make sure we stayed current, especially during challenging situations.

While the State of Emergency in NH was in effect, we were able to meet on Zoom, but once that expired in the spring, an in-person quorum was required. We began to meet either outside, in the town hall (where acoustics were difficult), in the library itself (spread out), or in the library lower level (also spread out).

Once vaccines began to be widely available, the trustees wrote and adopted a set of protocols for library use, a copy of which is appended below. We review this statement each month to see if revisions are warranted. So far, we have not changed our policy requiring masking and distancing in the library. At this writing (January 2022), we are still not certain when the library will be fully and safely opened again to the public, but we look forward to that time.

The American Library Association and United for Libraries offered a webinar this fall devoted to intellectual freedom and support for the Library Bill of Rights (first adopted in 1939) and the Freedom to Read Statement (adopted in 1953), available at ala.org, both of which we support through our library policies. Two trustees attended this webinar, and shared links to it with the rest of the group.

The trustees thank the Town of Nelson staff, especially Edie Drinkwater, for unwavering support, the people of Nelson for their patronage and great ideas about books and other materials, and especially Kris Finnegan for her steady hand on the wheel of the library and her great resourcefulness. We thank former assistant Heidi Tompkins for her years of service, and welcome Jeff Taylor as the new assistant librarian. We also thank the Friends of the Library for their support, and look forward to a gigantic Book Sale once that can happen again.

Olivia Rodham Memorial Library trustees: Susan Peery, Lew Derby, Gretchen Ezell, Russ Thomas, Sara Marean, and alternate Jan Perry

**Library Health and Safety Protocols During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

The intention of this protocol is to protect the health of Olivia Rodham Memorial Library staff and patrons, while at the same time maintaining, to the greatest extent possible, the services of a free public library. Curbside service is still available to any Nelson resident.

The library cannot at this time legally require staff or patrons to be vaccinated against the Covid virus, nor inquire about anyone’s vaccination status or plans. Therefore, for the duration of the pandemic, **the library will continue to require the use of facial masks, hand sanitizing, and social distancing** for anyone who is in the library, regardless of whether they have been vaccinated or not.

We strongly encourage vaccination for everyone who is able to do it.

If you have a cough, fever, or any other symptoms of the Covid virus, or have been exposed in the last ten days to anyone who has tested positive for the virus, please do not enter the library.

This protocol will be reviewed at each library trustees’ meeting until objective public-health sources consider the pandemic to have subsided. The decision to fully reopen the library will be made by the library trustees in consultation with the library director and the Town of Nelson select board, and in accordance with scientific data and appropriate metrics.

Board of Trustees, Olivia Rodham Memorial Library, Nelson, NH

Adopted May 17, 2021; reviewed monthly. Latest review was December 2021.