

Middletown Public Library - Meeting Room Policy and Procedures

Purpose:

The Middletown Library exists for the purpose of providing library services for the residents of Middletown, Rhode Island. The library has one small Meeting Room which is used primarily for library programs, but may be used for meetings by civic, cultural, charitable, and educational non-profit groups and organizations that have a substantial connection to the Middletown community.

A group or organization is considered to have a substantial connection to the Middletown community if its activities enrich the local community and connect local residents. This includes a primary focus on Middletown residents, community impact, and a non-commercial, community-centric purpose.

Policy:

The Meeting Room is subject to the policies and procedures outlined below, and in accordance with the principles set forth in the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, which states, "Libraries that make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use."

Use of the Middletown Library's Meeting Room does not imply endorsement, support, or co-sponsorship of the activities or of the beliefs of the group using the Meeting Room by the Middletown Public Library, the Board of Library Trustees, or the Town of Middletown. Groups or individuals using the Meeting Room may not imply that the meeting is sponsored, co-sponsored, or endorsed by the Library or the Town in any advertising or publicity.

The Library Director reserves the right to refuse the use of the library Meeting Room or cancel any Meeting Room reservation when the Director deems it to be in the best interest of the Middletown Public Library.

When the Meeting Room is not being used for library programs, the Middletown Library welcomes non-profit groups whose primary clientele are Middletown residents to use the room for meetings. Such use of the room must be free and open to the public, unless it is a fundraiser specifically for the Library. There is no charge for use of the meeting room, nor an expected donation.

The Meeting Room is not available to businesses, private organizations, or for private social functions. The Meeting Room is also not available for individual use, for studying, or for tutoring. The expectation of a group booking the Meeting Room is for there to be at least 5 people, otherwise a smaller number of people are welcome to sit at any table in the library.

The Meeting Room will be scheduled according to the following priorities:

1. Library related programs or meetings
2. Friends of the Middletown Library meetings and activities

3. Municipal meetings or programs
4. Agencies or officials of County, State, or Federal governments meetings or programs
5. Other local non-profit groups may use the room once a month for meetings as scheduling permits. Programs, such as storytimes, lectures, or craft events, should be co-sponsored by the Library. Occasionally, a group may use the room more often if such use does not inhibit other groups from using the space.

Procedure:

1. All requests to use the Meeting Room must be made in advance by: anyone aged 18 or above; who is a resident of or works in Middletown or on Aquidneck Island; who takes responsibility for the group's compliance with the Library's Meeting Rooms policy and procedures. The applicant will serve as the official representative of the nonprofit community organization requesting space.
2. All Library policies apply to meetings taking place in the Meeting Room. Violations of any Library policies may lead to a meeting being ended early or restrictions on future Meeting Room use. By agreeing to the terms of the Meeting Room Policy, patrons are also agreeing to comply with all other library policies during the meeting. Meetings may not disrupt the use of the library by others. Groups composed of minors must provide adequate adult supervision.
3. Reservations may be requested by non-profit organizations and agencies no more than 3 months and no less than 3 weekdays in advance of the meeting. The applicant will receive a confirmation when the request is approved. The Meeting Room is not officially reserved until confirmed. Reservations are considered in the order they are received. A completed application must be on file prior to use of the room.
4. The Library Director shall have the right to cancel, reschedule, or transfer Meeting Room locations or dates that conflict with library sponsored programs and/or special events. In such cases, the Library will make its best effort to give advance notice.
5. The group is expected to adhere to the stated purpose of the meeting.
6. Meetings must be free and open to the public, and attendance cannot be restricted. No admission fees can be charged, and no collections or donations can be solicited. Presenters may offer items for sale during events co-sponsored by the Library, with prior authorization from the Library Director. Attendance is not contingent upon purchase. Sales pitches are prohibited during events, and presenters may only announce sales at the start and conclusion of their events. Items offered for sale are not endorsed by the Library, may not meet collection development policy, and the Library is not obligated to purchase them for its collection.

7. If a group has reserved the Meeting Room and no longer needs to use it, the group must inform the Library at the earliest possible time. If a group is a "no show" and does not inform the Library of cancellation, any other subsequent reservations for the group that are already booked may be canceled, and any other future booking requests for the group may be denied or placed on hold on a waiting list to see if anyone else needs the room first.
8. The Meeting Room is not to be used for events favoring a single political candidate or political party. However, office hours for sitting candidates representing the community are permitted, provided that they are open to the public and focused on communication with constituents rather than campaigning. Politically-oriented citizen groups may also be permitted, provided that their meeting is free and open to the public. Religious organizations may use the room for community meetings and event planning meetings, but partisan religious material may not be distributed during the meetings. Commercial activities and individual use, including solicitation for personal causes or businesses, are prohibited. Organizations may not solicit for new members while using the Library Meeting Room. Fundraising is only allowed if it is for the Library.
9. Groups using the Meeting Room will be held responsible for any costs incurred by the Library or the Town as a result of that use. The Library Director reserves the right to determine whether any proposed use of the Meeting Room will require a police detail or other extraordinary police protection, and if so, the anticipated cost thereof which shall be the responsibility of the group. Payment shall be made to the Library prior to the event. The group will be responsible for any damage to the room, furniture, or equipment, and any cleaning fees incurred. The group will agree to pay for said damages as assessed by the Library Board of Trustees within thirty (30) days of notification.
10. The taping of materials to the walls, doors, and windows is not allowed.
11. The Meeting Room is available during regular Library hours, and must be vacated 15 minutes prior to closing. Meetings must start and end within the originally scheduled time. Access to the Meeting Room beforehand is not guaranteed, so groups are recommended to include setup and cleanup time within their reservation request. All changes to start and end times must be approved by the Library Director. Failure to vacate the Meeting Room at the end of a scheduled booking period may result in loss of privileges for future room use. Events co-sponsored by the Library and fundraising events benefiting the Library may operate outside of open hours.
12. No custodial services are provided in connection with use of the Meeting Room. Storage facilities are not provided. The condition of the room must be neat when vacated. All furniture must be set up by the group and must be back in original positions after use of the

Meeting Room. All supplies brought in such as food, napkins, towels, etc must be taken home, including leftovers. The library will not supply any equipment associated with the serving of refreshments. Dishwashing facilities are not available. The group will be responsible for removing the garbage and trash, and wiping down tabletops at the end of the meeting.

13. Fire laws limit maximum capacity to 100 people without furniture, and there are chairs for about 40 people, but please set up a meeting to view the room beforehand to see the layout.
14. No alcoholic beverages are allowed anywhere in the library unless a temporary liquor license is approved by the Town for a special event. Such an event will need permission from the Library Director and Board of Library Trustees before an application can be submitted to the Town.
15. All activities must be confined to the Meeting Room. Approaching library users for the purpose of encouraging participation in the group's activities is prohibited.
16. Groups that wish to use the Library's technology for their meeting are strongly encouraged to test their equipment for compatibility ahead of time. Library staff may not be available for help immediately before a meeting is scheduled to begin. In order to use the library's equipment, a representative of the group must borrow the equipment with their library card and be responsible for returning the equipment at the end of the meeting.
17. Permission to meet at the Library does not in any way constitute or imply endorsement of the users' policies, beliefs, or programs by the Library staff or Board of Library Trustees.
18. Groups using the Meeting Room agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Town of Middletown, the Board of Library Trustees, the Middletown Public Library, and their employees, officers, agents, and representatives, from any and all suits, actions, claims, or demands of any nature arising out of or brought on account of any injuries or damages sustained by any person as a consequence or result of the use of the room, its furnishings, or its equipment.

Any exceptions must be approved by the Library Director before a reservation is made. Failure to follow the Meeting Room policy and procedures may result in the cancellation of your reservation, loss of future use of the Meeting Room, and/or fees assessed by the Board of Library Trustees. Questions of interpretation will be referred to the Library Director. Final determination rests with the Board of Library Trustees.

Approved July 16, 2024 by the Middletown Board of Library Trustees