

BYLAWS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE TOMPKINS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
Amended April 2025

ARTICLE I - NAME AND AUTHORIZATION

The name of this organization is the Board of Trustees of the Tompkins County Public Library (the "Library"), located in the City of Ithaca, County of Tompkins, State of New York. The Board of Trustees exists and functions by virtue of the provisions of New York State Education Law, Section 255 and Article 28 of the Tompkins County Charter, which are appended to these Bylaws, and assumes the responsibilities delegated to it by the Legislature of the County of Tompkins.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The Board of Trustees of the Tompkins County Public Library will provide administrative oversight of the Library's operations on behalf of the people in Tompkins County. Consistent with the Library's Mission and Values, the Board will:

- 1) supervise the Director of the Library,
- 2) promote the best possible use of all Library resources,
- 3) review and consider improvements to existing services,
- 4) review and formulate policy, as necessary and,
- 5) Approve the budget as presented by the Director and considered by the Finance and Personnel Committee that:
 - a) requests adequate funds from the Tompkins County Legislature for good Library service,
 - b) applies for state and federal funds when available,
 - c) establishes private fundraising priorities, and,
 - d) supports philanthropic initiative

ARTICLE III - BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Section 1 - Members

- a) There shall be 15 members, all to be residents of Tompkins County at the time of their appointment and during their tenure.
- b) The Board Development and Nominating Committee shall recommend candidates to the Board for consideration.
- c) Candidates selected by the Board shall be presented to the Tompkins County Legislature for approval and shall take office upon taking the appropriate oath of office.

- d) Members will be expected to attend all meetings, regularly review documents circulated for the Board so as to be well-informed at meetings, complete such continuing education requirements as may be set by the State of New York and/or the Board and to serve on one or more Committees of the Board.
- (e) The board shall include a member of the Tompkins County Legislature. The County Legislature liaison seat shall be non-voting, but shall be provided financial reports, minutes of meetings, Director's reports, and any other information as the County may request. The liaison shall be included in communications and emails and be afforded the opportunity to attend executive sessions

Section 2 - Term of Office - To comply with Tompkins County Charter Article 28, Trustees shall be appointed for an initial three (3) year term. No Trustee may serve more than two full consecutive terms. Membership may not be automatically extended upon term expiration. A Trustee may be reappointed after serving two consecutive terms following a lapse of at least one full term off the Board. Should a Trustee be unable to serve a complete three-year term, the Board may propose an individual to serve the remainder of the unexpired term. The completion of an unexpired term shall not be counted toward the two-term limit. Any member appointed with less than one-half the term remaining shall be considered to have served a partial term. Partial terms do not count against a term limit, should one exist.

Section 3 - Disqualifications and Vacancies

- a) A Trustee who moves out of Tompkins County shall be deemed to have resigned.
- b) The Board may declare a position vacant when a Trustee:
 1. fails to attend three consecutive regular meetings of the Board, or,
 2. fails to participate in Committee assignments, or,
 3. fails to complete any continuing education requirement set by the Board or by the State of New York

The Board may decline to declare such a vacancy for good cause.

- c) The Board shall notify the Nominating Committee and the Clerk of the Tompkins County Legislature whenever a vacancy occurs. The Board shall nominate a new Board Member to fill the vacancy in accordance with Article III, Section 1.

Section 4 - Leaves of Absence - The Board may grant a Trustee a leave of absence from regular Board meetings for a period of from three to five consecutive regular meetings. No Trustee shall be granted a leave of absence more than once during a three-year term of office.

Section 5 - Key Expectations for the Board of Trustees - Consonant with the Library's Mission and Values, the Board shall:

- a) Operation
 1. Regularly review the Mission and Values of the Library

2. Regularly review the needs of the Library collections to see that they meet the requirements of the Library program
 3. Establish policies for the operation of the Library that are designed to promote efficient and effective procedures.
 4. Regularly review the needs of the physical plant and building needs to see that they meet the requirements of the Library program.
 5. Report to and liaise with the Tompkins County Legislature on Library matters, including the physical plant and building needs.
- b) Personnel
1. Appoint a Director of the Library whenever that position shall become vacant.
 2. Establish employment policies and procedures for Library personnel in accordance with the New York State Civil Service Law.
- c) Fiscal
1. Advise the administration in the preparation of the annual budget, approve the budget, recommend its adoption by the Tompkins County Legislature, and make every effort to secure adequate funds to finance Library operation.
 2. Establish policies for purchasing and expenditures for the Library, including the establishment and maintenance of bank accounts.
 3. Establish and maintain accounting procedures in the manner prescribed by the New York State Department of Audit and Control for the financial activities of the Library.
- d) Public Relations & Impact
1. Study and support legislation that will bring about the greatest good to the greatest number of libraries in New York State and the nation.
 2. Cooperate with other public officials and boards and maintain vital public relations.
- e) Board Maintenance & Professional Development
1. Keep abreast of standards and library trends by attending, whenever possible, regional, state, and national Trustees meetings and workshops.
 2. Recommend individuals to the Tompkins County Legislature for membership on the Board of Trustees.

Section 6 ~~=~~ Officers

- a) Officers of the Tompkins County Public Library's Board of Trustees shall be a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. Each of these offices

may be filled by up to two persons as “co-officers.” Officers shall be elected for a one-year term at the November Board meeting for the succeeding calendar year. Vacancies in any office shall be filled by a majority vote of the current Board membership at the next regular meeting of the Board after the vacancy occurs.

- b) The duties of the officers shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
1. The President shall preside at meetings and perform such other duties as custom and regulation may require. In the absence or incapacity of the Treasurer, the President shall sign vouchers for disbursements from the Library fund. The President shall appoint Chairs of standing committees from among the trustees.
 2. The Vice President shall assume the duties of the President in the event of the absence or incapacity of the President or both co-Presidents. The Vice President shall also be responsible for oversight of the Library’s committee system.
 3. The Secretary shall endorse an accurate record of all proceedings of Board meetings, shall supervise correspondence of the Board, and shall ensure that proper meeting rules and practices are followed.
 4. The Treasurer shall be responsible for all accounting of Library receipts and expenditures. The Treasurer shall sign all vouchers for disbursement from the Library’s funds within the framework of the approved budget and with the approval of a majority of the Board present at a regularly scheduled meeting. The Treasurer shall serve as the Chair of the Finance Committee for the Board.

ARTICLE IV – COMMITTEES

Section 1 – Standing Committees - The Board of Trustees for the Tompkins County Public Library will usually act as a committee of the whole. Certain functions, however, will be aided by the following standing committees:

- a) The Executive Committee shall include the Board’s President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Executive Committee may be expanded to include committee chairs when needed. The Library Director may be asked to serve as an ex officio member of the Executive Committee and act as its recorder. The Executive Committee shall, whenever necessary between regularly scheduled meetings of the full Board, make decisions on behalf of the Board. Those decisions must be reported, in writing, at the next meeting of the Board and are subject to ratification by a majority of the current Board membership at a regularly scheduled meeting. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for coordinating the performance evaluation of the Director.

- b) The Finance and Personnel Committee shall
 1. Advise the Director in the preparation of the annual budget and submit the recommended budget to the full board for approval.
 2. Review budget requests to the County, Friends of the Library and the Library Foundation, among others.
 3. Oversee the Library's fiscal affairs and fiscal policy, and its personnel affairs and policies.
 4. Represent the Library management in contract negotiations with the PSA and SSA.
 5. Adjudicate appeals of staff grievance rulings in accordance with procedures in union contracts.
 6. Manage the search process for the Director and assist with the search process for other senior staff.
 7. Manage decisions regarding their compensation and evaluation; and as necessary act on changes to the Director's employment agreement; and,
 8. Meet with the Library's external auditors and respond to audit findings.

- c) The Board Development and Nominating Committee shall:
 1. Assess the composition of the Board in terms of community representation and review the trustee membership for needed updates.
 2. Recruit, interview, recommend and advise the full Board regarding selection of new trustees.
 3. Prepare slates of candidates for Board membership as vacancies occur.
 4. Review and recommend processes for the cultivation, training, and involvement of Trustees.
 5. Prepare a slate of officers for a Board vote each November.

- d) The Library Art Committee shall review all proposed gifts and purchases of art and shall recommend their permanent acquisition to the Board and shall also recommend deaccession of permanent art to the Board.

- e) The Library Services and Policy Committee shall provide oversight and review of all Library activities and services, shall review proposed new Library policies or changes to existing policies, and shall recommend action to the Board. The bylaws shall be reviewed every other year by the Library Services and Policy Committee.

- f) The Community Relations and Outreach Committee ("CROC") shall collaborate with Library staff to establish and/or maintain connections with any group who is interested in or who may benefit from the Library. CROC shall provide advice and feedback on community relations and develop strategies for advocacy for the

Library and its staff as well as promote information-sharing with the public, with lawmakers, and with the media. It shall also encourage direct support by the Board with all such efforts.

Section 2 -- Ad Hoc Committees - From time to time, ad hoc committees may be formed for the special study of matters that are not covered in other committee assignments. Such committees shall be appointed by the President, with the approval of a majority of the current Board membership, to serve until the final report for their work has been presented.

ARTICLE V – MEETINGS

Section 1 – Regular Meetings - The Board of Trustees for the Tompkins County Public Library shall meet once a month, at a time and place to be determined by the Board with notice to the public as required by Public Officer’s Law, §104.

Section 2 – Special Meetings - Special meetings for the Board of Trustees may be called by the President, or upon the request of any three (3) Trustees, provided that notice in writing is given to every Trustee at least three (3) calendar days before the proposed meeting and shall be posted consistent with Article 7 of the Public Officers Law. This notice shall state the time and place of the special meeting and the purpose for which it is being held.

Section 3 – Quorum - A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of a majority of the current Board.

Section 4 – Voting - An affirmative vote of a majority of those present is required to approve any motion before the Board at any meeting.

Section 5 – Rules of Order - The current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order, plus common sense and a commitment that all board members’ views shall be solicited and heard, shall govern the parliamentary procedures of all meetings.

ARTICLE VI - LIBRARY DIRECTOR AND STAFF

The Board of Trustees for the Tompkins County Public Library is charged with the responsibility of appointing a qualified Library Director (“Director”) who shall be the administrative officer of the Library committed to the Library’s Mission and Values under the Board’s review and direction. The Director shall recommend to the Board the appointment of other staff, shall specify the duties of such staff, and shall be responsible for the direction and supervision of such staff. The Director is also responsible for the care and maintenance of Library property, for the selection and care of materials in keeping with Board policies, for the fiscal operation of the Library within the stated limitations of the budget, for the efficiency of Library services to the public served by the Library, and for the development of a first draft of an annual budget for the consideration of the Finance and Personnel Committee before presentation to the full Board.

The Director shall present the proposed budget to the Tompkins County Legislature. The Director is responsible for the implementation of the policies established by the Board. The Director, or the Director's designee, is expected to attend all regular and special Board meetings, unless otherwise specifically stated by the President of the Board.

ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS

Proposed amendments to the bylaws shall be presented to the Board at a regularly scheduled meeting for consideration by the Board at its next regular meeting. A two-thirds vote of the current Board membership is required for passage.

These bylaws, when approved by the Tompkins County Legislature, shall become adopted.

Original - August 27, 1985

Amended November 24, 1998

Amended May 22, 2007

Amended October 26, 2010

Amended November 25, 2014, Approved August 3, 2015

Amended and Approved March 22, 2016

Approved November 15, 2022

Amended March 26, 2024

Amended December 2024

Amended April 2025