

**Northern Lights Library Network
Governing Board Meeting
December 13, 2025
Zoom Conference Call**

NLLN Officers:

- President: Charlie Lindberg
- Vice President: Joe Gould
- Treasurer: Karen Qualey
- Secretary: Ruth Holmgren

Present:

- Kathy Enger, Executive Director, NLLN
- Joe Gould, Kitchigami Regional Library System Representative (KRLS)
- Christine Ayala-Zierke, School Library Representative
- Chizuko Shastri, Lake Agassiz Regional Library Representative (LARL)
- Kayla Kami-Decker, Special Library Representative
- Glenn Heinecke, Alternate, School Library Representative
- Christi Smith, Media Specialist, Alexandria Public Schools
- Aleta Sanford, Minute-taker, NLLN

1. Call to Order.

a. 10:05 A.M.

2. Welcome to Christine Ayala-Zierke, NLLN School Library Representative, Morris Public Schools; Kayla Kami-Decker, NLLN Special Library Representative, Beltrami County Law Library. Oath of Office.

3. Approve agenda, minutes, financial reports.

a. Motion to approve the agenda and minutes:

i. Christine, Kayla MCU

b. Financial reports:

i. NLLN has expended approximately 70% of the budget at the end of the 5th month of the fiscal year largely due to a staff retirement for payouts of accrued leave. That line item will not change again. Approximately 70% has been spent for Special Projects (programs and services), as well. Once the 990 is submitted, the 5516 Accounting/Audit line item will move to 100% expended. The rest of the budget is approximately 40% expended and everything is looking good.

ii. Kathy proposed reallocating some funds from four budget line items to supplement line item 6125 Special Projects, and specifically to 6125 Miscellaneous Special Projects-St, which is already 66% expended. She proposed:

1. Move \$3,500 from 5500 Governing Board due to lower in-person attendance at board meetings resulting in lower mileage expenses.
2. Move \$2,000 from 6010 Director/Staff Travel due to an increase in virtual meetings requiring less travel and low expenses when travel occurs.
3. Move \$2,000 from 6025 Library Advocacy. No funds have been expended under this line item to date and the funds will be better used elsewhere.
4. This would move a total of \$8,500 to line item 6125 Miscellaneous Special Projects and help NLLN focus its budget on providing programs and services for the region instead of expending funds on administrative costs. The funds are unrestricted and able to be reallocated.

iii. Motion to approve the reallocation as proposed:

1. Chizuko, Kayla MCU
4. Christi Smith, Media Specialist, Alexandria Public Schools book grant request. \$2,024.47 Miltona Science Magnet; \$1,004.36 Voyager; \$853.09 for Garfield GES. Total request for 223 books for \$3,881.92.
 - a. In light of budget cuts, Christi requested a grant from NLLN to support the purchase of books for three Alexandria public schools to meet specific material needs in each media center.
 - b. Motion to approve grant funding:
 - i. Kayla, Chizuko MCU
 5. Move from Bremer to Old National October 20, 2025.
 - a. The move was successfully completed and everything went well. All NLLN banking is now done through Old National, aside from two CDs at US Bank and American Federal.
 6. Online Bookkeeping and Accounting.
 - a. Since Deb Keena retired, NLLN's bookkeeping and accounting has moved online. This is functioning well and Kathy meets with the accountants each week to review bills. There are many eyes on the organization's expenses: the annual audit, the accountants, and the board's quarterly review of financial statements.
 7. Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML). Calculation for NLLN: 50/50 NLLN/Employee split NLLN cost approximately \$350 ($\$106,000 \times .66\% = \$699.60/2 = \349.80); 100% NLLN, total cost to NLLN approximately \$700 ($\$106,000 \times .66\% = \699.60).
 - a. NLLN will be required to pay in to this new payroll tax. NLLN can pay the full amount or the board may choose to have NLLN and employees split the cost 50/50. The \$700 in the agenda item is the total annual cost, which would be divided across all paychecks.
 - b. Motion to approve NLLN paying the full amount:

- i. Kayla, Chizuko MCU
- 8. Grant Request Form.
 - a. Kathy is revising the form to ensure compliance with State statute, both under the MCMT statute and Minnesota statute more broadly. The Arrowhead MCMT determined they would no longer cover mileage for scholarships or food for meetings, as those were grey areas under the statute. NLLN is examining these issues, as well, and Kathy is working with the accountants and the State Auditor to develop a new form that complies with statute.
 - b. In the meantime, Kathy requested the board's support to continue using the existing form until the revision is complete.
 - c. Motion to approve using the existing grant form until the new one is complete:
 - i. Joe, Christine MCU
- 9. Old Business.
 - a. A.I. Innovation Summit.
 - i. This event was very successful. Moorhead Public Schools sent a teacher and NLLN covered their leave for the day for approximately \$230. Attendance was good, with 32 business partners on the first day and 83 educators on the second.
 - b. Licensed Media Specialist Scholarships.
 - i. The MCMTs have not determined how to disburse this money to licensed teachers seeking to become Licensed Media Specialists. Approximately \$750,000 remains to be distributed, currently held by the Traverse des Sioux MCMT. They are considering using a consultant to operate the program, but the current candidate has a potential conflict of interest. There is a meeting scheduled for this upcoming Tuesday to continue discussions.
 - ii. Kathy will be writing a report with an update on this process, she also plans to request the MCMTs to write a report all the systems can share.
 - c. Conversation with Superintendent Cass Lake.
 - i. Kathy left messages with the superintendent, but has not heard back, regarding keeping the old elementary school building's library intact while the building is repurposed. The intent is to preserve the existing library, spruce it up, add materials, and make it a community space.
 - ii. NLLN has provided a grant of \$10,000 this fiscal year and \$10,000 next fiscal year for this project.
 - iii. Joe offered to connect Kathy with the superintendent.
 - d. The Loop Update.
 - i. Chizuko stated the new library may open in March or April 2026.
 - ii. NLLN donated funds to the new library and a plaque will be installed noting the donation.

- e. Wifi Hotspots for Students at Park Rapids Schools.
 - i. This project is in progress. They are in negotiations with companies to provide the hotspots.
 - f. Scholarship Update.
 - i. NLLN has distributed almost \$10,000 this year for librarians in the NLLN region to attend conferences. The majority were for the Minnesota Library Association Fall Conference in St. Cloud.
 - g. Strategic Plan.
 - i. Kathy has completed the qualitative data collection. She will now analyze the data, create a survey, collect quantitative data from NLLN members, and develop the strategic plan.
 - h. MCMT Meetings.
 - i. These meetings have changed from bi-monthly to monthly. Kathy chaired the meetings throughout 2025. A new chair will begin in 2026.
 - i. Membership List Update.
 - i. NLLN is paying a consultant to update the membership list. Thank you to everyone who was willing to participate.
10. New Business.
- a. Beltrami County Commission; budget decision impact on Bemidji Public Library and Bagley Public Library.
 - i. The Beltrami County Commissioners have voted for a 40% reduction in library funding, with Joe being the sole opposing vote. As a result, 4-5 positions will be cut and operating hours will be reduced. The Bemidji Public Library will bear the brunt of these cuts, as the Blackduck Library is already operating near the statutory minimum with 1.5 staff and 21 hours per week.
 - ii. Joe is requesting \$50,000 in emergency transition dollars from NLLN to help soften the blow to the Bemidji library. This would preserve one staff position and help the library adjust to the new budget amount.
 - 1. At this time, NLLN is not able to provide \$50,000 out of the budget, nor can it statutorily support personnel costs. However, if the Bemidji library can put together a written request for a line item in their budget that is within NLLN's statutory ability to support and a specific dollar amount request, NLLN could call a special meeting to review the proposal. NLLN's budget could potentially support a \$10,000 request but could also review its reserves.
 - 2. Chizuko suggested requesting funding for online materials and catalogs, which falls under NLLN's statute.

3. Joe will follow up with the Bemidji branch manager and put them in touch with Kathy.
 - b. Campbell School Libraries.
 - i. Campbell has submitted a request for \$10,535.80 to purchase books and furniture for their new elementary school library. NLLN's budget cannot support this whole request but may select two budget line items that fall within NLLN's statute.
 - ii. Chizuko noted that the Moorhead Public Library plans to sell their current furniture once they have moved to the new library, which will be furnished. If Campbell can wait, there may be an opportunity to purchase this furniture. Chizuko can let Kathy know more about this potential opportunity so NLLN can coordinate between Campbell, their consultant architect, and Moorhead Public Library.
 - iii. Motion to approve \$1,200 for the purchase of new books with the option to review other line items in the future:
 1. Christine, Chizuko MCU
 - c. Osakis Public School Collection.
 - i. NLLN supported this collection for \$1,000 in September.
 - d. Destiny Training December 8th. Thank you to Glenn Heinecke and Gina Drellack.
 - i. Thank you to Glenn for hosting this training, which will be recorded and Gina Drellack from Northwest Service Cooperative plans to post online for others to access.
 - ii. Glenn reported that a few attendees have reached out to him to have him consult at their libraries.
 - e. Area Library Directors Working Lunch: *Strengthening Our Regional Library Connections*. Special thanks to Karen Qualey.
 - i. There have been discussions on how the Tri-College professional trainings can be continued, since they disbanded due to cost. NLLN covered the cost of this working lunch for approximately \$180.
 - f. Handout for board members.
 - i. Thank you to everyone for joining and to our new board members who contributed so much today. Thank you also to Chizuko, who we hope will be able to remain on NLLN's board in 2026.

11. Adjourn.

- a. 11:37 A.M.
- b. Motion to approve:
 - i. Joe, Kayla MCU