



Geneva Public Library Board of Trustees Description and Duties Statement

The mission of Geneva Public Library is to provide a comfortable and welcoming place for the creation and encouragement of young readers; for access to the tools needed to find and evaluate the information you need; and to facilitate the discovery of materials that will stimulate your imagination.

Geneva Public Library Board members are elected by the residents of the Geneva City School District, usually in May, and appointed for a five-year term, beginning on July 1.

A trustee is a person to whom property is legally committed in trust. A Library trustee's commitment is to both the physical property and resources of the Library and the services it provides. The Library Board has the final responsibility to see that its Library provides the best possible service to its community. In the words of New York's Not-for-Profit Corporation Law, *"Directors and officers shall discharge the duties of their respective positions in good faith and with that degree of diligence, care and skill which ordinarily prudent men would exercise under similar circumstances in like positions."*

The duties of trustees are few in number but broad in scope. They are:

- select and hire a qualified Library director;
- secure adequate funding for the Library's service program;
- exercise fiduciary responsibility for the use of public and private funds;
- adopt policies and rules regarding Library governance and use;
- regularly plan and evaluate the Library's service program;
- promote the Library in the local community and in society in general;
- conduct the business of the Library in an open and ethical manner in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Everything the Library Board does either falls within one of these duties or is done in support of them. A trustee makes a personal commitment to contribute the time and energy to faithfully carry out these duties. Although the Board is legally responsible for all aspects of the institution, it is unreasonable to expect a trustee or the whole Board to be expert on every activity or concern that affects the Library. Sometimes the most important thing a Board can do is acknowledge that it does not have enough information or resources, and ask for help.

It is also important to remember that the Board's authority, while broad, is a collective authority. Trustees must work cooperatively with other members of the Board; no trustee can speak or act for the Board unless specifically empowered to do so.

Monthly Board meetings are held on the last Wednesday of the month at 5 p.m., at the Geneva Public Library. They are advertised in compliance with the Open Meetings Law and are considered public meetings. There are 12 meetings a year. In addition, each board member serves on a committee (Building, Personnel, Finance, Long Range Planning, or Policy Review). Committee meetings occur as needed.

Board officers include President, Vice-President, and Secretary. Library Board members are expected to attend every meeting. Because it is important that trustees be well-informed about Library issues and concerns, reading material is sent to each during the week of the meeting. A typical packet includes proposed meeting agenda, minutes of the last meeting, financial reports, staff reports, committee reports, and old and new business items.

Checklist for Effective Library Trustee:

- Be active and informed about Library matters; ask questions of the director and study the issues; • Attend all Board meetings and participate;
- Question issues until you understand. Don't be reluctant to vote no on a proposal that you don't understand or are uncomfortable about;
- Be a team player and treat your fellow Board members with respect;
- Support Board decisions even if you disagree. A democracy works by the rule of the majority. Seek reconsideration in the future if circumstances change;
- Understand the roles of all involved – the Board, director, staff, Foundation for Geneva Public Library, Friends, patrons, etc.;
- Don't go along with conflicts of interest by any Board member. A trustee or family member may not receive any gain, tangible or intangible, in dealing with the Library;
- Advocate for the Library in every manner possible;
- Stand up for decent salaries for Library staff. Good pay is a measure of respect for the individual and for the institution;
- Respect the role of the director and support the director's administrative decisions; • It's about the Library, not about you. Your job is to provide the highest quality Library service possible for your community.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on April 27, 2016