

Board Meeting Minutes

Croton Free Library

June 26, 2025

Minutes of the Ad Hoc Board Meeting of the Croton Free Library, held on Thursday, June 26, 2025 at The Croton Free Library, Ottinger Room, 171 Cleveland Drive, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520.

PRESENT

Library Board of Trustees:

Susan Ranis, *President* (29)
Justin Johnson, *Vice-President* (28)
Barry Feinberg, *Treasurer* (28)
Bethany Basile (27)
Adam Decker (28)
Leslie Ellis (29)
Kate Fabian (28)
Mayla Hsu (26)
Laura Jaeger (26)
Margaret Mahoney (26)
Marianne Merola (27)

Library Director: Jesse Bourdon

GUESTS

Cassandra Thayer, *Changing Our World*

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:33pm.

CHANGING OUR WORLD'S CAMPAIGN PLANNING REPORT

The board met to discuss *Changing Our World's* Campaign Planning Report, as well as to confirm our next steps in the library's relationship with *Changing Our World*.

Cassandra Thayer presented her report from the first few months of engagement with our library.

A Case for Support was created from a questionnaire and input from the Library Director, Jesse Bourdon and the Board President, Susan Ranis.

This Case for Support was sent out to select members of our community who have significant wealth and a demonstrated history of supporting philanthropic causes.

She was able to set up nine interviews with candidates interviewees who have a strong history of not only library patronage, but a strong relationship with us as demonstrated by previous donations . The dozen or so individuals to whom we sent the Case for Support who do not have a history of financial support for the library did not reply to our inquiry.

Out of the nine interviews that were completed, interviewees were generally positive about the case; all believed that the library is an essential community resource and that the revitalization effort is essential. The main concern of the individuals was the current suggested price tag of the project, which some believed is a reach and would not be able to be realized financially. Infrastructure improvements were recognized as important and needed.

For a campaign to be successful, it must set an achievable financial goal. We cannot fall extremely short of our initial ask. The money raised by our initial two stages of fundraising (all major gifts) should total 90% of the anticipated project cost before the final stage of fundraising, approaching the entire community.

Next recommended steps are as follows:

Develop the Case for Support. Cassandra suggested we extend our arrangements with her for a further 6-months, in order to prepare us for a 15-month campaign period.

Our architectural plans will need to be revised to create a plan that is in-line with our anticipated fundraising abilities. Ideally, this will be designed with a tiered approach - 3 different plans, depending on donations received. A basic plan to cover the necessary updates for health and safety reasons (Infrastructure), and then a next tier for desired design renovations, and a third tier for further design updates if there is the funding.

It was noted that we must continue our communications with our strongest community supporters to continue engagement with supporters who will be significant contributors to our success. .

Our next steps with community outreach would include this further engagement with people who have noted a likely commitment. Creating some naming opportunities for larger donations was recommended. It was also recommended that we ask for pledge commitments over 3 years, instead of only one-time donations. This may help increase the funding we are able to raise. We will need to start tracking all commitments as soon as we begin.

It will be important to recruit a campaign committee. We will need campaign volunteer leaders who are well-known in our community and have connections/influence. Jesse Bourdon is anticipated to spend significant time managing solicitations, but having strong campaign leadership is the best starting point for growing our support base. Board members will also be involved. The time commitment for the leadership groups may not be as large as expected.

Our campaign prospects will form a web - the initial interviewees will be our starting point, and the next level will likely be contacts of these donation leaders. At each level we will continue to ask contacts who else they believe would be a good match to our project.

It was noted that the number of total library donors from our town is under 300 people, which includes the full list of donors to our annual appeal over the past several years. We must continue with our outreach efforts to build a stronger base of financial support.

Regarding foundations, Cassandra noted that based on our case study, without a personal connection to a foundation, we do not anticipate large donations from foundations. Croton is not a town with many large businesses, and there would need to be a tight connection within our community from said foundation.

For grants, we will consider state and government grants, and applications will be managed by the Board.

The next annual appeal will be sent out in November 2025. Cassandra offered to review the letter, but at this time advised that the fundraising letter should continue as usual, which will fund our library's needs separately from what we would be fundraising for our capital campaign.

After meeting with Cassandra, the board discussed extending our contract with *Changing Our World* for another 6-months. After this period, we would have the tools and information to continue fundraising. Although Board activities typically pause during the summer months, we will continue activities related to the capital campaign in order to apply the resources developed by *Changing Our World* in a timely fashion. .

We asked to receive a contract from *Changing Our World* within the next few weeks so we have enough time to review the contract to avoid a pause in activities.

The library Board agreed on the following next steps:

- Reach out to Cassandra to confirm she will send an additional contract within the next week or two
- Reach out to Paul Mays to set up a meeting, and request an additional contract for creating updated project designs
- Form a committee to help recruit the head of the project's leadership committee
- Begin investigating applying for grants

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE JESSE TO SPEND UP TO \$10,000 FOR AN UPDATED PROJECT DESIGN FROM ARCHITECT PAUL MAYS

A motion was made by Kate Fabian to authorize Jesse to spend up to \$10,000 with Paul Mays to move forward with an updated design based on our current budget. Leslie Ellis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Jesse will be in touch with Paul Mays this week to set up possible next steps. A subcommittee meeting of Susan, Justin, Leslie, Barry and Margaret will be included in design plan discussions with Paul Mays.

The board will meet at the Croton Free Library on Monday, July 28th, 2025 to review the new contracts sent by *Changing Our World* and Paul Mays, and (if ready), review the updated project design from Paul Mays. We will also hear any updates from the Case Study project and summer plans for further communication with our lead fundraising prospects.

***PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Members of the public may address the Board of Trustees only during the Public Comment portion of the board meeting and must identify themselves by name when they begin to speak. Comments are limited to no more than three minutes per person. The number of public comments per board meeting may be limited due to time constraints.*

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Kate Fabian and seconded by Laura Jaeger to adjourn the meeting. This motion being unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:36pm.

Respectfully submitted by Laura Jaeger, secretary