

330. POLICY ON THE USE OF THE LIBRARY MEETING ROOMS

Purpose

The Board of Library Trustees of the Seekonk Public Library welcomes the use of the Library's meeting rooms free of charge by local community groups and individual town residents for civic, educational, philanthropic, and recreational purposes having a substantial nexus with the mission of the Seekonk Public Library. The Board of Library Trustees is solely responsible for determining if the use of the meeting rooms proposed by an applicant satisfies the above criteria.

When allocating the use of the public meeting rooms at the library, the Board of Trustees and library staff shall not discriminate based on the viewpoint or beliefs of applicants or on any other constitutionally or statutorily prohibited basis.

The Board of Library Trustees at their discretion may make exceptions to this policy if the Board deems it to be in the best interest of the Library and the community it serves.

The Library is responsible for providing a safe, peaceful, and respectful environment in which all users may quietly enjoy the services offered by the library. The Board of Library Trustees will not approve any proposed use of the meeting rooms or the immediate grounds of the library that is likely to disturb library patrons in their customary use of library facilities, impede library staff in the performance of their duties, or endanger the library building or the library's collections.

All public activities held in the library meeting rooms must be open to all members of the public and free of charge. Any person who has permission to enter and use the Seekonk Public Library shall not be excluded from attending public activities in the meeting rooms unless it is to comply with legally mandated occupancy limits.

The Board of Library trustees may approve use of the meeting rooms for private meetings, functions, or events at which admission may be limited to selected individuals if the applicant pays meeting room use fee. Private events shall not charge an admission fee or impose other charges on those attending, nor shall private events limit admission based on any constitutionally or statutorily prohibited basis. When assigning use of the meeting rooms, those willing to pay a fee shall not receive special consideration over those requesting to use the rooms at no charge.

A grant of permission to use the Library's meeting rooms , not imply any endorsement by the Seekonk Public Library, the Board of Library Trustees or the Town of Seekonk of the opinions, beliefs, policies or programs espoused by the applicant. Groups or individuals who receive permission to use the meeting rooms at the Library shall not state or suggest in their public statements and publicity that the Seekonk Public Library, the Board of Library Trustees or the Town of Seekonk has sponsored their gathering, endorsed their activities or supports any particular ideas they espouse.

Limitations on Meeting Room Use

Meeting room space at the library has limited availability. Because of the many competing demands to use this space, the Board of Library Trustees reserves the right to impose limits on the timing and number of meeting room reservations it will accept.

Subject to the provisions of this policy, the Library will consider applications and reservations to use the Library's meeting rooms in the order received. The Library reserves the right, however, to re-schedule or cancel meeting room reservations should the meeting room be needed for a library program. Use of the meeting rooms for library purposes shall take precedence over all other uses.

The Board of Library Trustees has established the following priorities for scheduling the use of the meeting rooms when there are competing requests. In order of priority, these are:

1. the activities and programs of the Seekonk Public Library
2. activities of the non-profit organizations that support the library
3. activities related to the operation of town, county or state government agencies
4. activities of non-profit organizations that primarily serve Seekonk residents
5. activities of informal or ad hoc community groups composed primarily of Seekonk residents
6. activities of other non- profit groups and organizations
7. groups or organizations seeking to use the meeting rooms for a fee

The meeting rooms at the library shall not be used for commercial activities. Commercial activity is defined here as promoting or selling or exchanging any good or service of real value. Commercial activity also includes the active or passive solicitation of memberships, subscriptions, enrollments, or financial investments of any type.

The meeting rooms at the Library shall not be used for gatherings that are primarily devoted to religious worship, individual or community prayer, acts of religious devotion, or religious instruction or training.

The meeting rooms at the Library shall not be used for fundraising unless proceeds are to benefit the Seekonk Public Library, or with the permission of the Board of Library Trustees, another tax-exempt, non-profit organization located in Seekonk. Artists, writers, performers and craftspeople may sell their creative works on the day they appear at an event or performance sponsored by the Library. No other goods or services shall be promoted, offered, sold, or exchanged on the premises without prior approval by the Library Director.

The Board of Library Trustees and the Library Director reserve the right to reject a reservation request when it can be reasonably inferred by the nature of the event that it will be disruptive to regular library functions, or too large for the applicable room capacity, or poses a significant risk to the health or safety of library visitors and staff, or is likely to result in damage to public property, or in any other way, deemed inconsistent with or in contravention of any of the terms and conditions of this policy. (See

also the section on Public Safety Consideration in the *Meeting Room Application Procedures and Rules of Use*.)

The Board of Library Trustees reserves the right to determine, in its reasonable discretion, whether any proposed use of the Library's meeting rooms will require a police detail or other extraordinary police protection, and if so the anticipated cost thereof. The Board of Library Trustees shall make such a determination by following the procedures described in the *Meeting Room Application Procedures and Rules of Use*.

This policy replaces the original Meeting Room Policy that was approved in July 1989, and significantly revised in 2017.

Date Approved: 9/20/2017

Last Reviewed: 5/16/18; 5/26/21

Last Amended 5/25/22