

**Sunset Advisory Commission  
Board and Commission Review  
July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019**

**Vermont State Board of Libraries Review**

The Commission reviews every State board and commission and takes testimony regarding whether each board or commission should continue to operate or be eliminated and whether the powers and duties of any board or commission should be revised. Each board and commission has the burden of justifying its continued operation.

The Commission also reviews whether members of a board or commission should be entitled to a per diem and, if so, the amount of that per diem.

In testifying before the Commission, you should be able to provide the following information:

- 1. In general, how often does the board and commission meet? Provide specific information on how often the board or commission has met in the past two fiscal years. Provide information on where agendas and minutes of meetings can be found.**

The State Board of Libraries, at a minimum, meets quarterly: January, April, July and October. The January meeting is the annual organizational meeting for the year. Special meetings can be held as need be, and the board occasionally has had subcommittees that have met to discuss pertinent issues between board meetings. Agendas and minutes can be found on the Department of Libraries website:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/about\\_us/board](https://libraries.vermont.gov/about_us/board)

- 2. Provide the names of members of the board or commission, their term length and expiration, their appointing authority, and the amount of any per diem they receive.**

Members

- Bruce Post, Essex Junction - **Chair**
- Deborah Granquist, Weston - **Vice Chair**
- Jason Broughton, State Librarian - **Secretary**
- Josh Fitzhugh, Berlin
- Maxie Ewins, Shelburne
- Tom Frank, Milton
- Rebekah Irwin, Middlebury
- Linda Saarinjoki, Weston

Members are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Vermont State Senate. An individual term is four years. No member may serve more than two terms, except that a member can be appointed to an unexpired term that does not count against the two-term limitation. Members receive a fifty-dollar *per diem* plus mileage for each meeting.

**3. Provide an overview of the board or commission's purpose.**

The board has two statutory functions: 1. an advisory capacity to the State Librarian; and 2. is the designated *“State agency to name geographic locations, including mountains, streams, lakes, and ponds, upon petition signed by not less than 25 interested persons or by petition of an administrative department of the State.”* The Secretary of Administration is tasked with consulting with the board in the appointment of the State Librarian.

**4. Is that purpose still needed? What would happen if the board or commission no longer fulfilled that purpose?**

As a preamble to answering, this comment was submitted by one of the board's longtime members: “For me, one of the real reasons for having such a board is to demonstrate a recognition by the state of the importance of libraries for a free and democratic society and the commitment from the state to the continuance, betterment and future of those libraries.”

Nothing is forever, but the Board of Libraries is an important asset to the State Librarian, particularly as the Department of Libraries has seen significant reductions in staff and funding. Board members can provide their perspective on how the Department can maximize its role with reduced resources. Additionally, as citizens, most with local library experience, the board can be a resource for local, school and academic libraries to discuss in common statewide library-related issues.

**5. How well is the board or commission performing in executing that purpose? What evidence can you provide to substantiate that performance?**

- As the Legislature and the Administration proposed significant reductions in funding and staff for the Department of Libraries, the board participated in an extensive review of state library models in other states. In April 2016, the board conducted video meetings with state librarians in Illinois, Oregon and Idaho, where state libraries incurred profound reductions in funding that necessitated changes in their departments' mission. The board's work informed the development and implementation of the so-called Himmel-Wilson report on new strategic directions for the Vermont Department of Libraries. See: <https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/AboutUs/Board/04-12-2016%20Draft%20Minutes%20BOL%20Meeting.pdf>
- Carrying out its geographic naming authority, the board participated in several important naming decisions. One included preserving the name for Mount Ascutney and another involved defeating the naming of a peak in Groton. In the latter case, the board found that the proposal was largely motivated by political/policy purpose. In Windham County, the board named several water features and hills. The board

was told by ANR staff that such naming of geographic features is helpful in allowing state agencies to carry out their regulatory tasks.

- The board conducted three hearings on a proposal to change the name of the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award. The board voted unanimously to recommend a name change to the State Librarian.
- Board members provided key advice to the Secretary of Administration in the appointment of the two most recent state librarians. This included screening applicants.

**6. If the purpose is still needed, can State government be more effective and efficient if the purpose was executed in a different manner?**

A popular, old adage is “There’s more than one way to skin a cat.” Obviously, the board’s functions can be carried out in different ways. The question remains: what constitutes effectiveness and efficiency and who is the arbiter of judging effectiveness and efficiency. Members of the present board include a former director of the state’s largest local library, trustees of local library boards, an academic librarian experienced in digital sources of information and archives, an individual actively involved in the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and knowledgeable in assistive technologies for children and adults with disabilities and a former U.S. Senate staffer who worked on library issues at the federal level. Eschewing modesty, that is a considerable amount of brainpower and experience available to the Department of Libraries for a modest fiscal cost, certainly much less than the state might pay an independent consultant.

**7. If the purpose is still needed, do any of your board or commission’s functions overlap or duplicate those of another State board or commission or federal or State agency? If so, is your board or commission still the best entity to fulfill the purpose?**

In advising the State Librarian, the Board of Libraries is distinctive, and the best positioned to provide this value-added service to the State of Vermont. Regarding geographic naming, the board’s authority to name transportation features was reassigned to the State Transportation Board. The federal government has an interagency Board of Geographic Naming, but the BGN relies on state-based entities as much as possible to initiate geographic naming petitions. Vermont evidently has one of the most effective state naming processes.

**8. Does the board or commission’s enabling law to continue to correctly reflect the purpose and activities of the board or commission?**

Yes.

**9. Provide a list of the board and commission's last fiscal year expenditures including staffing costs. How are these funded?**

The State Board of Libraries is funded through General Funds (GF). Members receive a fifty-dollar *per diem* plus mileage for each meeting.

\$701.94 for time period 7/1/2018 - 6/30/2019, this does not include Department of Libraries staffing costs.

Employees of the Department that assist with work for the State Board of Libraries

- State Librarian, Executive Secretary to the State Librarian, Grants & Contracts Administrator, Government Services Librarian.

**10. Is the board or commission required by law to prepare any reports or studies for the Legislature, the Governor, or any State agency or officer? If so, have those reports or studies been produced? Does the board or commission have ongoing reporting obligations?**

No.

**11. How would you measure the performance of the board or commission?**

Please see the answers to questions 5 and 6.