

Setting the Record Straight: The Library Trustees and the Friends Organization

The Middleborough Public Library Board of Trustees is committed to transparency, accountability, and the best interests of the library, its patrons, and its staff.

Recent public discussion about the relationship between the Board of Library Trustees and the Friends of the Middleborough Public Library has lacked important context. To understand how we arrived at the current situation, it is helpful to review the timeline and the decisions made by all parties.

The Original Agreement: In January 2021, the Trustees and the Friends entered into an operating agreement to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expectations. The agreement granted the Friends broad and exclusive privileges within the library, including dedicated space for the *Ex Libris* bookstore and permission to conduct fundraising activities inside the building. Some of these activities took place outside regular library hours and resulted in additional operational costs that were not reimbursed. No other nonprofit organization was afforded similar privileges. The agreement functioned much like a landlord-tenant contract and was intended to protect the Town, the library, and the Friends organization.

Termination of the Agreement: On September 18, 2024, the Friends' Board terminated the operating agreement effective immediately, despite a required 60-day notice period. Along with the termination, they submitted a list of expectations that the Trustees viewed as demands undermining library governance. Rather than immediately revoking privileges, the Trustees honored the 60-day notice and sought dialogue. The Trustees invited the Friends to attend their November 18, 2024, meeting to discuss next steps. The Friends declined due to scheduling conflicts.

It should be noted that the Friends were not “evicted” from their bookstore. With the termination of the operating agreement the Friends surrendered the privileges granted to them, including the ability to occupy the space and operate *Ex Libris*. The store was temporarily closed but reopened when a separate agreement between the Friends and the Trustees, for just the bookstore, was entered. That agreement expired in September of 2025.

Attempts to Move Forward: At the request of the Town Manager and Select Board Chair, all parties met on December 5, 2024. During that meeting, there was a verbal agreement to pursue a revised operating agreement, using the prior agreement as a starting point. Each group agreed to appoint a three-person negotiation team and reconvene after the holidays.

On January 3, 2025, the Library Director attempted to schedule that meeting. Days later, the Friends' Board informed the Town Manager and Select Board Chair that they did not intend to enter into any contract or operating agreement with the Trustees.

Governance Concerns: In a December 2024 email, the Friends announced a renewed membership drive for 2025. They placed applications and posters in the Library urging people to join. They then abruptly halted the drive and closed membership. An annual meeting scheduled for March 13, 2025, was postponed to September. The Friends cited internally inconsistent bylaws, advice from legal counsel, and the fact that their bylaws were not on file with the Massachusetts Attorney General. Given these acknowledged governance issues, the Trustees concluded that further negotiations would be unproductive until the Friends resolved their internal compliance matters.

The Friends have restated their Articles of Organization to eliminate their primary purpose of supporting the library, adopted a broader mission that no longer obligates them to provide library funding, and eliminated community membership, involvement, and voting rights. Furthermore, the Friends' leadership refused to communicate directly with the former Library Director and the Library Trustees, creating an untenable management environment.

Attacks on Library Leadership: We categorically reject the Friends' public labeling of former Director Randy Gagne's professional input as malicious or false. Mr. Gagne served with the highest level of professionalism, and the Trustees view his December 2025 resignation, driven by an environment where conflict management overshadowed library management, as a profound loss for Middleborough.

The Open Meeting Law Complaint: FMPL filed a 20-page Open Meeting Law complaint alleging inflammatory statements by BOLT. The Town's legal counsel has formally responded to the Attorney General, clarifying that these allegations are legally and factually incorrect, as the Board's discussions regarding the Friends' corporate governance flowed naturally from posted agenda items. The Attorney General has now formally closed the complaint.

FMPL Trademark Application: The Library Trustees are deeply troubled by the FMPL's recent attempts to federally trademark the library's name, a move that attempts to legally claim the identity of a 121-year-old municipal institution as their own. An identity that the Trustees have formally stated that the FMPL does not have a legal right to use.

Where Things Stand: The Friends of the Middleborough Public Library have no affiliation with the library. We encourage patrons to shop in our *Book Cellar* or donate directly to the

Middleborough Public Library at 102 North Main Street to ensure your contributions support our collections and programs.

We thank the community for its support as we look forward to hiring a new Director and continuing the services and programs residents have come to know and love at Middleborough's public library.

Related Public Documents

- [4-26-1986 FMPL Articles of Organization.pdf](#)
- [5-21-1987 FMPL Articles Amendment.pdf](#)
- [6-2025 Articles of Incorporation \(Friends of the Middleboro Public Library\).pdf](#)
- [6-2025 By-Laws of the Friends of the Middleboro Public Library.pdf](#)
- [9-2017 MFPL By-Laws v09-2017.pdf](#)
- [12-3-2025 Friends of the Middleborough Public Library, Inc. Trademark Application](#)