

Meeting Room Access and Use Policy

Policy adopted by Library Board of trustees June 10, 2024
Policy updated by Library Board of trustees August 11, 2025

Position responsible for compliance: Director, Bethlehem Library Board of Trustees
Reviewed by Trustees: Quarterly for the first year after adoption. Annually thereafter.

I. Purpose

To further its mission to serve the needs of the Bethlehem community and Bethlehem Library cardholders, and make optimal use of its facilities, the Bethlehem Public Library (the “Library”) makes space (“Library Space”) available to Bethlehem Library cardholders, affiliated entities, and local charitable groups per this Bethlehem Public Library Meeting Room Access and Use Policy (the “Policy”). It is the goal of the Library to provide a welcoming space for community learning. The Library adheres to the principles of the American Library Association’s policy statement *Meeting Rooms: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*, which states that facilities should be made available “on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.”

II. Application

This Policy is limited to use of the Library’s Board Room and the Community Room.

III. Key Considerations

1. Any individual or group (a “User”) may request use of Library Space through the Library’s website. Library Space is available for use during the Library’s normal hours of operation. Use should not be scheduled for the first hour the Library is open if extensive setup is necessary. Library Space must be vacated fifteen (15) minutes before the Library’s closing time (8:45 p.m. or 4:45 p.m., as applicable). If use extends beyond the Library’s usual closing time, the User will be charged a \$50 service fee and suspended from use of Library Space for a period of one (1) year.

2. The Library sets legal criteria to qualify for the use of Library Space under this Policy. For example, the Library sets the times Library Space is available for patrons to use. It is the Library Director’s (the “Director”), or their designee’s responsibility to determine if a proposed User meets such criteria. Any person who disagrees with the Director’s determination regarding access to Library Space may appeal that determination to the Library Board of Trustees (the “Library Board”). Such appeal must be submitted in writing no more than seven (7) days from receipt of the denial. The appeal should include a written statement asserting why the proposed use of Library Space meets the criteria set forth in this Policy.

Library programs and events take precedence over all other use of Library Space. Upon written notice to a User, the Library may pre-empt reservations for Library Space if the Library Space is needed for Library purposes. In such cases, the Library will make every effort to find alternative

space within the Library for the User or re-schedule the reserved use of the Library Space.

3. Users shall be responsible for reading, understanding, and enforcing this and any other applicable Library Policy. All Users of Library Space must acknowledge their understanding of this Policy and their responsibilities under it. If a User is a group, the group shall designate an individual eighteen (18) years or older to act as the group's representative (the "Designated User") and execute the Acknowledgement. For the purposes of this Policy, any reference to a "User" shall also be a reference to a "Designated User." A User shall not be permitted to reserve Library Space until the Acknowledgement is submitted.

4. The Library must be notified through the Library website's reservation system of cancellations of Library Space reservations as soon as the Library User is aware of the need to cancel, but no less than twenty-four (24) hours before the reserved time. Failure to notify the Library of cancelled reservations more than three (3) times in a calendar year may result in a loss of Library Space privileges for up to one (1) year.

5. As a condition of use, and upon conferring with law enforcement, the Library may require a User to provide security for a proposed use of Library Space to address a heightened risk of disruption of Library operations due to the proposed event. The Library will keep a written record of the reason(s) for any decision to require security. The User's contract for the provision of security services at the applicable event must include a waiver of liability and indemnification of the Library, and the Library must be named as an additional insured on the security company's certificate of insurance, a copy of which must be provided by the User to the Library in advance. If the requirement for security cannot be met, the applicable event cannot be held at the Library. Whenever possible, an assessment of security needs will be performed at least a week in advance of a proposed use of Library Space, but to protect the overall mission of the Library to serve the community, the Library will exercise this condition at any time before the start of an event. Any decision of the Library to require a User to provide security may be appealed in writing to the Library Board within seven (7) days of the User's notification of such decision. Any appeal of a decision to require security will be finalized within sixty (60) days of receipt.

6. No publicity of any use of Library Space shall be released before the User's reservation has been approved via a notification from the Library's online reservation system. Excepting Affiliated Entities, as described later in this Policy, use of Library Space may not be publicized in a manner that indicates Library sponsorship, affiliation, or support of the intended activity. All publicity must include the following statement "This program is neither sponsored by nor affiliated with the Bethlehem Public Library. The viewpoints of any speakers are solely those of the speaker and not the Library, the Library staff, or the Library Board of Trustees." Users may not use the name, telephone number, e-mail address, or physical address of the Library as the official address or headquarters of their organization.

7. Library Space is not intended for personal social events such as birthday parties, baby showers, and other personal celebrations.

8. Refer to the Library's Solicitation and Distribution Policy for specific guidance on permitted political activities.

Permitted Uses of Library Space

A. *Library Card Holders “Room Check out”*

1. Library Space may be reserved for small group use through “Room Check Out” by Bethlehem Public Library cardholders on the Library website.
2. The purpose of Room Check Out is for Bethlehem Library cardholders to use Library Space for a specific purpose such as a small meeting or discussion group that is not required to be open to the public.
3. Library Space made available under the Room Check Out process is limited to a maximum attendance of twenty-five (25) people in the Board Room or thirty (30) people in the Community Room and a minimum attendance of four (4) people for the Board Room and six (6) people for the Community Room.
4. Room Check Out reservations will not be accepted more than six (6) months in advance and must be made more than five (5) days before the Room Checkout. Library Space may be available for day-of Room Check Out without a reservation on a first-come, first-served basis. Day-of use is not guaranteed and will be granted based on availability, Library needs, and other existing reservations. Furniture may not be moved for day-of use.
5. If a User is more than thirty (30) minutes late for a reserved time the reserved Library Space may be made available for other Users.
6. To ensure broad access, Room Check Out is limited to one reservation per Bethlehem Library cardholder per month.
7. Users acting in coordination with each other may not reserve Library Space through Room Checkout for more than four (4) continuous hours on any one day.

B. *Community Organization Use*

Library Space is available for reservation through the Library’s website by not-for-profit entities with a stated mission of serving the local community (“Community Organization”). For the purposes of this Policy, a “Community Organization” shall be defined as an entity affiliated with a mailing address in Albany County that is either: (i) a 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable entity registered with the Internal Revenue Service and/or (ii) a charitable entity registered with the New York State Attorney General’s Charities Bureau; and/or (iii) a not-for-profit entity registered with the New York Department of State. Internal Revenue Service documentation showing a current 501(c)(3) designation, or New York Attorney General Charities Bureau documentation showing current registration, or documentation demonstrating current registration with the New York Department of State as a not-for-profit entity is required to complete a reservation.

1. The purpose of Community Organization use of Library Space is to gather for a specific purpose such as a meeting or a presentation that must be open to the public.

2. Library Space made available for Community Organization use is limited to a maximum attendance of twenty-five (25) people and a minimum of four (4) people in the Board Room and a maximum of sixty-five (65) and a minimum of six (6) people in the Community Room.

3. Reservations for use of Library Space will not be accepted from Community Organizations more than six (6) months in advance, but must be made more than five (5) days before the intended use of Library Space.

4. If a User is more than thirty (30) minutes late for a reserved time the reserved Library Space may be made available for other Users.

5. To ensure broad access, Community Organizations are permitted (1) one reservation to use Library Space per calendar month.

6. A Community Organization may collaborate or sponsor with other groups to reserve a space (Sponsoring Community Organization). The reservation must be made by the Sponsoring Community Organization under the terms of this policy. The Sponsoring Community Organization must disclose all collaborating groups and organizations. Failure to disclose a sponsorship shall result in suspension of the Sponsoring Community Organization's right to reserve Library Space under this Policy for not less than one (1) year.

C. *Facility Use Contracts*

1. Individuals or entities, including those that do not meet the definition of Community Organization, seeking use of Library Space on a one-time or recurring basis for a gathering they do not wish to be open to all Library patrons may enter into a "Facility Use Contract," as developed by the Library and subject to payment of a uniform rental fee.

2. Library Space made available under a Facility Use Contract is limited to a maximum attendance of twenty-five (25) people in the Board Room and sixty-five (65) people in the Community Room.

3. Reservations for use of Library Space under a Facility Use Contract will not be accepted more than six (6) months in advance, but must be made more than forty-five (45) business days before the intended use of Library Space.

4. To ensure broad access, groups and individuals may reserve space under a Facility Use Contract once every forty-five (45) days.

5. Individuals or groups seeking a Facility Use Contract must submit a completed "Application for Facility Use," available on the Library's website. Filling out this form does not guarantee that the Library will provide the requested Library Space.

6. Once an "Application for Facility Use" is accepted by the Library, the User or Designated User, and the Library must execute a Facility Use Contract.

7. Users may not advertise or promote use of Library Space under a Facility Use

Contract using the name or address of the Library until a Facility Use Contract is executed by all parties and the applicable fee is paid.

8. A rental fee chart shall be posted on the Library's website or otherwise made available upon request. Payment of any rental fee is due at time of confirmation of reservation.

D. *Affiliated Entities*

"Affiliated Entities" are those entities that, through a written and duly signed agreement with the Library (an "Affiliation Agreement"), offer events, services, and programs at the Library, in affiliation with the Library. *Unlike other uses of Library Space, Affiliation Agreements may allow for sales and other generally restricted activities, as determined by the Affiliation Agreement. Executed Affiliation Agreements are part of the public record and may be reviewed upon request.*

E. *Required Training and Announcement*

1. For use of Library Space under the Community Organization or Facility Use Contract provisions above, the User or Designated User shall be required to complete a Library training regarding this Policy prior to use of Library Space. The training will be made available by video to view through a home computer or personal device or may be viewed at the Library. The video will be made available in at least the two most common languages spoken in the Bethlehem School District based on data provided by the School District, or as otherwise required by law.

IV. Prohibited Uses of Library Space

1. The following items/activities are prohibited when using Library Space:
 - Any use of glitter
 - The use or consumption of alcohol
 - The use of smoking mechanisms, including, but not limited to cigarettes and vapes
 - The use of open flames
 - The use of machinery that produces smoke
 - Gambling activities that include the wagering of transferrable funds

2. With the exception of the Friends of the Bethlehem Library, no person may use any part of the Library or the Library grounds to engage in any activity that includes the exchange of money. This includes, but is not limited to, the sale of goods or services, promotional giveaways and raffles, and the sale of membership in any group, regardless of the group's not-for-profit status.

3. Any person found to be performing prohibited activities in Library Space will face consequences under this Policy and the Patron Conduct Policy, including, but not limited to a suspension of use of Library Space, and if such use is criminal, may be referred to law enforcement or another appropriate authority.

V. General Rules for Room Use

1. These “General Rules” supplement all other Library policies, as applicable, including, but not limited to the Patron Conduct Policy and Solicitation and Distribution Policy. Violation of this Policy may also be addressed as a violation of any other applicable Library policy.

2. The Library cannot provide operators for audiovisual equipment. Library staff may provide instruction for operation of equipment as needed, with advance notice. Library Space set-up configurations can be selected at the time of booking. Special set-up requests may be accommodated within reason depending on availability of staff. Changes in set-ups and equipment requirements must be submitted in writing to the Director at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the reserved time. Users may request instruction for operation of equipment from Library staff no less than five (5) days prior to use of the Library Space. Such instruction shall be scheduled at the convenience of the Library.

3. Users should check in at the Information Desk when they arrive for a reservation. Library staff will make the applicable Library Space available as soon as they are reasonably able, but in no event prior to the reserved time.

4. The Library Director, staff, and any member of the Library’s Board, shall have access to all Library Space at all times. The Library retains the right to monitor all use of Library Space to ensure compliance with this and other Library policies.

5. No use of Library Space event may impede the business of the Library, other patrons’ use of the Library, or the ability of patrons and staff to move freely about the Library. Overflow crowds for any use of Library Space shall not be permitted in the hallways. The User or Designated User shall ask all persons creating an overflow crowd to leave. If such overflow crowd does not disperse in a timely manner, subject to a verbal warning, the Library reserves the right to ask those refusing to disperse to leave the Library premises (including the Library building and outside grounds) for the day.

6. If Groups or individuals refuse to comply with verbal directions from Library staff the Bethlehem Police will be contacted to escort the group or individuals from library property. This paragraph shall also apply to instances in which a User fails to vacate Library Space after the end of their reserved time.

7. If there is an injury to any person, or damage to property during use of Library Space, the User or Designated User must alert the Library staff. If there is an emergency, the User or Designated User must call 911 first, then notify Library staff.

8. All children under the age of nine (9) present in Library Space accessed under this Policy must be accompanied by an adult aged eighteen (18) years or older, with at least one (1) supervising adult for every eight (8) children under the age of 9. At no time shall children under the age of 9 be left alone or unsupervised in a reserved room. A minimum of two adults is recommended for any group.

9. The Library does not provide storage space for Users during events and assumes no responsibility for equipment or personal articles belonging to individuals using Library Space.

10. The Library does not supply food, beverages, utensils or supplies. Library Space must be left clean and all trash put in receptacles. The Library will charge a minimum of \$50 if extra custodial service is necessary. All food, beverages, and supplies must be removed from the Library refrigerator at the end of the meeting. The Library will not accept donations of leftover food or beverages.

11. To screen a film or other recording, a User must secure public performance rights and provide the Library with proof of such rights before the reservation will be confirmed. The reservation will be held in pending status until seven (7) days prior to the planned use of Library Space. If the rights have not been secured by this time the pending reservation will be canceled. The Library is not responsible for securing these rights, nor is it liable for a User's violation of copyright or other law.

12. The Library reserves the right to interrupt, stop, or cancel an event when, in the sole judgment of the Library, such an act is necessary in the interests of public safety and/or use is in violation of this policy. User waives any claim for damages or compensation should the event be interrupted, terminated, or cancelled."

VI. Violations of Policy

Violations of any part of this or any other applicable Library policy during the planning, publicity, use, or aftermath of any use of Library Space shall be grounds for denial of future Library Space use of the individual, group, User or Designated User who reserved the room and/or signed User Acknowledgement Form. Such denial may be for a time period of one (1) one year or permanently for repeated violation. Any revocation of privileges will be sent to the User or Designated User in writing no later than seven (7) days following the event that gave rise to the revocation. Such revocation may be *appealed* to the Library's Board in writing within fourteen (14) days following the User's receipt of written notice of the revocation.