

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting  
June 8th, 2022**

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The meeting was called to order by President Thomas Pappas at 6:07pm at Su Chang’s restaurant at 373 Lowell Street in Peabody. The meeting was held in-person and not broadcast on Zoom or on PATV.

The roll call was taken:

**Present**

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

**Absent**

Frances Gallugi  
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 McAllister after the Board paused to review. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.

All in Favor: Yes      Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

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**Receipt of Communications**

None.

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**Director’s Report**

**Staffing**

Gabe Jayroe, current part-time Main Library Assistant Librarian, has accepted the full-time West Branch Assistant Librarian position, and will begin his new position this coming Monday, June 13th.

Several candidates were interviewed last week for our long-vacant custodian position, and Director Merlin expects the position to be offered to a promising candidate over the next week or so, after references are contacted.

Library staff conducted a second interview today for a very exciting candidate for the vacant Senior Children's Librarian position, and they hope to make an offer over the next few days, after references are contacted.

### **Programs & Initiatives**

Senior Local History Librarian Catherine Badal is excited to begin offering Local History research appointments every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, and will also begin hosting monthly Art & History Tours of the Main Library on the last Saturday of the month at 11am.

Highlights from the South Branch Library include:

Peabody resident and artist Jocelyn Velush will have her artwork displayed at the library until July 12th, Trustee Jennifer Smith continues her series of educational programs about genealogy research, and very South elementary school class K-4 is visiting the library this month to learn about the summer reading program and summer activities

### **Technology**

NOBLE will no longer host any library websites after June, as it has moved to all cloud-based servers. This also decreases the costs that the Library pays to NOBLE each year. Senior Technology Librarian Yunan Guo has chosen Bluehost as the new website host. The Library has purchased the Bluehost Business Pro hosting service plan for a 36-month term, and is working with the Bluehost migration team to move the library's website to Bluehost's server later this month.

### **Policy**

After discussion with other Massachusetts libraries and the Massachusetts Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee, Director Merlin requested tonight that the Trustees approve the addition of the following statements to the beginning of the PIL's "Request for Reconsideration" policy. These limits are suggested by the MLA and ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom, and limit challenges to Peabody residents, as they are who the collection is specifically chosen for, and also limit challenges on the same title from being filed over and over again if a patron does not like the final decision made:

"Any Peabody resident may file a Request for Reconsideration. If the Library has been previously presented with a Request for Reconsideration of a specific title and determines, according to policy, that the item will remain in the Library's collection, that item shall not be requested to be reconsidered again for 1 year from the date of the Library's final decision regarding said title."

### **Budget**

Director Merlin has provided a copy of this month's budget, the last for FY22; everything is on track. She has also included the requested FY23 budget that she and President Pappas presented to the Mayor and Finance director, along with the line-item detail explaining every change. Director Merlin requested the addition of one part-time Aide, and that the part-time Assistant position being vacated by Gabe Jayroe be increased to a full-time position, to focus on Public Service Desk and social media duties. The Mayor was amenable to the request and Director

Merlin expects the budget hearing (next Thursday, June 16th) to go well. Director Merlin will update the Trustees as soon as the FY23 budget is finalized. President Pappas also began the discussion with the Mayor about the Library's chronic understaffing, with the goal being to add at least one Senior-level position in FY24.

### **Building & Grounds**

Director Merlin brings this request to the Trustees tonight, in the hopes that the Trustees approve partnering with the City Health Department to host air quality monitors at all 3 branches. City of Peabody Health Department Director Sharon Cameron's comments are as follows:

"The City of Peabody was awarded 7 "Purple Air" air sensors through a grant program of the MassDEP. This program will allow us to monitor small particulates that can affect human health. Breathing small particulates (PM2.5) can aggravate asthma, and contribute to other respiratory and cardio-pulmonary illnesses. Data from the sensors will populate in real time to a public website so that community members have access to local air quality data (<https://fire.airnow.gov/?lat=42.369444&lng=-71.948611&zoom=9>) that can help inform their decision-making. Prior to this award, the closest air sensors to us were in Lynn.

For more information about the program, visit <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/air-sensors-for-particulates> and <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-massdep-air-sensor-grant>.

We have proposed to locate sensors throughout our community with a focus on environmental justice areas. Sensors will be in place for a minimum of 1 year.

We are requesting permission to install a sensor on each of the 3 branches of the Peabody Institute Library. Sensors will be affixed to the exterior of the building using one screw and zip ties. Sensors will be located in areas protected from the elements and with access to power and a strong WiFi connection. I have attached a photo of a sensor – they are approximately 4" x 4". Here is a link to more information about the sensor: <https://www2.purpleair.com/pages/install#installation>.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if I can provide additional information in support of this request."

Director Cameron and Director Merlin have met about this project, and chosen a location at each building for these monitors to be installed by the City Facilities department, and Director Merlin asks that the Trustees vote to approve this partnership this evening.

Director Merlin had an initial meeting with Green International, Inc, regarding transforming the Main Library courtyard into a usable and welcoming space with a patio, landscaping, and upgraded lighting. They have provided a Proposal to Provide Survey/Lighting/Landscape Design Services- the first step in the process. As Director Merlin mentioned last month, she plans on seeking Community Preservation and other outside funds for both states of the project- this first design step, and the work to be done itself.

Director Merlin has reached out to the CPC president Darren Kelly to inquire as to the application process, and am waiting to hear back. She will also be looking for additional funding sources to share in the cost of the project, and will begin that search this month. The Mayor has expressed support for this project and is excited about upgrading this downtown green space, and has volunteered to write letters of support as we move forward. At some point, Director Merlin will also ask the Trustees and Foundation for similar letters of support, and will also invite whoever is interested to join the process as we move forward.

Director Merlin has provided the Trustees with Green International's proposal, and ask tonight that the Trustees approve her moving forward with this project, which involves both starting the CPC application process and inquiring into other grant funding sources for this project, so the CPC is not the only funder.

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### **Discussion and Questions for the Director**

Trustee Shruhan asked about the new website host; Director Merlin confirmed that it was the same host used by NOBLE for their website. Trustee Shruhan rescinded his question.

Trustee Shruhan questioned the one-year hiatus for library challenges, saying that three years made more sense. Director Merlin replied that three years would be draconian whereas dissenters would tend to move on within one year. Trustee McAllister stated that if one year proves to be too short, the policy can be changed. Director Merlin stated that she did not anticipate the need for such an extension, but the possibility exists.

Trustee Bakula asked about improvements to the Wallis Street entrance at the Main Library; specifically, better wheelchair access. Director Merlin replied that such changes are virtually impossible as they would comprise major hardscaping adjustments. Trustee Najjar asserted that there must be steps to make the space more attractive, particularly the concrete pass with the stairs, perhaps planters. Director Merlin stated that local artists may be brought in to paint murals. Trustee Titelbaum suggested expanding the flat areas of concrete. Trustee Quinn confirmed the area being discussed as shown in diagrams on Director Merlin's handout. Director Merlin noted that landscaping was sparse in the courtyard area and discussed the Children's Room entrance could be improved. While the Library grounds are partially maintained with mulching and weeding, more landscaping and maintenance needs to be done. Director Merlin also plans to update lighting to make it stylistically consistent around the building.

Trustee Najjar asked if Director Merlin could roll unused budget money. Normally, Director Merlin receives an email with a statement of remaining funds, but as of the meeting, she had not received it.

President Pappas asked after the NOBLE website changes and possible reductions. Director Merlin stated that the server change would be a net even for the Library. Previously, NOBLE had been renting a large space in Danvers for physical servers for libraries and Evergreen. During the pandemic, NOBLE downsized and shifted to a hybrid work-from-home arrangement, resulting in being able to rent a smaller physical space. Director Merlin anticipates a cost reduction in fiscal year 2024.

President Pappas asked if a non-resident could be a patron and Director Merlin confirmed. Director Merlin went on to explain that anyone can challenge the Library's books because anyone can obtain a Peabody Institute Library card. Trustee Quinn asked if other libraries are employing a similar measure and Director Merlin replied that this is new, having been brought about by the recent book challenge this past spring. Historically, Massachusetts has felt fairly immune to such challenges and intellectual freedom censorship, but with the system-wide challenge for that particular book, people discussed the challenge's unprecedented nature. Director Merlin has joined the Intellectual Freedom Committee of Libraries as a result. There has been an ongoing discussion with the Massachusetts Board of Commissioners: if we limit the challenging of books to residents only, are we also limiting the public's access to all our materials? Massachusetts Library Association says no, since the public may still access the titles, but they cannot challenge their presence in the library. The Massachusetts Board of Commissioners does not aim to penalize libraries or individuals; rather, they are expressing a concern and a viewpoint. The incoming Massachusetts Library Association president is advocating for only residents being able to challenge their local libraries. Director Merlin mentioned the Reading library being the first to enact this change. Trustee Quinn noted that one of the articles she had sent to Director Merlin concerned challenging content of online databases that are available through libraries. Director Merlin shared her plan to deep-dive into policies this summer and eliminate outdated language and policies. The Library currently does not have a collection policy for databases; they are trusted to hold a high moral standard, but there will always be questionable titles and materials. Director Merlin aims to establish a disclaimer statement for such materials stating that we do not condone the content; only providing access to it. Trustee Quinn noted that Google searches may also lead to library controversy. Director Merlin wants to move forward with this effort to avoid such extensive and potentially damaging challenges (such as the one in Marblehead) in the future. The service Hoopla experienced a breach in which Holocaust denial materials got past the checkers and were available. Director Merlin was able to block the content, but it should not have been there, leading to her concern that, by providing access to Hoopla, the Library may be misinterpreted as supporting all their content. Trustee Najjar stated that it is the individual's prerogative to choose the materials they consume.

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There was a **MOTION** to receive the Director's Report by Trustee McAllister. The motion was seconded by Trustee Dallaire.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

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### **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 a successful geranium sale. The next meeting will be a quarterly meeting

held on Wednesday, July 13th at 5:30pm regarding Starry Starry Night.

**Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society:**

Trustee Quinn reported that the Historical Society recently held officer elections. Their next event is the Felton Tea which has already sold out. Volunteers will make tea breads and sandwiches.

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

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

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**Unfinished Business**

None.

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**New Business**

Trustee McAllister noted that, historically, the Board of Trustees does not hold meetings in July or August; there should be a motion to halt meetings until September. Trustee Quinn added that this meeting is typically held on the second Monday in September due to the Labor Day holiday. Director Merlin does not anticipate new developments beyond work with Green International which should proceed smoothly.

Trustee Quinn asked that the minutes reflect that the Board of Trustees marched in the Memorial Day parade with other elected officials.

President Pappas noted that the George Peabody medal ceremony in the Sutton Room on May 25th was a success. President Pappas also spoke on behalf of the Trustees at the convocation, with Trustee Najjar standing by as substitute.

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There was a **MOTION** to approve Director Merlin's proceeding with Green International by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee McAllister.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

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There was a **MOTION** to accept the policy changes regarding requests for reconsideration to be available only to resident patrons by Trustee Dallaire. The motion was seconded by Trustee Shruhan.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

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There was a **MOTION** to allow the city to install three air sensors on the three Library branches through the Purple air sensor grant program by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Vassallo.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

Discussion:

Trustee Quinn asked if this would mean allowing the City access to Library properties. Director Merlin replied that it would allow the city to attach sensors to our buildings. The sensors must be close to power and high above reach. Trustee Najjar asked if children would be able to reach the sensors and Director Merlin replied that they would be high and hidden. The idea was to install a sensor at the Main Library first because it is a climate justice area. Trustee Titelbaum asked after the sensors' maintenance and President Pappas asked when the sensors would be installed. Director Merlin replied that the Library would not be responsible for the minimal maintenance and that the sensors would be installed soon.

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There was a **MOTION** to halt meetings until September 12th by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

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**Resolution**

Covered in prior discussion.

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There was a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Quinn. The motion was seconded by Trustee Vassallo.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45pm.

Submitted by,  
Sarah Boçi  
Recording Secretary