

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting
September 19th, 2022**

The meeting was called to order by President Thomas Pappas at 6:40pm, with PATV having started the recording at 6:38pm and quorum having been reached at 6:37pm. The meeting was held on Zoom and broadcast live on PATV's television station. President Pappas cited open meeting laws, mentioning in particular the extended provisions.

The roll call was taken:

Present

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

Absent

Stephanie Dallaire
Frances Gallugi
Don McAllister

Alysa Hayden, Assistant Director of the Peabody Institute Library

Approval and Discussion of Minutes from Previous Meeting

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Receipt of Communications

None.

Director's Report

Staffing

This summer brought new staff and promotions. Jennifer Usovicz began as Senior Children's Librarian in June, and immediately hit the ground running with storytimes, crafts, and new collections in the Children's Library. The Union and City approved the transition of a part-time Assistant position into a full-time and benefited Public Services Assistant position, and Melissa Giacobbe, long-time Aide, began in that position in August. Former Aide Alexandra Pappas moved into the part-time Children's & Teen Assistant position in August, as well. Former Aide

Jeff Spencer returned to the Library as full-time Custodian, and Library staff are thrilled to have him back in Peabody.

With these promotions, and other aides leaving for higher-paid positions at other Libraries this summer, the Library is having a difficult time filling vacant Aide positions, with 4 currently open. The Aides who have left are all incredibly talented and dedicated, and Director Merlin was honored to get them started in the Library world.

Programs & Initiatives

Fall programs have begun, including the seasonal Monday evening concert series in the Sutton Room, the return of Professor Theo Theoharis in October, and the ramping up of Children's, Teen, and Creativity Lab programming for the beginning of the school year.

Assistant Director Hayden submitted the MBLC's required Annual Report and Information Statistics report, and Director Merlin will present a summary of her very encouraging statistics at the October meeting, including FY22 and summer programming attendance, as well as the past year's circulation statistics, which have more than doubled since this time last year.

Technology

The Library website was successfully migrated to the new BlueHost server, with no technical issues or downtime for patrons or staff.

Budget

Director Merlin provided a copy of this month's budget (including the first few months of FY23); everything is on track.

As Director Merlin shared with the Board in June, the Library's FY23 budget was approved as requested, and satisfies the MBLC's city Minimum Appropriations Requirement for full certification. The annual MBLC Financial Reporting paperwork is due on October 7th, and Director Merlin anticipates no issues receiving full certification, which will be voted upon by the MBLC later this fall.

Building & Grounds

Director Merlin is currently working with City Purchasing Agent Dan Doucette to begin requesting bids for the first step of the Courtyard reimagining- proposals for the lighting, landscaping, and hardscaping work to turn the Courtyard into a sustainable and accessible programming and public space. One company will be chosen to draw up plans for a multi-year project, and Director Merlin will then begin to seek funding for each phase separately. This first planning phase will be paid for with State Aid funding.

Director Merlin is also working with City Security Director Keith Bloom and City Purchasing Agent Dan Doucette to request proposals for upgrades to the Main Library's security camera system, including the installation of cameras at the Branches. The first step of this project- replacing the current Main Library cameras and adding cameras at the Branches- will be relatively inexpensive, and will be paid for with State Aid funds. The next step of the project- adding new cameras inside the Main Library, and outdoor cameras at all locations, will be costly

as new wiring will need to be run, etc, and Director Merlin plans on requesting those additional funds from the City as a Capital Improvement Project.

Discussion and Questions for the Director

President Pappas was pleased to note that circulation statistics have more than doubled. The budget is on track and includes the Trustees line item of \$1000. President Pappas added that he shares no relation to Alexandra Pappas.

Trustee Quinn asked about installation of sensors from the last meeting’s minutes. Director Merlin confirmed that the sensors had been installed weeks prior and that the process was slow because the sensors were being installed throughout the city. Trustee Quinn asked what environmental justice is; Director Merlin responded that it relates to the idea that areas with lower air quality and heat deserts tend to be populated by lower income and marginalized residents. Therefore, people who live in such areas, such as Downtown Peabody, will be disproportionately affected by lower air quality. Trustee Shruhan asked about the duration of the testing and Director Merlin responded that the health department had received a grant for a year’s time, but that the sensors will stay installed indefinitely and will not cost the city more than a negligible electricity cost.

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports of the Committees and Sub-committees

Executive Committee:

President Pappas reported that he had signed two paperwork items: the form for the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners for the fiscal year 2023 state aid on September 13th, 2021, and the form for the Massachusetts General Hospital vaccine clinic the library hosts every Tuesday. Director Merlin added that the library has been hosting the clinic for some months and that the form in question authorizes MGH staff to use the library’s bathrooms.

Audubon:

Director Merlin added that the Audubon prints that were sent to be restored in the spring will be ready in the next month or so. Progress is being made on the next batch of prints.

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 she had attended a meeting prior to this one to discuss Starry Starry night. Progress is being made on securing food vendors. Gift boxes will be sold. Trustee Najjar reported that the high-end raffle items include a YMCA membership and a Total Wines gift card. Since each gift box sells for twenty dollars, they must promise a value of twenty dollars or more. Trustee Najjar asked that any Trustees with restaurant connections please reach out. Director Merlin asked if there was another meeting scheduled, and while Trustee Najjar did confirm

another meeting would take place, that no date had been established.

Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society:

Nothing to report.

Although there is no more official Liaison to the Friends of the Peabody Library, Assistant Director Hayden, who used to hold the position of president, was in attendance. Assistant Director Hayden explained that she resigned from the foundation in 2020 when she became Assistant Director because it proved to be a conflict of interest. She maintained her status as staff liaison, however. Unfortunately, the organization suffered greatly during the pandemic, with membership dropping and some members resigning from intense volunteer duties due to health concerns. The Friends voted to dissolve due to drastically diminished numbers. Assistant Director Hayden is working to officially dissolve the group. The process entails making sure all state taxes are up to date (since the organization raised between twelve and fifteen thousand dollars a year on behalf of the Library, filing state taxes was required). The Friends still have a current bank account and they are trying to transfer funds to the Library. Said funds included past memberships, donations, and a generous bequeathment from a long-time donor who had donated yearly in memory of his mother. When he passed away, he left a sum for the Friends of the Library. Director Merlin and Assistant Director Hayden have discussed using all funds left in the account because said funds were traditionally used for programming, particularly the Creativity Lab in 2014. The monies will fund upgrades to the Creativity Lab to make it a current and up-to-date makerspace. Remaining members of the Friends have given their approval and blessing to dissolve the organization.

President Pappas asked why taxes were involved with a nonprofit organization and Assistant Director Hayden replied that all 401(c)3's are registered through the state, and the Friends organization does not meet the threshold to file federal taxes. The term "taxes" does not necessarily indicate a payment, said Assistant Director Hayden, but rather a recognition that they are collecting and spending money appropriately. The State Attorney's office requires such reporting every year in order to ensure that nonprofits are official and up-to-date so that donors may see where their donations are being used.

President Pappas asked for an estimate on when the group will officially dissolve and Assistant Director Hayden replied within the next few months. She went on to say that progress is made in fits and starts.

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Trustee Titelbaum asked Assistant Director Hayden whether a letter will be sent to members with donation information. Assistant Director Hayden replied yes, the foundation is now the sole fundraising body on behalf of the Library and they have maintained all member records. In any given year, there were two hundred and fifty to three hundred members. It is important to not only acknowledge the value that the members added to the Friends and to the Library but also to inform them that they may continue supporting the library. Assistant Director Hayden will draft this letter to submit to the Foundation to recognize the contributions and accomplishments of the

Friends.

Unfinished Business

Three votes were conducted electronically:

1. Allow the International Festival to utilize the Courtyard;
2. Delay opening of the Library and branches for an all-staff meeting on October 3rd;
3. Change the meeting date of this meeting from September 12th to September 19th.

There was a **MOTION** to ratify the three electronic votes by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee Shruhan.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

New Business

President Pappas congratulated Teen Librarian Allison Bridgewater for the media recognition of her banned book club for teens.

The MBLC will host a public library meeting in Shrewsbury on October 22.

President Pappas noted the excellent acoustics in the Library Courtyard, making it a good space for musical performances.

Resolution

The next meeting will be held on October 3rd at 6:30pm.

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14pm.

Submitted by,
Sarah Boçi
Recording Secretary