

Pillsbury Free Library
Special Meeting
To Discuss the Trustee Letter Regarding
Reevaluation as it relates to the Pillsbury Free Library
September 29, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: 5:34 p.m.

PRESENT: Trustees Mike Brown, Michael Simon, Jan Gugliotti, Holly Holmes,
Cassey Greene, Lois Shea, and Dana Myskowski

Library Director Nancy Ladd

ABSENT: Hannah Leigh-Brown, Teresa Hathaway

BACKGROUND

Re: Impact of reevaluation on the library budget

Mike Brown presented his drafted letter addressing the issues raised in the joint meeting of the Budget Committee and the Select Board held on September 18, 2025, further explaining that:

- As Chair of the Budget Committee Mike Cutting pointed out in the minutes that the recent town reevaluation effectively doubles the allotment to the library.
- No PFL Trustees or Staff attended the Sept. 18 meeting.
- The letter, which answers the comments made during the meeting, is an opportunity to lay out our position.
- The allotment to the Pillsbury Free Library equals 1/15th of 1% of the total valuation.
- Mike Cutting pointed out that the entire town valuation went up about 95%.

5:37 Lois Shea entered the meeting

- The reason Pillsbury Free Library is tied to the allotment formula is because the trust lays out clearly that the allotment the town needs to pay is based on that formula.
- There have been some years when the allotment has gone down, and one where it went up by about 50% in the past 40 years.
- The conversation in the Budget Committee/Select Board meeting essentially asked, “What do we need to do about the amount?”
- This letter is the answer: There is nothing we can do. It would be illegal for us, the Board of Trustees, to even negotiate to reduce the the allotment.

THE LAW

The letter lays out the legalities, including:

- The agreement at the 1890 Town Meeting in which the townspeople voted to accept George A. Pillsbury’s generous gift to build a library for the benefit of the people of Warner on the condition that it would be held in trust and the town would support it based on the agreed-to funding formula every year thereafter.
- The following year the New Hampshire Legislature signed off on a chapter law that embraces this agreement, thus legalizing it.

As Mike understands it, this Trust is binding in the town; as Trustees we need to act according to our legal obligations.

- We Trustees also have a duty to the beneficiaries, which are all the patrons and towns' people who are served by the library.
- In addition to the beneficiaries, we have an obligation to Mr. Pillsbury, as the Trustor, and are bound to uphold his wishes of funding the library via the annual formula.
- Therefore, reducing the allotment is contrary to the law.

POSSIBLE REACTIONS

- The Select Board and the Budget Committee may react strongly, which may lead to a legal fight.
- At the September 18 meeting it was proposed that the Town attorney be consulted to see if the Pillsbury Free Library is entitled to double its allotment.
- The committee permitted three people to look into this with the Town attorney (Select Board members Mike Smith and Alfred Hanson, and Budget Committee member James Sherman, according to line 18, page 2 of the Sept. 18 draft minutes).
- If a legal challenge is brought, the Pillsbury Free Library Trustees would need to hire our own attorney.
- There may be pushback since every department in Town is cutting back, except the library.
- The more they push us, the more it will become uncomfortable for us.

Holly asked about the amount of money the Town may need to spend in lawyer's fees, wondering how much they would actually save taxpayers in the process.

Mike noted that while they may try to unravel the Trust and the law governing it, there also exists years of legal framework concerning Trusts that will be harder to overturn.

While our library funding formula is unique to our town in the state, there are other libraries that began with a bequest of a building, land, funds, etc.

Jan asked, who are the stakeholders?

Nancy answered that they are the taxpayers.

Nancy noted that it has been pointed out to her that the increase in the library's budget as a result of reevaluation is approximately half of the total Town increase.

We discussed having someone from the Trustees attend the Select Board meetings and the Budget Committee meetings just in case the Pillsbury Free Library funding is brought up again. Next two Budget Committee meetings are Oct. 16 and 23 at 7 pm. (Note: It was later learned the Pillsbury Free Library is on the Budget Committee agenda for November 20, 2025.)

Dana noted that while the Trustee's response letter is the reason we are here this evening, we are also here to help each other feel more comfortable in our understanding of our legal obligations so that when neighbors ask us about this, we can answer.

Lois thanked Mike Brown for his work on writing the response of the Library Trustees.

EDITING

Lois suggested a few edits that help bring some easier to understand language to parts of the letter, while leaving the legal explanations as is already written. Discussion followed, resulting in edits such as:

- Revisions to the paragraph regarding the Pillsbury Family still visiting the library:
 - Just a few months ago some family visited, proud of their ancestor's legacy.
 - Illustrating it is not a dead Trust since live people still visit.
- Making it clearer that between evaluation cycles the Library's allotment remains nearly steady, meaning that the Library actually often operates at a deficit since there is no consideration for rises in inflation.
- Pointing out that we Trustees are residents and taxpayers who understand the concerns of townspeople about the tax rate and the recent reevaluation.

Dana noted that the Library's Finance Committee and the Building and Grounds Committee suggested that the annual fundraising letter be rewritten so it is no longer asking for donations but instead used as a tool to reach out to the Townspeople about the Library's allotment. Lois agreed to work with Dana and Hannah on the draft letter.

MOTION

Michael Simon made a motion to have the Chair and Treasurer of the Pillsbury Free Library Board of Trustees present the letter (with any minor edits as might be necessary last minute) to the Budget Committee and to the Select Board. Lois Shea seconded. **ALL APPROVED**

MOTION

Holly Holmes motioned to adjourn. Jan Gugliotti seconded. **NONE OBJECTED**

ADJOURN at 6:54 pm

PFLSpecial Meeting Minutes 2025-09-29 FINAL
Submitted by Dana Myskowski