

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

**Minutes of Meeting**  
**March 6th, 2023**

---

The meeting was called to order by President Kate O'Brien at 6:34pm, with PATV confirming presence at 6:33pm and quorum having been reached by 6:30pm. The meeting was held in the Sutton Room 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  
Stephanie Dallaire  
Frances Gallugi  
Don McAllister  
Stephanie Najjar  
Kate O'Brien  
Thomas Pappas  
Anne Quinn  
Richard Shruhan  
Jennifer Smith  
Ruth Titelbaum  
Katrina Vassallo

**Absent**

None.

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

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

All in Favor: Yes      Any Opposed: No

Trustee Quinn had supplied edits to Library Director Merlin, who adjusted the draft accordingly.

---

## **Director's Report**

### **Staffing**

Long time Public Services Librarian Sharon Janus has announced her retirement, effective May 24th. Sharon has worked at the PIL for over 30 years, and is currently the heart of the Public Services department at the Main Library, keeping the PSD organized and focused on customer service and helping every patron. She is the coordinator of the Conversation Circle English language learning program and Home Delivery program. Director Merlin wishes Sharon the best of luck in this next stage of her life, and cannot thank her enough for her years of dedication and passion for our library and patrons.

Due to scheduling conflicts, it has been quite some time since we hosted an all-staff training. Director Merlin requested the approval of a late (1pm) opening for all 3 locations on Tuesday, June 20th, to allow for the next all-staff training.

### **Building**

Additional areas of the West Branch roof- the flat area above the Children's Room entrance and play area- were found by the Facilities department to need repairing, and this flat roof will be repaired this month. The boiler pump at the West Branch is also being repaired in-house.

The conversion of all South Branch lighting to LED begins later this month. The Facilities Department shared explained that these lights come with 4 brightness settings, and we will choose the setting that is warmer and most conducive to reading and studying.

Director Merlin has accepted the proposal for a full appraisal of the Library's fine art and historical object collections for insurance reasons from the Winston Art Group, and will be meeting soon with their New England area director to make further plans.

### **Programs & Initiatives**

Senior Children's Librarian Jenny Usovicz reports that she has booked three art therapy programs for children with Art Relief in the Spring. There will be another Baby Wiggle program here and two at the West Branch. Summer Reading supplies have been ordered. Little Groove: Baby Wiggle, the Pajama Storytime and Alex's Monthly craft program have been successful new programs. She is looking forward to setting up the Family Literacy Kits and Family Literacy programming soon and expanding the World Language section with the grant for Gateways to Reading.

Senior Teen Librarian Allison Bridgewater reports that the Teen Department is kicking off the mental health and wellness series this month. They will have yoga classes twice a month, a baking demonstration given by a mental health advocate in April (postponed from March), a

bullet journaling class in April, and the TACO volunteers will help us make DIY wellness kits that we'll start giving out next week. Kits will contain materials to make things like stress balls, mini zen gardens, and eye pillows.

Senior Technology Librarian Yunan Guo purchased a new printer for the South Branch, replaced the public printer with the new one, and added wireless printing.

Senior Adult Services Librarian Gabi Toth reports that Harvard professor Theo Theoharis will return in April to discuss two Shakespeare plays.

Senior West Branch Librarian Amory Thomas reports that she has scheduled cupcake decorating with a local bakery, an "Ask a Muslim Anything" group discussion, a cooking demonstration, realtor talks on how to downsize, and hopefully hearing testing being scheduled in the next couple months. AARP Tax Help continues, with a couple extra days added because of the massive demand for appointments. The West Branch will have a "rent the chicken" display with live chickens on view as they get closer to hatching, with the chicks being borrowed from Brooksby Farm, and in accordance with the Peabody Dept of Health (i.e. cleaning regularly, no touching, etc).

Senior South Branch Librarian Amy Titus reports that the South Branch Library will be hosting a collage workshop for adults presented by local artist Jessica Furtado on Thursday, March 30th. Due to many patron requests, Toddler Storytime will take place every other Tuesday morning starting March 14th. This program will be for caregivers with children ages 2 to 4.

And last but certainly not least, the 5th annual PeaPod Seed Library will open at all 3 locations on Monday, March 20th. This year, the PeaPod has over 5,000 packets of vegetable, herb, and flower seeds available for patrons, and anyone may take up to 5 veggie/herb packets and 5 flower packets per visit. This year's PeaPod is generously sponsored by the Rotary Club of Peabody.

### **Budget**

The current budget is provided; nothing is of concern. Director Merlin's budget request for FY24 is due to the Finance Department by March 24th. The Mayor has requested that departments prepare level funded budgets, with the addition that "Please add budget adjustments that address mission critical needs and inflationary factors, so we can discuss possible additions during our budget meetings with the mayor." Director Merlin plans on requesting the addition of one Senior Marketing and Outreach Librarian and one West Branch Children's Librarian, both of which are critical to ensuring that the Library increase its reach, programs, and service outside of the 3 buildings' 12 walls, and increase its services to children in West Peabody, as it requested on an almost daily basis.

## Policy

Tonight, Director Merlin is asking for the approval of changes to three policies:

1. Internet Access Policy- combines and replaces the existing Internet Use and Wireless Network Access Policies, and has no content changes other than deleting extraneous language and duplicated statements.
2. Library Loans Outside of MA Networks- replaces Inter-Library Loan Policy, as that policy name was misleading (this policy is for country-wide loans, while inter-library implies local libraries as well).
3. Photography and Videography Policy- adds the highlighted sentence: “**no one may photograph/video/audio record a patron without their permission (or a minor’s parent/guardian permission)**”.

The Meeting Room policy will be ready to be approved at the April 3rd meeting.

---

## Discussion and Questions for the Director

Trustee Najjar asked if the portrait of Queen Victoria was included in the appraisal. Director Merlin replied that the appraisal will comprise the Library’s entire art collection, including the portrait and all items in the vault. The appraisal will cost around \$12,000. The City will pay for premiums and insurance policies and State Aid will cover the appraisal itself. Director Merlin mentioned that our fine arts policy is undersized.

Trustee Pappas mentioned the phrase “mission critical needs” from the Director’s Report and asked for clarification, adding that the budget is already low. Director Merlin replied that a Marketing and Outreach position is critical, as staff is often out of the library for work needs and it would be helpful to have an in-house employee responsible for marketing and outreach coordination and administration. A West Branch children’s librarian is also critical as there is a large and growing need for children’s programming, especially at the West Branch, which houses an extensive children’s collection. Trustee Pappas mentioned that, with current budget adjustments, there is nothing to be cut. Director Merlin replied that we have level-funded budgets, but the Library needs these two positions to be established and filled. With our current amounts in grant money, we have the financial potential to do more with staffing. Trustee Quinn asked if these positions would alleviate the problem of having to close branches. Director Merlin replied in the affirmative, going on to explain that we are now nearly fully staffed, which mitigates scheduling struggles.

Trustee Quinn asked about the Winston art group and their credentials. Director Merlin responded that she was referred to them by the City auditor. When the Library sends out Audubon prints for restoration, they are required to inform the conservation company and



Merlin will provide marketing material. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 22 at 5:30pm.

**Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society:**

The Society hosted a genealogy lecture last week. The next lecture, the History of Jordan Marsh, will be held in April. Trustee Quinn will supply the date.

---

There was a **MOTION** to accept the reports of the committees and subcommittees by Trustee Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustee McAllister.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

---

**Unfinished Business**

Trustee Najjar gave an update on the George Peabody medals. Unfortunately, the woman who worked at Jostens had a family emergency and was not able to reply. Trustee Najjar found that, years ago, there had been another pin that meets current needs. It is a coin emblazoned with George Peabody's name and has a ribbon attached. Since this medal exists, it will be this year's ceremonial medal. Trustee McAllister asked if there will be a representative from the Board of Trustees at graduation. Trustee Najjar replied that she has been communicating with Stephanie Darling on this matter. The high school principal wants to leave this decision to the Board. Typically, the President attends, and if the President cannot, another Trustee will. The President can choose whether to attend convocation or graduation. The George Peabody medal ceremony will continue to be held in the Sutton Room, but the Board must discuss their expectations for the event.

---

**New Business**

There was a **MOTION** to approve the All-Staff training and late opening on June 20, 2023 by Trustee Shurhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Smith.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No.

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

There was a **MOTION** to accept the policy on photography and videography by Trustee Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustee McAllister.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

There was a **MOTION** to accept the new internet access policy by Trustee Gallugi. The motion was seconded by Trustee Pappas.

All in Favor: Yes                      Any Opposed: No

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

**Resolution**

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

---

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

No discussion. The motion was carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59pm.

Submitted by,  
Sarah Boçi