Ashland Library Advisory Panel
Meeting Agenda
August 20, 2025

1. Call meeting to order
2. Approve August 14 minutes
3. Review survey draft
4. Review/finalize C of A #2
5. Discuss C of A #3 framework/initial observations
6. Other business
7. Adjournment

Ashland Library Advisory Panel
Meeting Four—August 20, 2025

Work Week 4 for the Library Advisory Panel began by approving the minutes of the previous work session and reviewing a draft of specific information related to a discounted subsidy model for 2026 identified as “CoA #2”. Background information summarizes actions recommended by the town manager to examine a possible discounted methodology in 2026 compared to the unmet subsidy request in 2025. As per the suggestions of the panel in previous work sessions, a 50% discount rate in 2026 for all surrounding towns compared to the approved (but in some cases unpaid) subsidies in the 2025 town budget seemed most favorable. CoA #2 included a direct comparison of the 2025 budget and the projected 2026 budget utilizing the 50% discount of the per capita rate. This change would result in Ashland paying 84% of the library budget, Portage 8%, Masardis 4%, Garfield 2%, Nashville and Oxbow both paying 1%. The projection also included comparisons of wages and benefits for both the librarian and the library aide with a 3% merit increase as has been done in the past.

This model recognizes some of the concerns of the surrounding town related to funds but not how funds are used; the Ashland Town Council would remain the sole governing body. CoA #2 does not include any information about reestablishing an advisory board though it is recognized that this would be a way to ensure a “voice” for surrounding towns regarding the management of the library. CoA #2 would require a net increase in the funding provided by Ashland equaling $20,444 compared to 2025. This would include the cost of health insurance and retirement benefits for the library aide to be prorated to 20 hours per week included in the library budget rather than the administrative budget as it currently is paid.

Minor editing was suggested by members of the panel and the document will be revisited prior to submitting the entire Panel’s report to the Town Manager on or before October 7, 2025.

The panel reviewed the ongoing development of the google docs survey which will be sent to 10 regional libraries to gain information about their governance and funding models. A draft of the survey was emailed to members of the Ashland Library Advisory Panel as a test; panel members were able to respond and these responses were categorized such that the questions and comments were linked. It was agreed that phone calls will be made to the librarians of the institutions by 8/30; panel members making phone calls are encouraged to initiate conversations that would glean useful information to the Library Panel. The surveys would be sent on 9/2 (post-Labor Day).

Course of Action #3, which describes a municipal organization with IRS non-profit status for tax-deductible donations, was preliminarily discussed. One advantage of recognition as a non-profit body is that it would not affect the eligibility of the town to go after grants with time limits should the library previously receive financial benefits from the same grant. For example, the receipt of funding for the handicapped accessible entrance to the Gladys J. Craig Memorial Library by the Stephen & Tabatha King Grant limits the town in applying for another King grant for 5 years. This would not be true had the library been designated 501 (c3) prior to the application for construction funding.

It was noted that every organization receiving 501 (c3) status has an advisory board or board of trustees, though the roles of this group may or may not include directly overseeing the budget as it relates to municipal management. Presumably, the government does not dabble in “how” as much as “what.” It is clear from reviewing the self-descriptions of several other libraries in the region with a non-profit designation that there is great diversity in the roles/expectations of advisors in different libraries. Individual libraries’ information gleaned from an internet search included a “job description” for the board as a whole, described how funding was managed, and delineated the process for identifying, accepting, and retiring board members.

A short, but noisy discussion regarding the connotations of a “nonprofit” library as designated in the Library Annual Review resulted in editing the survey questions to include a specific question about the 501 (c3) designation of the responding library as opposed to a library which simply has a net balance of zero. It was agreed that further discussion of CoA #3 would be more productive once the survey responses from selected libraries identified in the PLAR as “nonprofit” or “municipal/advisory” were received.

Submitted,

Anne Chase