



## Library Trustee

### **GENERAL FUNCTION:**

Trustees of FSPL are appointed by the Franklin City School Board. They are expected to participate as a member of the library board to protect and advance the interests of the broader community by effectively governing the operations and promoting the development of the local public library.

### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

- serious commitment to being a library trustee
- serious commitment to the provision of library services within your community
- ability to attend regularly scheduled board meetings and be an active member of the library board
- willingness to become familiar with Ohio library law, standards for libraries, and principles and practices for ensuring that the library provides broad and equitable access to the knowledge, information, and diversity of ideas needed by community residents
- commitment to freedom of expression and inquiry for all people

### **PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES:**

#### **1. Prepare for and attend regular board meetings.**

The library board meeting will be the primary opportunity for you to contribute to the development the library. To get the most from the meetings, and to be able to share your skills and knowledge, you must attend each meeting after having read and thought about the issues and topics that will be discussed. It is important that the full board meet on a monthly basis to conduct business.

#### **2. Work with the municipal governing body to obtain adequate library funding. Assist in the review and approval of the annual budget and monthly expenditures as presented by the library director.**

One of the library board's most important responsibilities is to work to obtain adequate financial support so that the library can provide meaningful programs and services for the community. As a trustee, your focus should be on those services and what is required to provide them to the public in the most beneficial manner. Once a determination is made as to how much money will be needed, the request must be carefully and accurately prepared and then presented to the appropriate government party. Trustees should attend the meetings when budget requests are presented so that they can answer questions about need and account for how previous appropriations benefited the citizens and the community. After funding has been approved, the library board must monitor the use of these public funds to assure that they provide what was intended.

#### **3. Participate in the development and approval of library policies. Review policies on a regular, systematic schedule.**

A library cannot operate successfully without policies that assure consistent and equitable treatment of all users while at the same time protecting the resources of the institution. Developing and adopting these policies is another important responsibility of a library board. Each trustee acts as a contact with other members of the community and has the chance to hear about concerns or desires relating to the library. The comments you receive from the public can help you and the other members of the board address the community standards through thoughtful and fair policies.

#### **4. Supporting the needs of the Library Director.**

There may come a time when the library board must hire a new director. If this is required, deciding how the process is conducted and who is finally selected will be among the most important decisions a library board will ever make. A library director will have a significant impact on the tone and quality of library service. The board will consult with the director on all matters concerning the library, and the director will also consult with the board on all matters of Library Policy.

**5. Study the needs and interests of the community and see that they are addressed, as appropriate, by the library.**

As a community liaison, you are in a unique position to survey the community, learn of its needs and wants, and include those interests in discussions relating to library development. This opportunity and responsibility is satisfied at an informal and formal level. Informally, just being visible and accessible as a library trustee and communicating with your neighbors will allow you to gather important information about how the library can help its patrons. In a more formal fashion, the library board may decide to conduct a community survey and/or call together a focus group to help it pinpoint important issues. Active participation by each trustee at both levels will be invaluable to the library's progress.

**6. Act as an advocate for the library through contacts with civic groups and public officials.**

Your contacts on behalf of the library with public officials from the municipality, the county, and the state will advance the cause of your institution. In the same way, building rapport and networking with civic and service groups will advance your cause with your patrons and potential individual supporters. This is an area where an individual trustee can directly help the library in a significant way.

**8. Become familiar with principles and issues relating to intellectual freedom and equitable provision of public library services.**

Public libraries in our country and state are founded on the principle that for a democracy to function properly it must have an educated electorate, and to be educated, people must have free access to the broadest possible array of information. Libraries, along with other institutions such as the press and the judiciary, have long stood as protectors of the individual's right to have the information that he or she requires to thrive in and contribute to society. Regardless of these basic rights, though, sometimes people seek to limit the access of others to certain ideas and presentations. It is a responsibility of your library board, and each member of that board, to make a commitment to the community's freedom of inquiry and expression, and to be prepared to address calmly and respectfully the challenges that may come before you. While the board must have a carefully devised process for addressing challenges and speak in a single voice on censorship issues to the public and the media, it is up to you as a trustee to take the time to become informed about the principles and issues. While it is said that a public library without something to offend everyone is not doing its job, it is not the job of the library board to offend, but rather to defend the rights of each citizen to search for the truth through his or her own journey. The nation's and the library's future relies on unrestricted access to information.

**9. Assist in the formulation and adoption of a long-range plan for the library. Periodically review and revise long-range plan.**

Working through the budget process, developing policies, and studying community needs and making contacts with individuals and groups prepares you for the valuable process of formulating plans for the library's future. Your library may be accomplishing great things already, but as the world changes, the library must change with it. Trustees, as the citizen representatives with detailed information about how the library functions, are in an ideal position to assist with planning. Your important role in planning will be to investigate, along with the library director, different planning options and then decide on the most appropriate process for your library. If additional resources are required to fulfill the plans, you can also help to establish the amount and identify sources. Finally, once proposed plans are approved by the full board, you can continue to participate by being active in the annual review of the library's plan, during which you can suggest revisions that will keep the library on course. A plan is a means to an end, and it will be the active participation of each trustee in the planning process that will offer ongoing strength and insight to the library board as it pursues its responsibility for library development.