

Director's Report

March 2026

Respectfully submitted by Val Finkel on April 5, 2026.

Joys and successes:

- We're very grateful to Hadley Looman for spearheading our new Seed Library.
- Many thanks to Chelsea, who continues to volunteer to offer our services at the Franklin County jail.

Building & Grounds:

- Following the Cornerstone Committee meeting on February 18, we communicated to Stephen Larocque that the Committee decided it does not want to explore the option for an accessible access pathway from the street, and not to ask that Stephen broach the question of whether an accessible access pathway from the street is required based on the addition of the accessible sidewalk in front of the building. We decided this because of Stephen's sense that this point does not matter to the MAAB based on their communication with him, and also that broaching the question may invite an amount of scrutiny on this issue from the MAAB that would be unhelpful.
 - Stephen then made another approach to the MAAB for further clarification on whether the proposed work would apply to the MAAB's 30% threshold that triggers full ADA compliance requirements. His read is that unfortunately, the MAAB will consider the proposed work as applicable to the threshold - and since the cost of the work is very likely to exceed that threshold, that will trigger the compliance requirements, which means we'll need to look into applying for relief again if we want to avoid updating the bathroom. Stephen also reports on that front that it seems the MAAB will require a new application for a variance on work to bring the bathroom into compliance, rather than extending the current variance relief we have from 1997. His recommendation is to proceed with the project as originally conceived and once we identify estimated costs for the various aspects, we will be in a better position to determine their relative costs vis-a-vis the MAAB thresholds.

- Stephen also suggests that rather than hold a public forum on the proposed work, we could gather public input internally over a longer period of time and feed it back to his team. He observes, and I agree, that it might be a more sustained way of gathering input with library users and the community rather than a one-shot opportunity. In this scenario, his team would prepare boards based on our most recent effort, and we could display them in the library and possibly at other locations in Colrain.
- We had Bradley Bardwell come to fix the arcing outlet on the electrical panel in the basement on March 23.
- Northeast IT moved our workstation to the old circulation desk on March 11. We then moved the magazine shelf to the kids' room to house all the newly displaced makerspace supplies and Ms. Betty's monthly craft, moved the table we'd been using as our desk next to the old (now current) circ desk and set it up as a printing and tea station, and moved the supplies on the shelves into that table's storage. We also brought the round table up from the basement to use for displays in the entry area. Patrons have been enthusiastic about the changes.
- We moved several pieces of furniture in the kids' room in order to comply with ADA wheelchair accommodation guidelines.
- Aaron Foster is working on erecting the stage. It will be ready in time for Earth Day.
- Aaron will check in with Taylor Dover of Dover Signs, and barring any complications plans to work on installing that in the location we specify after finishing up with the stage.

Programs and services:

- Our display for Women's History Month for March continued to have slightly more engagement than February's, but still not significant. We will consider ways to better highlight Black History Month and Women's History Month next year. We have changed to a display for Arab American History Month for April, which has seen some action already.
- We held the Seed Library debut on Friday, March 20, which featured a seed swap, a seed sorting demo and station to try out seed sifting screens, and a few seed-based snacks. We had great attendance, including several people who haven't used the library recently. There's also been significant sustained interest in the Seed Library from patrons who heard about it or noticed it while visiting the library.
- We held Part 2 of the Sourdough Class from Hearthstone Artisan Bakery on Monday, March 30, and it was very well attended. Participants were mostly new faces who had not attended Part 1, so Nicholas pivoted to a repeat of Part 1 with some new info at the

end, with some extended Q-&-A time. One participant from Part 1 brought a sourdough she'd baked, and the class enjoyed it alongside a small cheese board.

- Our "Knit with Friends" program, led by Jan Jones, continues on Wednesday evenings at 6:00. The past three Wednesdays, attendance has been well bolstered by sewists, sergers, and support volunteers who crafted many reusable bags for Colrain Food For All.
- The Cyber-Seniors Tech Help program has had at least one booking every, is again booked for the next week, and patrons have continued to let us know how much they get out of the sessions with Sasha.
- The sixth meeting of the new hybrid format Carol Purington Poetry Collective was held on 4/3, with four in attendance in person and two attending virtually. Plans are in the works to schedule a slam poetry team to perform at one of the upcoming meetings.
- The Patron Picks displays continue to be popular. April's displays are by Ollie Giard and Hadley Looman.
- Story Time attendance has stalled, with no kids joining us at the last three. We hope that added programming on Fridays will spur attendance.
- We've scheduled a Read to Lamby session to follow this week's Story Time so kids can stay after to read to Lamby if they want. We hope to offer this program once a month after Story Time.
- We've started a Friday After School Playgroup for every Friday afternoon from 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM.
- Our Earth Day Celebration is scheduled for Saturday, April 18 from 11 AM - 1 PM. We will feature the Colrain Pollinator Group, the Colrain Water Dancers, Tesia Elani with her paper flower craft, Davis Bates with stories and songs, supplies for Spruce It Up Colrain 5.0, and pizza from a local restaurant.
- We got in touch with Drew Lopenzina, and planning for William Apess Day is underway.
- Candidates' Night will be on April 29 at 6 PM. We will plan to stream the event live on our Facebook page.
- We will have a live animal program for April vacation on April 22 from 2 PM - 3 PM from Riverside Reptiles Education Center.
- We will also hold a tech workshop on April 22 at 4:30 PM. This workshop will be Protecting Your Personal Info Online (Including Password Management), and will be led by Rich Vaden of the Alliance for Digital Equity and United Way of Franklin and Hampshire Region.

Administration:

- We reviewed and updated the Employee Emergency Procedures Manual with Chief Lannon. Chief Lannon also identified a number of recommended action items for the building, among them installing a safe lock on the bathroom door, installing a lit exit sign, and replacing the water-based fire extinguishers with fire retardant-based models.
- Cheli Mennella and I attended a webinar on Open Meeting Law on March 20. My takeaway is to make sure to approach all instances when there is a quorum of Trustees or of a subcommittee carefully, with an eye to following OML procedures and being transparent. I found the webinar reassuring in that it affirmed that we already take the recommended approach, practice following OML procedures to the best of our ability, and take steps to educate ourselves further in this area.
- We submitted GML's Annual Report for 2025 to the town on March 22.
- We scheduled a Governance Committee meeting for April 14. Planned topics of discussion will include a Building Use Policy, a statement on the Land Acknowledgement, a Tech Help policy, and further discussion of Open Meeting Law.
- We are working on scheduling a Strategic Planning Committee meeting. We plan to review the results of the Community Forum and discuss next steps.
- Val is working on completing the BLT courses, and is on Part 2 of all four. An additional one-month extension for their completion is requested.
- We submitted an application to ARSL for their Sustainable & Resilient New England Libraries grants for \$10,000 to go toward the door's power arm installation on March 10.
- We attended a Finance Committee meeting on March 12 to go over the library's FY27 budget. The Town Administrator let us know there that the town's budget needed to constrict further than the department budgets submitted up to that point had managed. She suggested three lines in the library budget to decrease: Programs, Cleaning, and Professional Development. We reviewed the budget and made cuts to all these lines: Programs is down to \$2,500 from our original request of \$3,000, Cleaning is down to \$1,780 from our original request of \$3,000, and Professional Development is down to \$1,500 from our original request of \$2,000. We also made an adjustment of the Building Heat line down to \$3,000 from our original request of \$4,430. We are confident that we can sustain an adequate level of operations and a high level of service even with these cuts.
 - We also requested and received approval for a slight increase to the Wages line in order to give Dominique a merit-based raise beyond the town's recommended increase, which had limited raises to the FY2027 cost of living adjustment.
 - With these adjustments, the Town Admin is confident the Finance Committee will vote to approve the library budget.

- I attended an orientation session at the Franklin County Sheriff's Office on March 31.
- I attended a meeting of Mass in Motion on April 6.