

Good morning, My name is Laura Fetterolf and I am here today on behalf of the Trustees of the Cornwall Public Library in Cornwall, VT to talk with you about our staffing challenges and successes in Cornwall. Cornwall is a small town of 1,207 people in the middle of Addison County. Our library is “staffed” entirely with volunteers - the seven trustees of the library. And the reason this is possible is the library is situated within the Cornwall Town Hall - so the library is open Tuesday - Friday from 9am-5pm, and the town clerk is also a library trustee.

The reason we’re all volunteers is that we are granted \$4000 each year from the Town of Cornwall at Town Meeting, which goes to pay for library materials. We do receive some gifts and donations, and we do run a very profitable booksale each fall, but our total budget is still somewhere around \$6000. We don’t pay rent, or utilities, though we do pay for a dedicated phone line for the library’s computer. When we have needed “big ticket items” - an entire set of bookshelves for the space in the newly renovated Town Hall, or a new computer for our catalog and self-checkout, we have done a public appeal and our townspeople have been generous. But we definitely do not have the funds to pay the salary of a trained librarian.

To compensate, the trustees have portioned off some of the day-to-day library operations. We have one trustee who does a fantastic job ordering and cataloging materials. We have another trustee, our town clerk, who helps patrons with books they want to find or request, or with ILLs - in between her town clerk duties. She also makes sure the bills are paid. One trustee organizes the yearly weeding to get the shelves cleared for new books. The other four trustees help with organizing the book sale, and lending their opinion and advice on any matters that come up. Our goal is to come as close as we can to meeting the state standards for Public Libraries.

1. We do provide free, equal & easy public access to services - as we are located within the town hall, so we are handicapped accessible.
2. The standards state “receives at least \$1 per capita of local tax support” - Cornwall is a town of 1,207 per the 2020 census. We receive \$4000 from tax support, which means we receive \$3.90 per capita. We expend our total support at just over \$5 per capita
3. We do cooperate with other libraries and communities agencies - we participate in ILL at no cost to our patrons, and we have partnered with the local Boy Scout Troop and the Odyssey of the Mind to provide materials and fund-raising support.

Thus far, all of that has gone pretty well. We have devoted patrons and healthy circulation numbers.

In speaking with my fellow trustees, one issue that we felt was our greatest challenge is our lack of a designated leader, like a library director, because no one has the time to do that in a volunteer capacity. We have no long term or long range plans. We plan for the next 6 months or so. We’re still in the process of getting our policies written, and our mission statement crafted. We are definitely a work that is constantly in progress.

Over the years, we have heard the suggestion now and then that we close the library or try to become part of Ilsley Library. (In full disclosure, I'm a librarian at Ilsley. Ilsley is a wonderful library, the librarians are fantastic, the collection is amazing, the trustees are wonderful.) But we have had much input that most of our patrons do not want that. Our patrons don't want to become a suburb of Middlebury. Our town school has been consolidated into the surrounding district, and we have lost much of the say in how our school is run. And as it stands right now, our school might one of the schools forcibly closed by the district. When and if that happens, our library will be the last bit of Cornwall community space. Our library is our last remaining free community space in our town, the only space in town where there is any opportunity for intergenerational interaction.

So, the trustees keep working hard, doing our very best with what we've got, striving to ensure Cornwall library continues on into the future.