

Friends of the Fiske Free Library (FFFL)

Meeting Minutes

Date: September 2, 2026

Call to Order: 5:20 PM

Adjournment: 6:45 PM

Members Present

- Renee Mayer, President
- John Cloutier, Vice President
- Lisa Gosselin, Secretary
- Lynsey Lacourse, Treasurer
- Jim Allen, Library Administrator
- Elizabeth Cram
- Katie Welsh
- Josh Reyes
- Gary Merchant, Guest

Introductions

Renee welcomed Gary Merchant as a guest and asked everyone to introduce themselves and share the name of the book they are currently reading.

Jim Allen was also introduced as the new Library Administrator. Jim shared that he is happy to be part of the library community and brings a diverse background in education and community library experience. He expressed interest in supporting recurring programs at the library.

1. Financial Report

Current Balance: \$20,982.36

Activity Since Last Meeting

Credits

- Interest: \$0.54
- Stripe: \$0.00
- Deposits: \$0.00

Debits: \$421.05

- Check #189 — Renee reimbursement: \$75.00
- Check #185 — Mariposa: \$346.05

Encumbered Funds

- Digitization: \$5,000.00
- Caterpillar Lab: \$549.00
- Summer Reading: \$350.00
- Center/Cartoon Studies: \$575.00
- Magazines: \$350.00
- Tree: \$350.00

Total Encumbered Funds: \$7,174.00

Available Balance: \$13,808.36

Lynsey emphasized the importance of being good stewards of grant funds received and requested an update on the digitization project.

2. Guest Presentation and Grant Opportunities — Gary Merchant

Gary Merchant introduced himself and asked questions about the FFFL and its organizational structure. The Friends were described as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Gary shared that he serves on the board of the Endowment for Health Grant Foundation and expressed willingness to submit a grant request on behalf of the FFFL.

Renee asked about the foundation's grant proposal process. Gary referred the group to the foundation's website to review its mission and grant priorities and said he would do what he could to support the FFFL's efforts.

Katie noted that the cartoon project may qualify as a health-related need for purposes of a grant application.

Gary also asked questions about the relationship and organizational structure among the library, the City, and the Friends, which was explained to him.

3. Library Administrator Report — Jim Allen

Jim discussed several opportunities and needs at the library.

Wowbrary Subscription

Jim requested funding for a Wowbrary subscription, a service that integrates with the library's catalog to produce a weekly newsletter promoting new library materials, events and programs.

Cost: \$500.00

Motion/Decision: The FFFL voted to fund the Wowbrary subscription.

Other Upcoming Library Needs

Jim also identified several potential future needs:

- A smart TV for presentations
- A museum pass program, with details still being developed

The group expressed enthusiasm about the potential museum pass program.

4. Meet the Candidates Forum

Gary Merchant asked whether the FFFL would consider co-sponsoring a nonpartisan Meet the Candidates forum. He explained that the League of Women Voters would moderate the forum and that other Friends/library organizations have participated in similar events.

The group discussed the proposal and raised questions about the FFFL's role, including concerns regarding the political affiliations of some members of the organization's leadership. Ie, Lisa and John are both running for State Representative.

Josh asked what would be required of the FFFL. The expected responsibilities discussed included event setup and takedown.

Potential venues discussed included:

- River Valley Community College
- Chamber of Commerce
- First Congregational Church

No final venue or event details were established during the meeting. Ultimately it was decided that co-sponsoring this event would not be a good fit for the FFFL at this time.

5. Ice Cream Social / Welcome Event for Jim

The FFFL discussed plans for an upcoming ice cream social to welcome Jim Allen to the library.

Event Objectives

One objective is to encourage community members to register for a library card. Because of the Read to a Dog program and associated staffing and space considerations, attendees will receive information/paperwork to begin the library-card registration process rather than completing the entire process at the event.

Martha is procuring bookmarks that will provide library hours and related information.

Promotion

The event will be promoted through:

- FFFL Facebook
- Library Facebook page
- Cross-promotion on WUC
- Email to FFFL members
- Flyers posted around town by Mark

Elizabeth expressed concerns about the increasing size of the event and the logistics involved. The group discussed the importance of community outreach and agreed that supporting community engagement aligns with the FFFL's mission.

The group agreed that individually packaged ice cream treats would be easier to manage than scooping ice cream.

Logistics and Supplies

- Pop-up tents: Renee, Katie, and FFFL
- Tables: Katie and Lisa
- Coolers: Renee, John, and Lisa
- Bookmarks: Martha
- All officers will work the tables.
- Additional volunteers will be recruited from the membership to work from 4:00–6:00 PM.
- Josh suggested creating a Google sign-up/RSVP form.
- Flyers will include a QR code linking to the sign-up form.

The group discussed purchasing approximately 300 items, along with:

- Hand sanitizer
- Napkins
- Plastic spoons

Renee suggested contacting Walmart and Hannaford for possible donations or discounts. Elizabeth will contact the stores.

6. Thrill the World

Information has been distributed regarding participation in Thrill the World.

Mary will hold an informational meeting on September 10, 2026, for those interested in participating.

7. Appeal Letter

A meeting date of 9/21'26, has been established to complete and refine the FFFL appeal letter. The committee will meet at the library from 5:30 to 7:00.

8. Chili Cook-Off / Fall Festival

Date: October 3, 2026

The FFFL will participate in the event but will not prepare chili.

Planned activities for the FFFL booth include:

- Selling books
- Selling baked goods
- Promoting FFFL membership
- Featuring cookbooks currently in inventory
- Highlighting upcoming library events
- Promoting the upcoming Pie Sale

Elizabeth will ask about having the Friends and Democrats situated at the event.

Renee will appeal to members for volunteers to staff the booth.

The group agreed that the FFFL will pay for purchases if the total cost is under \$100.

9. Annual Pie Sale

Date: Tuesday, November 24, 2026

The October meeting will focus on organizing the Pie Sale, including:

- Determining how orders will be collected
 - Recruiting volunteers to bake
 - Establishing other event logistics
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10. Grant Ideas and Opportunities

The group discussed several potential grant opportunities and project ideas, including:

- Library of America
- Affordable books for children
- Hygiene kits, where the primary cost is shipping
- Cogswell Foundation
- Digitization project

Further research will be conducted into grant eligibility and application requirements.

12. Upcoming Dates

- September 10, 2026: Thrill the World informational meeting
 - October 3, 2026: Chili Cook-Off / Fall Festival
 - October 7, 2026 Meeting: Pie Sale planning
 - November 4, 2026 Monthly FFFL meeting
 - November 24, 2026: Annual Pie Sale
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Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa R Gosselin