

# Seneca Falls Library Board of Trustees Code of Ethics

## Preamble:

The Seneca Falls Library Board of Trustees is dedicated to upholding the mission of the Seneca Falls Library: to serve the community's educational, informational, and leisure needs through the provision of literary materials, programs, meeting venues, and multimedia services. To ensure the library effectively fulfills this mission, the Board commits to ethical stewardship of its resources and unwavering dedication to the community it serves. The public's trust is paramount, and therefore, all Trustees must adhere to the highest ethical standards in their conduct and decision-making. This Code of Ethics serves as a framework for maintaining that trust and guiding the Board's actions in support of the library's mission.

## Core Principles:

### 1. Integrity and Accountability:

- Trustees shall accept and execute all duties and responsibilities with absolute truth, integrity, and honor.
- Trustees are accountable for the library's resources and must ensure they are used responsibly and effectively.

### 2. Authority and Governance:

- Trustees recognize that their authority resides solely in the legal actions of the Board as a whole, not in individual members.
- Trustees are responsible for establishing the library's strategic direction and governing policies, and for overseeing compliance with those policies. Trustees must uphold the critical distinction between governance and management. Direct involvement in day-to-day administrative operations, personnel management, or directing staff activities is outside the scope of Trustee duties. Trustees shall refrain from interfering in these areas as the management of library operations and staff is the exclusive responsibility and delegated authority of the Library Director.
- Trustees should respect the established chain of command within the library. Trustees must understand that the board's primary connection to library staff is through the Library Director, and Trustees should avoid direct intervention in the daily operations of the library or give directives to staff members.

### 3. Confidentiality and Transparency:

- Trustees shall respect the confidential nature of library business, including library patron records, staff matters, board deliberations or information discussed in executive sessions, and shall not disclose such information without proper authorization.
- Trustees shall be aware of and comply with all applicable laws governing freedom of information and open meetings.
- Negotiations of contracts are in the purview of the assigned Board committee/representative.

### 4. Conflict of Interest:

- Trustees shall avoid situations in which personal interests might be served or financial benefits gained at the expense of the library or its users.
  - Trustees shall immediately disclose any potential or actual conflict of interest and recuse themselves from any related discussions or votes.
  - Trustees shall not use their position to gain unwarranted privileges or advantages for themselves or others from the library or from those who do business with the library.
  - Trustees must avoid situations in which there is a reasonable probability that their personal interests may appear to be in conflict with the best interests of the Library.
  - Trustees shall not use library resources (other than collections, programs, and services available to the general public) for personal gain.
5. **Respect and Professionalism:**
- Trustees shall respect the opinions of their colleagues and engage in respectful discourse, even when disagreements arise.
  - Trustees shall not engage in discrimination of any kind and shall uphold library patrons' rights to privacy.
  - Trustees shall strive to uphold the integrity of the Library and be respectful to their fellow Board members.
  - Trustees, in fulfilling their responsibilities, shall not be swayed by partisan interests, public pressure or fear of criticism.
  - Trustees will seek opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills as a trustee, staying informed about current library trends and best practices.
6. **Institutional Support:**
- Trustees must distinguish clearly in their actions and statements between their personal philosophies and attitudes and those of the Seneca Falls Library, acknowledging and supporting the formal position of the Board.
  - After a policy or rule is adopted by a majority of the Library Board, individual trustees should publicly support those decisions.
  - Trustees shall support the efforts of library staff in resisting censorship of library materials by groups or individuals.
  - Trustees will advocate for the library's mission, services, and needs within the community and to funding agencies, promoting its importance as a vital community asset.
7. **Community Focus:**
- Trustees must make decisions in the best interest of all residents within the Seneca Falls Library's service area, ensuring equitable access to library services.
8. **Active Participation:**
- Trustees who accept Seneca Falls Library Board membership are expected to perform all the functions of Library trustees. Trustees who are unable to attend meetings regularly and complete work delegated to them should resign so that an active member can be appointed.
  - Trustees must be prepared to contribute the time and energy to faithfully carry out his/her duties and responsibilities effectively.

**Enforcement:**

- Any Trustee who appears to be in violation of this Code of Ethics will be asked to meet with the Board to discuss the issue.
- The Board will make recommendations for corrective action.
- Failure to rectify the conflict to the satisfaction of the Board and/or governing law may result in a Board recommendation for the removal of the offending Trustee.

**Acknowledgement:**

Each Trustee shall sign a statement acknowledging receipt and understanding of this Code of Ethics upon appointment and annually thereafter.

**Adoption:**

This Code of Ethics is adopted by the Seneca Falls Library Board of Trustees on [Date].

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**History:**

Adopted by the Board of Trustees May 19, 2025