

FRIENDS OF HALL MEMORIAL LIBRARY – OPEN MEETING
MARCH 5, 2026, 6:30
McKNIGHT CONFERENCE ROOM – HALL MEMORIAL LIBRARY
Minutes

I. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Vice President Stephan Samson. In attendance: Peg Busse, Vice President; Stephen Samson, Vice President; Sara Roman, Patti Wendell, Treasurers; Susan Eldridge, Secretary; Ellen Bonanno; Mikayla Bonanno; Tom Boscarino; Amanda Duhamel, Hall Memorial Library Staff; Helen Scherwitzky.

II. Meeting Minutes:

The meeting minutes from the previous meeting were approved as previously distributed.

III. Treasurer's Report:

Patri Wendell provided a handout for Monthly Treasurer's Report for Period December 1, 2025, through February 28, 2026.

Total income was \$9,916.73, which included: Mini Golf, membership dues, adult book fair, and various donations.

Total Expenses was \$5,860.44, including museum passes, Mini Golf expenses, supplies for the Book Cellar renovations, and other items.

Ending balance: \$84,807.52

There was discussion regarding the bank balance, recognizing that expenses for the Book Cellar renovation were ongoing, as well as funds earmarked for memorials for special Friends.

Sara Roman reviewed the handout for the Mini Golf Event income and expenses. Total income was \$9,796.09; expenses totaled \$2,238.94, with a net income of \$7,557.15. A total of 418 golfers paid for admission, and 155 free books were distributed through the coupon process.

IV. Book Cellar: Book Sale Update:

Ellen Bonanno reported that the Book Cellar is now open! Phase I is now complete, and customers are very happy to be able to visit and make their purchases. The Book Cellar is now a bright, cheerful place, healthy for both books and people. There is an increase in the cost of each book, producing minor grumbling, but not restricting purchases. Thank you, Ellen Bonanno and team for all the hard work in making this a huge success.

There was some discussion for a few subjects regarding the Book Cellar:

- Phase II, projected, but not yet scheduled, will be for the entry, storage, and working areas.

- The possibility for using credit cards for purchases: This can be done using an independent device (not a personal phone account), which would require a monthly fee for the account. Sara Roman will look into this.

V. Mini Golf Update:

Mini Golf was a huge success this year, providing a fun family activity on a very cold winter day. See details above in Treasurer's report.

Thank you notes and surveys were distributed by mail to 17 hole-sponsors and 37 volunteers. Five sponsors and one volunteer responded. Overall, the sponsors were repeat participants, setup went fairly smoothly, and all are looking forward to participating next year.

In addition, comments and suggestions were collected from Friends members and Mini Golf volunteers. These have been collected and will be provided to next year's Mini Golf Event Organizers.

The Friends are looking for Volunteers to create the next Event Organizers team for the 2027 Mini Golf event. Planning, organizing, and reserving the vendor should begin now! Please contact Friends if you are interested in supporting this event.

VI. Membership update:

Membership dues are coming in, as the first quarter is a popular renewal period. However, numbers are stable. Three new members, offset by three members passing, yields a net zero.

Discussion ensued as to what members were looking for, versus the purpose of the Friends. According to the Bylaws, "[t]he purpose of the organization shall be to foster closer relations between the Hall Memorial Library of Ellington, Connecticut and the citizens of Ellington; to promote knowledge of the functions, resources, and needs of the library; and to cooperate with the Library Board of Trustees and the Library Director in the development of the resources, facilities, and programs of the Library."

It was noted that members often initially join looking for personal engagement. Meeting participants noted that they find their service to be enjoyable and rewarding. Friends provides a few key services, through which members can engage:

- 1) The Book Cellar and October Book Sale provide a steady revenue stream for the Friends, as well as a supply of extremely inexpensive books for library patrons to own. Volunteers "mind the store" by signing up for hours, as well as receive, sort, cull, and shelve book donations.
- 2) Mini Golf is a once-a-year event which provides a fun, family activity during the cold, dreary winter months, community engagement, fostering community engagement and bringing people to engage with the library and with each other. A few volunteers work diligently throughout the year, planning, organizing, enlisting vendors and volunteers. During the weekend, volunteers set up the night before, participate throughout the day, and clean up that evening. Friends also support the event throughout the day, engaging with each other and the community.

- 3) Other volunteer activities include participation in governing boards and administration of Friends.

VII. Communications Guidelines:

The Friends wishes to create a Communications Committee, “to best decide how, when and by whom communications should be sent to our group.” Peg Busse distributed an email invitation to all Friends on March 9, 2026 to join this committee.

VIII. Town Budget and Impact on Friends:

The Friends has a pledge to the library which may be going up this year. These funds support Hall Memorial Library’s various activities such as museum passes, summer programs, and Book Page. Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the library was not a revenue department, with only income coming from overdue books, yet the library is a key facility for the community in many ways. The Friends’ pledge is vital for the library’s continued success.

IX. New Business:

Ellen Bonanno again raised the question of naming and identifying the books from the Book Cellar that are arranged on a table near the front of the library near the Reading Area. Once the name is identified, a banner will be created, and posters and communications focusing on the Friends organization will be displayed. A “catchy” name is desired, that would draw attention and identify the location. Names were mentioned at the December meeting: Book Nook, Book Cellar 2, Book Cellar Extension, Book Cellar Annex, Book Cellar Sequel, Book Cellar Chapter. Ellen will distribute an electronic survey for ideas and voting.

Patti Wendell discussed that she and Sara Roman will be transitioning on May 31, making Sara the Treasurer, and Patti stepping down as Treasurer. Sara wishes to obtain a bookkeeping software for maintaining the books, which would cost a yearly fee of about \$80-\$90 per year. This was approved.

Ann Williams has stepped down from her duties as Assistant Treasurer, Peg Busse has picked up making these deposits.

X. Adjournment:

Stephan Samson closed the meeting at 6:37.

Submitted by:
Susan Eldridge
Secretary, FOL