

OVERVIEW OF OCPL BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESPONSIBILITIES 05/03/2022

This is an overview of the responsibilities of a member of the Onondaga County Public Library Board of Trustees and is meant to help a prospective Board member understand what the role is. This document has no legal standing; however, legal guidance is available in the [OCPL Board of Trustees bylaws](#), New York State Law (e.g., [library law](#)), and other documents as referenced below.

The mission of the Onondaga County Public Library is to prepare our community for a bright future by creating opportunities, empowering people, and inspiring ideas.

The Onondaga County Public Library Board of Trustees (also referred to as Board members) govern the operations of the Onondaga County Public Library, both the OCPL:System and OCPL:City. The OCPL:System provides services to the [20 independent libraries in Onondaga County](#) as mandated by State Law or as agreed to by the [memorandum of understanding](#) between the OCPL Board and the 20 independent libraries. OCPL:City covers all the branch and outlet libraries in the City of Syracuse as well as the Central Library, which together comprise one library. The Executive Director of OCPL is both the executive director for the OCPL:System and the executive director of OCPL:City.

Each of the 11 OCPL Board members “must act in good faith and exercise the degree of diligence, care, and skill that an ordinary prudent individual would use under similar circumstances in a like position.” ([Handbook for Library Trustees of NYS, Ch. 2](#)) They must ensure that OCPL’s “resources are dedicated to the fulfillment of its mission.” ([Ch. 2](#))

Every OCPL trustee is nominated by the Onondaga County Executive and confirmed by the Onondaga County Legislature. The person must be a resident of Onondaga County during their entire term as a trustee. No person shall hold their trustee position consecutively for more than two full five-year terms plus an initial partial term, if any. Terms begin on January 1, unless the person is completing a partial term.

Central Library located at 447 South Salina Street, Syracuse, NY 13202-2494
Phone 315-435-1900 Fax 315-435-8533 www.onlib.org Christian Zabriskie, Executive Director

Beauchamp Branch * Betts Branch * Hazard Branch * Mundy Branch
Paine Branch * Petit Branch * Soule Branch * White Branch

Each trustee is expected to:

- attend each Board meeting (11 meetings are scheduled each year).
- read all documents sent in advance of every Board meeting.
- volunteer to serve on an OCPL Board standing or ad hoc committee, or to take a Board leadership role (i.e., officer).
 - The Board has four officers who serve one-year renewable terms: president, vice-president, secretary, and finance officer. These four, along with the immediate past-president comprise the Board's executive committee. The executive committee may be tasked by the Board to handle specific tasks between meetings.
 - It is the current Board process, that the vice-president does not immediately become the president.
 - The roles of secretary and finance officer are assisted in their duties by members of the OCPL staff.
- be a liaison to 2-3 suburban libraries in Onondaga County. That means the trustee is in contact with that library's board president and may function as an information conduit between the OCPL Board and that suburban library board. They are encouraged to attend a meeting of that board each year.
- advocate for OCPL with local and state government representative.
- as a group, oversee the work of the OCPL Executive Director, which includes the full lifecycle of that person's tenure with OCPL.
- respect the role of the Executive Director and support that person's administrative decisions.
- remember that they do not supervise OCPL staff. Staff are supervised by the OCPL Executive Director.
- review and approve the OCPL budget and understand where funding for OCPL is derived and how those funds are being spent.
- attend a minimum of two hours of library trustee education annually. This ongoing training will help the trustee learn about the intricacies and legal underpinning of their role as a library trustee, and the role, structure, and management of public libraries in NYS.
- OCPL Board is a public board governed by its [bylaws](#); New York State Law; [Library Laws and Regulations in New York State](#); requirements from the New York State Library (e.g., [Minimum Standards](#)); and Open Meeting Law and opinions from the [Committee on Open Government](#).

Questions about Board operations may be directed to the [OCPL Board President](#) or the [OCPL Executive Director](#). Onondaga County maintains an [Appointment Application](#) on its website where people can express their interest in serving.