

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting
May 2nd, 2022**

The meeting was called to order by President Thomas Pappas at 6:34pm, with Director Merlin having started the webinar at 6:32pm and quorum having been reached at 6:32pm. The meeting was held simultaneously on Zoom and in-person, and broadcast live on PATV's television station. President Pappas cited open meeting laws. Viewers were allowed to pose questions or comments to the chair in real-time.

The roll call was taken:

Present

Peter Bakula
Stephanie Dallaire
Frances Gallugi
Don McAllister
Stephanie Najjar
Thomas Pappas
Anne Quinn
Richard Shruhan
Jennifer Smith
Ruth Titelbaum
Katrina Vassallo

Absent

Kate O'Brien

Approval and Discussion of Minutes from Previous Meeting

There was a **MOTION** to approve the minutes of the previous meeting by Trustee Najjar after the Board paused to review. The motion was seconded by Trustee Gallugi.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Director Merlin noted some editorial anomalies on Page 5, Paragraph 3 of the April minutes.

Receipt of Communications

None.

Director's Report to the Board of Library Trustees

Staffing

Two long-time Library Aides, Russell Grossman and Jeff Spencer, have resigned. Jeff has moved on to a full-time position at the Marblehead Library, and Russ has joined his family business as a

managing partner. We wish them the best of luck! The Library has filled Jeff's hours, and will post Russ's hours after his last day on May 11th.

Senior Children's Librarian Allison Bridgwater has chosen to move into the position of Senior Teen Librarian, and Director Merlin is excited to see what she can bring to the teens in downtown Peabody. Director Merlin has posted the Senior Children's Librarian job to multiple library job sites.

The Library Custodian position was posted earlier in April, and closed this past Friday. Director Merlin will hear from HR soon regarding applicants and interviews.

The last all-staff training was in March, so it's time to schedule our next meeting. Director Merlin requested tonight that the Trustees approve a late opening- 12pm at all 3 locations- on Monday, June 13th, 2022, to allow for an all-staff training at the Main Library.

Programs & Initiatives

Regular in-person programming continues, including Sutton Room concerts, an upcoming lecture series by Professor Theo Theoharis, technology help, Creativity Lab open labs, book groups, storytimes at all 3 locations, and online programs like English conversation circles, meditation, craft meetups, and creative groups. Director Merlin plans on spending more State Aid funds on outside programmers, as our programming staff are overburdened due to continued staff turnover and absences, and feels that outside programmers will breathe new and creative energy into our programming for this summer.

The annual Elementary Art Show is on display in the Main Reading Room through May 15th, after which the High School's Spring Art Show will be on display through the end of the month, and there will be an Art Show Reception & Coffee House Performance on Friday, May 20th, at 6pm.

A main focus of the next few years will be ensuring that our collection and spaces, especially at the Main Library, are utilized in the most efficient and patron-friendly manner possible. As the first part of this plan, this summer, the Library will introduce a "Lucky Day" collection, filled with new and popular fiction and nonfiction releases that are not holdable, and only able to be checked out for one week with no renewals. This will be a separate collection housed in the Main Reading Room, and will be physically separate from normal New Fiction and Nonfiction. Duplicate copies of new titles will be housed in each collection, but while copies in the "normal" collections will be holdable and able to be checked out for 3 weeks with renewals, the Lucky Day collection will require patrons to visit the library and the physical collection to see if what they want to read is available- if it is, in fact, their lucky day.

The Library will transition the “Featured Authors” fiction books back into the normal 2nd floor fiction section, and focus the main floor center shelves on expanded New Releases sections (including interfiling paperback new releases that are currently shelved in an entire separate Paperback section and often totally overlooked), an expanded Travel section, and coffee table/large format books for browsing and reading in the Library.

Budget

Director Merlin has provided a copy of this month’s budget; everything is on track. As Director Merlin requested earlier this month, the Treasurer’s office sent the information they have on record regarding the formation and guidelines of each of our trusts, and she is compiling all information so that all trusts are easily accessible and understood.

Building & Grounds

The West Branch roof leaked in a new area, under a small and difficult-to-access flat roof, and discolored ceiling tiles. The Facilities Department cleaned the small roof and its drainage, replaced ceiling tiles, and fixed all water damage. A roofer will repair some other leaking patches on the main flat roof, and will also address the smaller flat roofs to ensure no further damage.

Director Merlin has an initial meeting with Green International Affiliates tomorrow, to discuss their vision for the Main Library Courtyard, including lighting, landscaping, and adding a patio and permanent covering. Green International designed the Main Street realignment that ended in 2013, including adding the brick median and bumped out parking spaces, so the company is familiar with downtown Peabody and the history and feel of the area. If this meeting goes well, Director Merlin will then move forward with beginning a Community Preservation Commission grant application, and will welcome feedback and input from Trustees, Foundation, and other stakeholders such as the Peabody Garden Club and downtown groups who may want to use our space in the future. Director Merlin will send any initial ideas or plans to the Trustees after the meeting tomorrow, and will ask for authorization to move forward with this process if all agree that this company understands the past, present, and future use of the Courtyard.

Discussion and Questions for the Director

Trustee Gallugi reported having seen leaks and equipment at the West Branch and asked if the roof had been fixed. Director Merlin replied that yes, the roof has been fixed. The roof at the West Branch comprises two pitched roofs with one drain in a flat section in the middle. The drain accumulates debris, which causes water pooling if the drain is not properly cleaned before certain weather systems. While it has been patched periodically, it is being completely repaired now. The West does not need a new roof; rather, only a section needs to be stripped and tarred.

Director Merlin explained that the leakage is the result of years of accumulation, but there is no evidence of water coming in anywhere else. Trustee Gallugi asked who would be in charge of the drain going forward. Director Merlin replied that the drain needs cleaning every few weeks and that, when a storm is predicted, the custodian or Facilities cleans it.

Trustee Gallugi went on to mention that the Garden Club wants to know as soon as possible what Director Merlin envisions for grounds beautification. Director Merlin stated that if the courtyard renovation is going to happen, it will happen in the fall for the summer of 2023. In the meantime she will visit the Branches and see what needs to be done.

Trustee Najjar asked about the dollar amount for the Community Preservation Grant and Director Merlin replied that it will be for the cost of the project. She spoke with Dick St Pierre, of the Community Preservation Commission that funded the Sutton Room ceiling and the George Peabody portrait. This project has evolved in scale from its conception. Because the monies are a grant, not a contract, Director Merlin can choose a company who understands Downtown Peabody and appreciates municipal history.

Trustee Quinn expressed concern about staff turnover and acknowledged Director Merlin's explanation of Peabody library salaries being lower than those of surrounding towns. Trustee Quinn spoke of the cost of cultivating staff and questioned the turnover in various levels of employment, including, but not limited to, aides and senior librarians. Director Merlin replied that part-time employees accepting full-time positions is normal, but that full-time employees leaving is a matter of salary. Since salaries are established by the Union, the Director is unable to offer more money. Trustee Quinn went on to say that teachers, who are in the same Union as librarians, have thirteen salary levels whereas librarians have four, and would it help to get librarians the same levels as teachers. Director Merlin stated that she has never been part of union salary negotiations. Offering fixed steps would help, but the fourth step was only added three years ago so it is still new. Trustee Quinn asked why, if library staff are part of the union, they do not have more of a voice. Director Merlin stated that yes, they do, because they have a bargain unit, but she could not discuss union negotiations because they are between the union and the City. Negotiations will take place this summer. Trustee Quinn asked if the Library is being left out of negotiations. Director Merlin replied that the Library does request more steps and higher pay. Trustee Najjar added that every Union member has the opportunity to raise concerns or go to union stewards and advocate for themselves. The opportunity is there, but "outside" people cannot further that work. Trustee Najjar went on to say that negotiations do not yield perfect results; advocates sometimes must choose their victories. Trustee Shruhan added that much of staff turnover is the result of people accepting promotions elsewhere. Trustee Quinn asked about turnover in other municipal libraries. Director Merlin replied that all Library staff who have left have gone to other libraries except Russ Grossman, who is leaving to work for a family business. There is an unheard-of abundance of library jobs on the MBLC website, indicating that other libraries are experiencing the same level of turnover as we are. Trustee Bakula added that, during the pandemic, people reassessed their career goals and that, in his job, they recently finished negotiations and had to compromise on certain points. Director Merlin said that we negotiated years ago to include aides in the union, and while aides got certain rights, they did not get everything they asked for.

There was a **MOTION** to receive the Director’s Report by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports of the Committees and Sub-committees

Executive Committee:

Nothing to report.

Audubon:

Nothing to report.

Building and Grounds:

Nothing to report.

Personnel:

Nothing to report.

Policy and Procedures:

Nothing to report.

Liaison to the Peabody Institute Library Foundation:

Trustee Najjar reported that the Friends of the Peabody Library Foundation meeting was held last week. The geranium sale will take place on May 14th, 2022 and preorders are available. The price will be \$15 per plant.

Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society:

Trustee Quinn reported that the Historical Society’s annual meeting will take place on May 18th, 2022. There will be a dinner, election, and awarding of various scholarships and recognitions. The tea will be revived on June 15th at the Felton House at Brooksby Farm. More information can be found at peabodyhistorical.org.

There was a **MOTION** to receive the reports of the committees and subcommittees by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee Titelbaum.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Unfinished Business

Efforts on the George Peabody medal are at a standstill. Trustee Najjar reported that she is waiting for Principal Magno to confirm the budget. Trustee Shruhan reached out to the Josten company, who wanted a picture of what the medal would look like. Trustee Najjar stated that both sides of the medal will be inscribed, with the student’s name on the back, as with past medals. Trustee Shruhan expressed support for the size of the medals being two to two-and-a-half inches in diameter. When Trustee Najjar stated that the medals would be worn around the students’ necks as medallions, Trustee Shruhan asked if the ribbons would be navy blue. President Pappas suggested light blue. Trustee Dallaire stated that Peabody high school colors should be used, and President Pappas explained that the use of blue came from the chromium used by Peabody tanners.

New Business

At the April meeting, President Pappas mentioned the invitation from the Veterans association about marching in the parade on May 30th, 2022. Trustee Gallugi and Director Merlin will not attend. President Pappas stated that he would send relevant information in the next week or so. His concern is how individuals will return to their cars after they march the distance. Trustee Quinn asked how the Board would designate themselves in the parade. President Pappas explained that the Board would march with other elected officials. Trustee Quinn expressed concern that parade watchers would not know who the Trustees were and Trustee Gallugi confirmed that no, bystanders would not recognize the individuals of the Board of Trustees. Trustee Shruhan said that, while he is invited because he is a veteran, he walks with the other elected officials. Trustee Najjar suggested that the Board hold umbrellas that read “Peabody Institute Library” and Trustee Gallugi suggested that they hold books while they march.

George Peabody Medal

Trustee Najjar has not discussed this with the Principal Magno, but last year, President Pappas was present at convocation to conduct the pinning ceremony. In previous years, it was held at graduation in front of the entire class. Convocation is a small selection of students whereas graduation encompasses the graduating student body. Trustee Najjar expressed the need to approach Principal Magno as a unified voice to request going back to presenting the pins at graduation, which does not occupy much time. Trustee Gallugi asked who made the final decision. Trustee Najjar wanted to discuss the thoughts of the Board. The ceremony is the responsibility of the President or whoever is designated by the President.

President Pappas explained that convocation is not part of graduation; rather, it is a separate ceremony for students receiving scholarships and awards. The George Peabody medal is an award, so it is traditional to award the medal at convocation. Then, there is a smaller gathering in the Sutton Room. While the students are honored in the Sutton Room with their families, they do not receive the pin in the Sutton Room.

President Pappas said that the George Peabody ceremony will be on May 25th, 2022 and Trustee Najjar brought the conversation back to the convocation, which will be on Thursday, June 2nd, 2022 while graduation is Friday, June 3rd, 2022. In the past, George Peabody medals have been awarded at the graduation ceremony, but last year the George Peabody medals were awarded at convocation. Trustee Najjar feels that Principal Magno will want to continue to award the George Peabody medals at convocation and asked the Board if they wanted to pin at graduation or convocation.

President Pappas said that only eight students receive the George Peabody medal and convocation is not a small ceremony. He felt that the George Peabody medal fit in with the awards at convocation. He acknowledged the value of giving the George Peabody medals at graduation where not only is the whole graduating class present, but others in the audience can bear witness to the tradition.

Trustee Dallaire asked how the recipients are chosen and Trustee Najjar explained that the top eight graduating students receive the medal.

Trustee Shruhan said that when he was President he attended graduation and pinned the students. He favors giving the George Peabody medal at graduation. Trustee Quinn also said that she was in favor of giving the medal at graduation because the award needs the largest audience possible.

A table vote was taken and it was unanimously decided that the medal would be given at graduation. Trustee Vassallo expressed concern that the festivities of graduation would overshadow the medal ceremony, but Trustee Najjar replied that the medal ceremony is still significant.

President Pappas expressed wanting more Trustees on the stage at convocation. The Board of Trustees is invited to the ceremony. Trustee Najjar explained that the high school organizes convocation and graduation ceremonies and high school administration would give relevant details.

Trustee McAllister stated that it is important to include the George Peabody medal at graduation so the tradition will not fade from public knowledge or memory. Trustee Najjar stated that the only reason the separate ceremony exists is to give more recognition.

Trustee Titelbaum asked why the number eight, and Trustee Najjar explained that that had been the number for years. It had changed previously, but eight was chosen and committed to.

Board of Trustees Annual Dinner

President Pappas asked the Board if everyone was comfortable with a restaurant dinner for the annual dinner. Everyone said yes. Trustee Najjar stated that a reservation was necessary; many restaurants are closed on Monday and the Board would like to stay in Peabody. Su Chang's was the first choice because they have donated to the library before and are accommodating for groups. Trustee Najjar asked Trustee McAllister to call Su Chang's.

There was a **MOTION** to approve a late opening for all three libraries for the next All-Staff Training on June 13th, 2022 by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.
All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No
The motion was carried unanimously.

There was a vote over email to change the Board of Trustees meeting start time to 6:30pm from 7pm.

There was a **MOTION** to change the Board of Trustees meeting start time to 6:30pm from 7pm by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Smith. Discussion took place over email.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No
The motion was carried unanimously.

Resolution

Covered in prior discussion.

There was a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Gallugi. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No
The motion was carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37pm.

Submitted by,
Sarah Boçi
Recording Secretary