

Trustee of Morrill Memorial Library

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1. Tell us about yourself and how your experiences will make you a good candidate for this office.

Hello, my name is Sheri McLeish, and I have had the privilege of calling Norwood my home for more than 20 years. I'm thrilled to be seeking reelection as Library Trustee at Morrill Memorial Library, a position that allows me to give back to a community I deeply cherish. Libraries have always held a special significance for me—not just as sanctuaries of knowledge but as hubs of connection and opportunity.

My professional career has been rooted in content, research, and strategy. I've worked as a journalist, editor, research analyst, and digital strategist, a path ignited by my lifelong love of reading. This foundation has equipped me with expertise in publishing, content management, copyright law, and financial management, all of which are valuable for the stewardship of a public library. I also hold an MBA from Northeastern University and have extensive experience in business operations, from budgeting to strategic planning.

Beyond my career, I've actively contributed to Norwood through various volunteer roles, including involvement with the schools' PTOs, Friends of Visual Arts, and the Norwood Parents Music Association. My time as a Library Trustee has reaffirmed my belief in the transformational power of libraries. Combining my skills, professional experience, and dedication to civic engagement, I am eager to continue serving my community.

2. In your view, what is the public library's role in a community?

At its heart, a public library provides access to information, promotes literacy, and fosters lifelong learning for all members of the community. Libraries like Morrill Memorial aren't just about books; they are about opportunity. They offer a safe, welcoming space for diverse groups to connect, learn, and grow.

For children, the library is often their first introduction to the joys of storytelling and learning. Programs like story hours and early literacy initiatives set the foundation for success in school and life. Norwood has an amazing, dedicated children's library team that continues to find new ways to make reading more accessible, such as the planned reorganization of the children's collection by topics vs. alphabetical by author, which will make discovery easier for kids (and adults). Beyond its rich collection of materials to borrow, there's many services and programs designed to inspire, educate, and entertain all ages. From book clubs to creative workshops like painting classes and DIY crafts to author talks and lectures, there's something for everyone.

Our library also plays a vital role in leveling the playing field. Not everyone has high-speed internet, a quiet place to study, or even access to basic resources—but the library ensures these barriers are removed. Particularly in an era of remote learning and work, Norwood library, like others,

continues to adapt to provide equipment, technical assistance, and spaces to meet these new needs as well as serve homebound populations.

Finally, libraries promote democracy and civic engagement. They offer information that helps individuals make informed decisions about their lives and their role in the broader community. Whether through access to legal information, hosting public meetings, or tackling issues of equality, libraries foster a sense of belonging and empowerment.

3. What programs or services would you like the library to provide in the future?

Morrill Memorial Library has consistently evolved to meet the changing needs of Norwood. Looking ahead, we could expand some of our most impactful programs and services, like those supporting English Language Learners (ELLs). In terms of new services, I am interested to follow and hear from the community, patrons, neighbors and peers. Our library has been early to offer new services like our Library of Things. Some newer areas of offerings by libraries include maker spaces and podcast studios. Given the rise of AI, especially AI authored books, there is an opportunity to provide education and tools, which the team has already begun to do. From ethical, creative and copyright concerns, AI is impacting how librarians' assess new materials that may be AI generated. Plus, currently there are biases in AI algorithms, which could inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes or exclude diverse perspectives, so educating the community and discussing these concerns would be a valuable service toward AI literacy.

4. How do you plan to be an effective advocate for our library at local, state, and federal levels?

Advocacy for the library is a responsibility I take very seriously. To be effective, I seek to provide:

- **Local Advocacy:** Stories of library patrons are our most powerful tool. By sharing examples of how community members have benefited from library programs, I like to discuss the library's impact whenever I have a chance. It's also essential to offer programming that caters to all community members, ensuring everyone feels welcome and engaged. I will continue to support our librarians' commitment to a wide range of programming that meets the interests and needs of all of our patrons.
- **State and Federal Advocacy:** When opportunities arise, I seek to make my voice heard regarding state funding, around important initiatives such as the Access to Justice program, and the preservation of services like statewide interlibrary loan networks.
- **Bringing Attention to Issues That Matter:** As libraries are facing increased scrutiny and challenges, particularly regarding book bans and censorship, I will continue to collaborate with library leaders and lawmakers to ensure our policies and bylaws reflect our goals and mission. Making revisions to policies to make them simpler, easier to understand, and ensure they are aligned with current library operations and needs helps ensure issues that matter are covered and well understood.