Ashland Library Advisory Panel

Meeting Agenda

September 4, 2025

1. Call meeting to order
2. Approve August 28 minutes
3. Survey update
4. Review C of A #3
5. Other business
6. Adjournment

Ashland Library Advisory Panel
Meeting Six—September 4, 2025 6:00—7:15pm

Attending: Kevin Bushey, Anne Chase, Joan Johnson, Shara Page, Miranda Carney, Sandy Bartlett

Work Week 5 for the Library Advisory Panel began by approving the minutes of the previous work session. It was recommended that the names of the panel members who attend each meeting be included in the minutes as well as the time period in which the meeting takes place. This will be done going forward.

It was reported that four of ten contacted libraries have completed and returned their surveys. There was a brief discussion of the best way to organize the information as it is received; it seems useful to group the responses in accordance to the governance structure that is utilized. A response from Cary Library in Houlton indicate its principle funding structure was as a Charitable Trust 170-(b)-(1)-(A). The panel agreed that it would be worthwhile to research some details about the trust structure as a possible alternative to the IRS non-profit 501(c 3) status thus far discussed in funding models.

The bulk of the meeting focused on a draft reviewing the key components of Course of Action #3 in which the governance structure would be shared between the municipality and a non-profit/advisory board entity. CoA #3 describes a model in which the municipality would be responsible for wages and benefits for library employees (currently projected at $98,283 for 2026). A board of directors under the control of the non-profit entity would be responsible for oversight of fundraising, operational programs, and meeting all other library expenses (currently projected at $33,500). This information is similar to the structure and assumptions previously discussed for Course of Action #2 which describes a 50% discounted subsidy from surrounding towns. It was suggested that the CoA#2 model be applied for 2026 only to transition from the current library operation model under municipal control to an alternative governance model. Several points were brought up for discussion including financial responsibility of the town to address legal expenses associated with forming the non-profit governance structure, receipt and discussion of the completed surveys from other regional libraries (requested by September 15th), representation on the board by members of the subsidy towns, a memorandum of agreement between Ashland and the nonprofit, and sources of funds to maintain the library during the transition. It was reiterated that financial support from the subsidy towns should be a charitable appeal rather than a specific amount billed going forward with this Course of Action past 2026.

It was noted that any transition to an alternative governance model faces a steep timeline. Submission of the Ashland Library Advisory Panel information and recommendation is due to the Town Manager by October 7th to be acted on by the Town Council on October 15th. Any changes in library governance would likely require a vote by the town in early spring, a vote that would only include Ashland residents despite the ripple effect to subsidy towns. Acceptance of CoA #2-4 would require time to form the library board, finalize bylaws, complete legal agreements with the town regarding leasing the library building as well as legal processes necessary to obtain and retain IRS non-profit 501 (c3) status. All the steps necessary to complete prior to applying for Federal Tax-Exempt Status with the IRS would need to be submitted with an application; a timeline for review by the IRS is unknown. It would also be necessary to identify sources of funding such as grants, charitable donations, and fundraising activities to have a working library budget in place on January 1, 2027 and beyond in order to keep the library solvent. Ideally, the budget for an upcoming year would be resolved and acted upon in the previous year.

Copies of proposed by-laws for the Gladys J. Craig Memorial Library based on a template reviewed in Week Five with deletions, additions, and alterations were provided and discussed. The panel agreed that it would not be necessary to retain a past-president for a year to maintain continuity of the executive board function, that the treasurer would retain the ability to sign checks in the absence of the board president, and that staggered terms could be introduced in by-law amendments if necessary. It was thought that there would be enough turn-over in the case of 3 year terms that were not completed or renewed to continue to function with a mix of “old” and “new” faces on the board.

As with previous Courses of Action discussed by the Library Advisory Panel, the CoA #3 draft will need to be revisited and refined once the results from the surveys have all been received and discussed in order to make a well-supported recommendation to the Town Council in October.

Submitted—Anne Chase