

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting**  
**April 3rd, 2023**

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The meeting was called to order by President Kate O'Brien at 6:31pm, with PATV confirming presence at 6:31pm and quorum having been reached by 6:26pm. The meeting was held in the Tech Lab at the Peabody Institute Library, on Zoom, and broadcast live on PATV's television station. President O'Brien cited open meeting laws, mentioning in particular the extended provisions.

The roll call was taken:

**Present**

Peter Bakula  
Frances Bisazza-Gallugi  
Stephanie Dallaire  
Don McAllister  
Kate O'Brien  
Thomas Pappas  
Anne Quinn  
Richard Shurhan  
Jennifer Smith  
Ruth Titelbaum  
Katrina Vassallo

**Absent**

Stephanie Najjar

**Approval and Discussion of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

There was a **MOTION** to approve the minutes of the previous meeting by Trustee Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustee Bisazza-Gallugi.

All in Favor: Yes      Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

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**Director's Report**

**Staffing**

The Library is fully staffed except for one empty part-time Aide position, so please send any qualified applicants to the Assistant Director.

Senior South Branch Librarian Amy Titus continues her studies, and Public Services Librarian Sharon Janus completes her degree this semester. Director Merlin requested the approval of

tuition reimbursement for both of their Spring semester courses.

The next all-staff training is on Tuesday, June 20th, and an outside trainer will be conducting a deescalation training, to ensure that staff are prepared to handle and calm tense situations that may arise in the Library.

### **Building**

The South Branch LED light conversion has begun, and is happening on Fridays, as the South Branch is closed and therefore empty and easier for the City Electricians to complete their work. It should be done by the end of April. When this project is completed, Director Merlin will be requesting quotes for the same LED conversion at the West Branch Library.

The fine arts and historical object collection appraisal by the Winston Art Group will begin with an initial consultation later this month, and Director Merlin will provide more information as the process moves forward.

### **Programs & Initiatives**

This year's George Peabody Medal Awards will take place in the Sutton Room on Wednesday, May 24th, at 6pm, and will celebrate the highest achieving members of this year's Peabody Veterans Memorial High Class of 2023, and will include speeches and music by the high school Chorale ensemble.

Senior Adult Programming Librarian Gabriela Toth reports that Harvard Professor Theo Theoaharis returns next week for a six week class, reading *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*. After a successful puzzle swap at the South Branch, the program will begin at the Main Library as well. Program attendance in general continues to increase, with special interest in crafting programs and concerts. Brooksby Village pop up library has been going very well - there are about 75 people on the monthly list for holds deliveries, and there is now a dedicated book drop for the library there as well.

Senior Teen Librarian Allison Bridgewater reports that the Teen Room, and in particular the teen volunteer program, are popular and busy. Mental health programming has begun, with weekly yoga and an upcoming baking program. She will be visiting Higgins Middle School this Wednesday in order to contribute to their literacy initiative for the month of April, and Senior Librarian Bridgewater will donate recently weeded books to students, as well as bring new books for students to check out.

Senior Children's Librarian Jennifer Usocvitz reports that the Children's Library will be doing a three program long art therapy series with ARTrelief out of Waltham using grant funds from the Peabody Cultural Council mental health grant in April and May. In June, the Plant Mobile from

the Mass Horticultural Society will be stopping by for a STEM program on edible plants for children. The weekly Music and Movement program has been very successful and the baby, toddler, preschool, and pajama story times have been very popular. In the future, the Children's Library is looking to host a children's yoga program in the afternoons at the West Branch, and a Read to a Therapy Dog program at the Main Library. The children's department has been working hard to offer the community a program almost every day of the month.

Senior South Branch Librarian Amy Titus reports that the South Branch Library had excellent attendance for three programs in March: a collage workshop with local artist Jessica Furtado, the first toddler storytime, and the Community Puzzle Swap. Another puzzle swap is being planned for September. For spring school vacation week, Animal Adventures Family Zoo and Rescue Center from Bolton, MA will be visiting the South Branch on April 18th, and they will have a sunflower planting program for children on April 19th.

Senior West Branch Librarian Amory Thomas reports that the West Branch Library's Teen Room is finished with getting up to date furniture and a curated collection, and is just waiting on the new computers to be delivered. The Teen area has seen an increase in use among Teens - more students coming after school to study and look at books, and the average attendance for the TACO volunteer group continues to increase. Senior Librarian Thomas will be working with Senior Teen Librarian Bridgewater in the near future to plan more Teen oriented programs and events for the Summer.

The West Branch has hosted a small few Children's programs that have been very successful, with high demand for more Children's programming, especially with school soon to be let out for the Summer.

### **Birds & Bubbly**

The first annual Peabody Library Foundation Birds & Bubbly fundraiser will take place on Friday, April 28th, from 6-8pm at the Main Library. The PIL owns one of only 119 remaining original copies of Audubon's 200 year old Birds of America print, and works every year to conserve these prints for generations to come, with your donations.

Birds & Bubbly will feature selected framed prints that have been conserved and those that have yet to be conserved, and will include speeches and information about the conservation process and the history of these prints. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres, desserts, wine, beer, & bubbly (for those 21+) as we celebrate the PIL's history and support its future.

Tickets are \$50/person, and available for purchase through Eventbrite, and at every Library location. Learn more at [www.peabodylibrary.org/birds](http://www.peabodylibrary.org/birds). Sponsorship opportunities are also available, and Director Merlin can provide you with more information.

Director Merlin has flyers for your convenience, and please feel free to take some to post in local businesses and anywhere you would like to promote this event. The Library is also regularly posting ads for this event, so please feel free to either Share the Library's posts, or create your own posts using the same graphics that can be sent out. Director Merlin also has printed invitations and envelopes that you may take to mail or deliver to those who you would like to personally invite.

### **Budget**

Director Merlin has included our current budget for your consideration. The notable line items are the high percentage of expenditures due to higher electric and natural gas costs.

Director Merlin submitted her requested Library budget for FY24 to the City, and await Union contract ratification to confirm salary raises (projected to be a 3% cost of living increase, increases in longevity).

Director Merlin's request was level funding for Expenses and a 10.57% increase in Salaries, for an overall requested departmental increase of 7.82% over FY23 due to:

1. Expected 3% COLA raises
2. Request to change the soon-to-be-vacant Public Services Librarian into a Senior Position, so that it may take on more marketing and outreach responsibilities while being of the appropriate level to manage the Public Services department (this position existed until 2019)
3. Request for a slight raise for the Assistant Director position to bring it in line with other NOBLE Assistant Director salaries
4. Request to add a Full Time Children's Librarian for the West Branch Library.

Director Merlin expects to begin meetings with the Mayor, Finance Department, and HR in May, have included copies of the proposed Library FY24 budget for the Board's reference.

### **New Business- Policy**

Director Merlin provided the proposed new Meeting Room and Bulletin Board policies, and requested that they be discussed and voted upon during New Business.

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

Trustee Quinn asked if there would be a celebration for Public Services Librarian Sharon Janus' retirement; Director Merlin confirmed.

Trustee Pappas asked how many guests the Library expects for the Birds and Bubbly event on April 28 and Director Merlin replied they estimated one hundred. Trustee Pappas went on to ask

about TACO, which is Teen Advisory and Community Organization. Director Merlin started this group, which provides an opportunity for local teens to serve community service requirements once a week. Senior West Branch Librarian Amory Thomas continues the program at the West Branch and Senior Teen Librarian Allison Bridgewater continues the program at the Main Library.

Trustee Pappas commended the puzzle swap and toddler storytime at the South Branch and asked to learn more about reading to therapy dogs. Director Merlin replied that said program is an opportunity for elementary students to practice reading to a calm, noncritical presence. The Library has held this program prior to the pandemic; it is not the Library's invention.

Trustee Pappas asked how Senior Teen Librarian Bridgewater garners interest in teen programs and Director Merlin replied that all Peabody Veterans' Memorial High School students are required to fulfill between ten and twenty hours of community service every academic year. Library programs are a guaranteed source of volunteer time and Senior Teen Librarian Bridgewater has instituted myriad programs that allow students to accumulate hours when they can.

Trustee Pappas commented that the Library is becoming a more vibrant presence in the community. He asked where the LED lights were being fitted and Director Merlin replied that they are being installed at the South Branch. The lights have three available settings and staff chose the middle setting. This means the South Branch will be brighter and cheaper to light.

Trustee Quinn asked about the requirements for the Aide position. Director Merlin replied that the position requires fourteen hours a week with one evening shift, an alternate Saturday shift, and one Sunday shift approximately every five weeks between Labor Day and Memorial Day. Aides are front line staff and their work is mostly customer service as they are the most visible staff at the Library.

Trustee McAllister commented that only 119 sets of Audubon prints exist, and the Library is in possession of one set.

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There was a **MOTION** to accept the Director's report by Trustee Bisazza-Gallugi. The motion was seconded by Trustee Pappas.

All in Favor: Yes      Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

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**Reports of the Committees and Sub-committees**

<b><u>Executive Committee:</u></b>	Nothing to report.
<b><u>Audubon:</u></b>	Nothing to report.
<b><u>Building and Grounds:</u></b>	Nothing to report.
<b><u>Personnel:</u></b>	Nothing to report.
<b><u>Policy and Procedures:</u></b>	Nothing to report.
<b><u>Liaison to the Peabody Institute Library Foundation:</u></b>	
Director Merlin shared a need for volunteers to set up for Birds and Bubbly.	
<b><u>Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society:</u></b>	Nothing to report.

There was a **MOTION** to accept the reports of the committees and subcommittees by Trustee Smith. The motion was seconded by Trustee Bisazza-Gallugi.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

### **New Business**

There was a **MOTION** to approve tuition reimbursement for Public Services Librarian Sharon Janus and Senior South Branch Librarian Amy Titus by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Bisazza-Gallugi.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

There was a **MOTION** to approve the updated meeting meeting room policy by Trustee Vassallo. The motion was seconded by Trustee McAllister.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

### **Discussion**

Director Merlin stated that a library is not required to make its spaces available for outside organizations; once it does, it becomes a limited public forum. Under the first amendment, the Library is required to provide that right, resulting in everyone getting approval provided they follow headcount regulations and building rules. The new policy clarifies that use of Library spaces does not imply Library endorsement or alignment with organizations using Library facilities. Those who request to use Library space must complete a use agreement form online which Assistant Director Alysa Hayden and Director Cate Merlin will review in detail. Once the Assistant Director and Director approve, the group may proceed to book rooms. Each Library location has essentially one programming room, e.g., the Tech Lab at the Main Library. Neither the Sutton Room nor the Children’s Programming Room are open for programming. The Community Rooms at the Branches are very heavily used spaces. Director Merlin will make the scheduling calendar available to the public this week. Library programs get priority; as such, outside programming will experience less availability.

Trustee Quinn mentioned that, at the last meeting, Director Merlin stated that she might not make spaces available due to existing programming. Director Merlin clarified that she would like to make the spaces available to the community, but the Library must take priority. The Library also does not provide AV equipment because it is a liability. Groups must provide their own AV equipment and must market their own programs.

Trustee Bakula asked what maximum occupancies were and if they were on the website. Director Merlin replied that max occupancies are between twenty and thirty people.

Trustee Shruhan stated that the policy is too lenient regarding groups that book a room and do not arrive to use the space. He said the ban should be for six months rather than three. Director Merlin stated that previously there were no limits on how often a group could reserve a space or how many times during the year, so some groups would occupy Library space every week. Now, the Library limits scheduling to one meeting a month for a total of twelve meetings a year. By giving Library programs priority, outside programming will be limited, but this will better serve the Library.

Trustee Dallaire asked what groups are reserving rooms and commented that she understood groups needing to cancel reservations twice in a row under certain circumstances. Director Merlin replied that groups may make a written appeal to request an exception, which would be largely at her discretion. Often, groups will book a room, the custodial staff will set it up, and then the groups will simply not arrive. This wastes staff time and effort. Groups must respect the space and the staff. Canceling a reservation ahead of time is one thing; not showing up is another. Trustee Pappas asked if such groups are subsequently banned from booking and Director Merlin replied that yes, such groups are banned from booking for three months. Groups may only book once a month and two months in advance. Library spaces must be open to the public. Doors must remain open and unlocked; no one may be dismissed or prohibited from attending. Groups who require entry or membership fees, therefore, may not use Library spaces.

Trustee Titelbaum asked if there was a time limit. Director Merlin replied that the natural restrictions of shared booking limit extensive one-time use. She went on to say that she did not want to impose more limitations as there were plenty.

Trustee Pappas commented that Director Merlin and Assistant Director Hayden put much effort into this policy, but they still needed the assistance of the city solicitor. He went on to ask if this is something that other libraries will follow. Director Merlin replied that these policies become “boilerplate” among other libraries, because many other libraries follow the same or similar rules. All Library policies eventually coalesce, resulting in consistency between cities and libraries. Director Merlin and Assistant Director Hayden researched other libraries’ policies that

they found reasonable. Trustee Pappas asked if said policies contributed to our policies, and Director Merlin replied in the affirmative. She is confident that this is a policy everyone can follow.

There was a **MOTION** to approve the updated bulletin board use policy by Trustee Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustee Bisazza-Gallugi.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

### **Discussion**

In the past, there has been one bulletin board per location, open for any and all public use in addition to Library use (provided, of course, the material met Library approval). Bulletin boards are also subject to Limited Public Forum regulations once they are made available to the public. Library bulletin boards are small. In order for the Library and the City to publicize their work, we are no longer allowing the community to post on the bulletin boards. Only City of Peabody and Peabody Institute Library of Peabody may utilize the bulletin boards. This includes schools, City Hall, etc. Trustee Dallaire asked if the Library expects pushback and Director Merlin replied no; the policy has always been for outside materials to be vetted first. Trustee Bisazza-Gallugi asked if appropriate materials included anything happening in the city, such as the Garden Club. Director Merlin confirmed that only City of Peabody-related matters would be posted.

There was a **MOTION** to accept the public comment policy by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Bisazza-Gallugi.

All in Favor: No                      Any Opposed: No

Trustee Quinn abstained.

The motion was carried.

### **Discussion**

Trustee Quinn asked if it would be sensible to put public comments elsewhere in the agenda that the issue is likely to be. Director Merlin replied that the point of including public comments is to somewhat detach that discussion from the Trustees meeting. Constituents must email ahead of time to be put on the list. Anyone who requests it may have three minutes to speak, but there is no discussion as it is not intended to be a dialogue. Trustee Quinn mentioned that on the City Council, whoever wishes to speak on, for example, a permit, may do so in the moment. President O'Brien mentioned that the school committee allows public comments at the beginning of meetings. Director Merlin stated that having public comments at the beginning of meetings is consistent with other boards and committees. Public comments may also be read during Receipt of Communication. Trustee Pappas asked how we would record motions for public policies and if they needed to be read out loud. President O'Brien stated that they were only approving the public comment policy.



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**Resolution**

The next meeting will be held on May 1, 2023 at 6:30pm.

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There was a **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Bisazza-Gallugi. The motion was seconded by trustee Pappas.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12pm.

Submitted by,  
Sarah Boçi, Recording Secretary