



## **Town of Chester Public Library: Addressing Public Library Standards in New York State**

### **Introduction**

#### **Brief History of New York State Library Minimum Standards**

In July 2018, the New York State Board of Regents adopted amendments to the existing (2002) library standards along with adopting three new minimum library standards. The nearly twenty years since the last standards were published necessitated revisions in language and content. The three new standards reflected changes in governance, technology, and library use.

The existing library standards expire on December 31, 2020 with the updated minimum library standards taking effect on January 1, 2021. The *Minimum Public Library Standards in New York State* (2018) not only provide guidance for the development and operation of successful libraries, but they also provide an opportunity for libraries to self-assess, reflect, and develop plans for moving into the future.

#### **Town of Chester Public Library Long Range Plans**

The Town of Chester Public Library's "Absolute" Charter (i.e., "Permanent") was approved by the New York State Board of Regents in 2003. One of the many requirements to become a chartered library in New York State is the development of a long-range plan to guide the library in achieving the state's minimum public library standards. Since the development of its first long-range plan almost twenty years ago, the Library Board of Trustees has developed several revised plans- up until now, guided by the 2002 library standards.

The development of the Town of Chester Public Library's recently revised long-range plan, effective January 1, 2021–December 31, 2025, was informed by the 2018 minimum library standards referenced above. Through the collaborative efforts of the Library Board of Trustees, Library staff, and members of the Town of Chester community, the 2021–2025 long range plan attends to the state's amended minimum standards, extending the letter and spirit of the standard beyond "compliance," and addressing the three new standards.

#### **Intersection of Standards, Long-Range Plans and the Future "Envisioned" Library**

The overarching purpose of standards is to support ongoing improvement of library services for patrons, an overarching goal shared by a library's long-range plan. Standards provide a general description of the content to be achieved while a long range plan provides a more focused "local" lens for individual libraries to describe content and process through specific goals and activities they envision for achieving the standards for their library, community, and patrons.

This document, a companion document to the Town of Chester’s Long-Range Plan (2021–2025), includes:

- a presentation of the latest (2018) New York State minimum public library standards;
- a summary of actions completed by the Town of Chester Library to meet long-standing minimum standards along with activities attending to the amended and new standards;
- a description of ongoing activities to further address the 2018 minimum standards.

A careful examination of the minimal standards reveals achievement of the standards is never really “done” given the important goal of continuously striving to improve!

It should be noted that, at the mid-point of the new cycle for New York State libraries, the Town of Chester Public Library will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a permanently chartered public library; a testimony to its success!

### **Town of Chester Public Library: Addressing Public Library Standards**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Related Actions</b>
<b>Standard 1: Written By-Laws</b>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> Written by-laws were developed and approved, May 1998 as part of charter process. Amendments to by-laws recorded in Appendix of the document. Current by-laws (2019) available to the public on Library website and upon request at the Library.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activities:</b> By-laws have been, and will continue to be, reviewed and amended every five years or more frequently, as needed, with amendments documented in Appendix. Current by-laws will continue to be posted on the Library website and will be available at the Library. <i>(Long-Range Plan, Goal 5)</i></p>
<b>Standard 2: Long-Range Plan</b>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> Most recent long-range plans were developed 2013-2017 and 2016-2020. Current long-range plan (2016-2020) available to the public on Library website and upon request at the Library. Long-range plan developed for 2021-2025 following the recommended process and components of the NYS Minimum Standards publication (2018) and SALS. Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees on December 2, 2020.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activities:</b> An annual review of the 2021-2025 Long-Range Plan (LRP) will be completed each January to determine LRP goal achievement(s) and to identify the new year’s prioritized focus. The LRP will continue to be posted on the Library website and will be available at the Library. <i>(LRP, Goal 5)</i></p>

<p><b>Standard 3: Report to the Community</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> Written annual reports have been presented to the Board and made available to the public since the Library was chartered. Recent annual reports are posted on the Library website with copies available upon request at the Library.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> Presentation of annual report for Trustee approval prior to submission of the report to NYSED each year. Beginning in 2021, annual reports will be modified in terms of content and format, as suggested in Minimum Standards publication (2018, pages 14 &amp; 15). Continue to post annual reports on the Library website and make available to the public upon request in the Library. Extend range of distribution of report to wider community audiences. <i>(LRP, Goal 5)</i></p>
<p><b>Standard 4: Written Policies</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> Past and current written policies have been scanned and saved as Word documents, then archived in the Trustees' Dropbox account. Some required policies posted on Library website and available to the public upon request at the Library.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> Continue to systematically update policies, prioritizing the writing and adoption of new policies required but not yet developed. (Minimum Standards 2018, pages 20 &amp; 21). Continue to review and revise existing policies. Policies will continue to be archived in Trustees' Dropbox, posted on the Library website, and made available to the public upon request at the Library. <i>(LRP, Goal 5)</i></p>
<p><b>Standard 5: Written Budget</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> A written budget is prepared annually, reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees. The current annual budget is available to the public on the Library website and upon request at the Library.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> An annual written budget will be prepared following the guidance in the Minimum Standards (2018, pages 22 &amp; 23) in terms of process and content. The current annual budget will continue to be posted on the Library website and made available upon request, at the Library. <i>(LRP, Goals 4 &amp; 5)</i></p>
<p><b>Standard 6: Evaluating Effectiveness</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> The most recent evaluation of the Library was an indirect query contained in the Town of Chester Economic Survey (2018).</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> Develop a schedule for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Library's programs, services, collections, and community needs/interests. Plans to conduct, analyze, and respond to information gathered, via survey, questionnaire, etc, is an</p>

	<p>important part of the 2021-2025 Long-Range Plan. Existing indicators of Library effectiveness, such as the annual report, will be analyzed as one-year snapshots and longitudinally for indicators of effectiveness and needs. (<i>LRP, Goals 1, 2, 3, &amp; 5</i>)</p>
<p><b>Standard 7: Hours</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> Under normal conditions (pre-pandemic), Library hours exceed the minimum weekly hours per the Minimum Standards (2018, pg. 28)</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> Resume and maintain the pre-pandemic weekly hours and schedule. Communicate Library hours in prominent locations, including printed and online publicity. (<i>LRP Goals 2 &amp; 5</i>)</p>
<p><b>Standard 8: Maintaining a Facility to Meet Community Needs</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> The Library has been housed in several facilities since its opening, moving to accommodate its growth in services and patronage. The current facility addresses community needs through general maintenance and repairs.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> The 2021-2025 Long Range Plan includes goals to assess and address facility needs for new roles envisioned for the Library. (<i>LRP, Goals 1, 3, 4, &amp; 5</i>)</p>
<p><b>Standard 9: Programming</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> The library has a history of providing programs, including participation in the NYS sponsored summer reading program. It has provided programs for technology support for the public and preschool story hour programming, including a weekly virtual story hour posted on the Library’s Facebook page.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> The 2021-2025 Long Range Plan emphasizes increased programming for the community by surveying community needs and interests to broaden the range and frequency of programming. (<i>LRP Goals 1, 2, &amp; 5</i>)</p>
<p><b>Standard 10: Technology to Meet Community Needs</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> Through the integrated library system (ILS) patrons can access online catalogs of local holdings and inter-library loans to support borrowing. Equipment and technology are available for public use. Free Wifi is available in the Library and in the Municipal Center parking lot.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> Continuous monitoring and updating of equipment, technology, and internet connectivity needs is part of the 2021-2025 Long-Range Plan. “Next Steps” presented in the February 2020 Technology Committee Report should be revisited. A Technology Plan should be developed. (<i>LRP Goal 1</i>)</p>

<p><b>Standard 11: Provides Access to Current Library Information</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> The recent move of the Library website to join the well-established Friends of the Library website has contributed to improved access to Library information. The establishment and regular maintenance of a Library Facebook page has also helped disseminate Library information. Other efforts to address this standard include the formation of a publicity committee in January 2020.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> The 2021-2025 Long Range Plan attends closely to needed actions related to this standard. Goal 2 specifically addresses the need for a well-coordinated, ongoing approach to publicity promoting the Library through a variety of media to a variety of audiences. <i>(LRP, Goal 2)</i></p>
<p><b>Standard 12: Employs a Paid Director</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> A Library Director is employed by the Board of Trustees in accordance with Commissioner’s Regulation, Section 90.8. The Director is provided opportunities for continuing education.</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> Continue to employ a Library Director in accordance with Commissioner’s Regulation, Section 90.8. Continue to provide continuing education opportunities for the Director through budgeting and grants for conference and workshop attendance. <i>(LRP, Goals 1 &amp; 5)</i></p>
<p><b>Standard 13: Technology Training for Staff</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> While a 2020 SALS Continuing Education Grant was secured for the purpose of technology training for Library staff and Trustees, past budgeting has been short of the recommendation for staff training, including staff technology training. (SALS Continuing Education Grant referenced above deferred to 2021.)</p> <p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> The 2021-2025 Long Range Plan includes specific objectives for addressing technology training for staff. Recommended in the Minimum Standards, 2018 (pg 42), is a minimum level of library budget to be dedicated for such training and the development of an annual training plan by the Library Director and staff, and the scheduling of annual staff training opportunities by the Library Director. <i>(LRP, Goals 1 &amp; 5)</i></p>
<p><b>Standard 14: Community Partners</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence of Meeting Standard:</b> The Library has established partnerships with many community and regional organizations in the past including North Warren Central School, Horicon Public Library, and recently the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York to provide programs and services.</p>

	<p><b>Ongoing Standard Activity:</b> In order to extend the reach and role of the Library, new partnerships with local and regional organizations are required to address the growing and changing needs and interests of the community. Maintaining existing partnerships while forming new ones is vital to transforming the Library to a community hub. (<i>LRP, Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, &amp; 5</i>)</p>
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