

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

**Minutes of Meeting**  
**May 1st, 2023**

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The meeting was called to order by President Kate O'Brien, with PATV confirming presence at quorum having been reached. 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 minutes were taken from a Zoom recording of the meeting.

The roll call was taken:

**Present**

Peter Bakula  
Frances Bisazza-Gallugi  
Stephanie Dallaire  
Stephanie Najjar  
Kate O'Brien  
Thomas Pappas  
Anne Quinn  
Ruth Titelbaum  
Katrina Vassallo

**Absent**

Don McAllister  
Jennifer Smith  
Richard Shruhan

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

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

All in Favor: Yes      Any Opposed: No

Trustee Quinn posed questions about policy and the timing of a vote; Director Merlin will move it.

**Communications**

The Board of Trustees has been invited to participate in the City's Memorial Day Parade.

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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.

The next all-staff training is on Tuesday, June 20th, and an outside consultant will be conducting a deescalation training, to ensure that staff are prepared to handle and calm tense situations that may arise in the Library. The Library will also offer an optional active shooter training to staff on Thursday, June 8th, taught by Peabody Sergeant Mark Saia.

Per the contract, Children's Librarian Katia Pascoal requests that approval of a three-week trip to visit family in Brazil:

"I would like to request three weeks off from July 31 to August 19, in order to visit my home country Brazil. There are few reasons why I need a full three weeks off. First, I have been unable to return to Brazil since 2021, an extended trip would be much more meaningful, and would give me time to visit family and friends that I've been unable to see for that long. Second, the multiple flights from Massachusetts to Brazil take about 24 hours, one-way. After traveling for such a long period, I would appreciate the ability to stay a little longer to compensate for the travel time.

### **Building**

The South Branch LED conversion is almost complete. After that is complete, the City electricians will add additional outlets and wifi ports at the Main Library.

### **Programs & Initiatives**

The first annual Birds & Bubbly fundraiser was a huge success, and Director Merlin has heard wonderful feedback about the event.

As a reminder, 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.

The annual Peabody Elementary School Art Show will open at the Main Library on Wednesday, May 10th, and run through May 28th.

Senior Children's Librarian Jenny Usovicz reports that the Children's Department is incredibly busy! Two chicks successfully hatched during the West Branch Library's "Rent a Chicken" Program, and now live at Brooksby Farm. Outside performer Baby Wiggle regularly brings in over 30 children at each event. At the Main Library, staff have embarked upon a long-awaited weeding project, to remove older and uncirculated materials to make room for new materials once the next fiscal year begins in July. All Welch Elementary School Kindergarten students will visit the Main Library this month to get their first Library cards. A Summer Reading Kickoff Party for children and teens is planned for June 28th.

Other upcoming Children's programming includes:

- Plantmobile Program: Horticultural Program in June- Plants You Eat
- Ukulele Program in August- music program for kids to dance to and hear music
- Alpaca Therapy Program- potentially booking two alpacas to come in June or August for an hour long educational visit)
- Poetry contest along with the Find Your Voice Theme for Summer Reading
- Family Literacy Kits are awaiting supplies
- Set up a Summer Story Walk in the courtyard with *Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late*
- Art Therapy Programs thanks to the PCC grant- 3 workshops with Art Relieve were all very successful with full registration lists, another one is coming in May

Senior Teen Library Allison Bridgewater continues to visit the Higgins Middle School, Peabody High School, and Peabody Learning Academy regularly, last checking out over 125 books in one visit to the Higgins!

All departments are gearing up for Summer Reading, which will begin on June 28th with a kickoff party for kids and teens. This year features an online reading program for children and teens, and a BINGO program for adults. Director Merlin will be meeting with the Peabody School Department Food Services Director this week to finalize details for this summer's 15th free Summer Lunch program.

### **Budget**

Director Merlin included the current budget for your review.

Trustee Chair O'Brien and Director Merlin met with the Mayor, Director of the Finance Department, the City Auditor, and HR Director in April, regarding the FY24 Library budget request. Director Merlin is confident that the FY24 budget will reach the MBLC-required Municipal Appropriation Requirement for full certification, and her other requests were favorably discussed. The budget hearing with the City Council Finance Committee will be on Thursday, June 15th.

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

Trustee Najjar thanked Director Merlin and Library staff for their work for Birds and Bubbly. Director Merlin acknowledged the work of Senior Local History Librarian Catherine Badal, and expressed her own gratitude for the staff's work. Trustee Titelbaum asked what the final attendance count was; there were eighty tickets sold and more at the door.

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



expertise. President O'Brien added that Trustees have been asked to provide feedback, so the Board is involved. Trustee Pappas stated that, in the spirit of George Peabody's legacy, it is unfair that pay is mentioned in the charter as Trustees do not collect a stipend or salary. President O'Brien clarified that the language allows for the possibility of paying Trustees, not mandating payment to Trustees. Trustee Pappas mentioned that there is no language in the charter regarding a Trustee's resignation and subsequent replacement, which would need council approval. President O'Brien clarified that the Trustees and the council approve of a replacement together, and only until the following election. The person in question may not run for office. Trustee Quinn asked why Trustees are not compensated if their duties are equivalent to those of the City council. Director Merlin will look into it.

There will be a meeting with City Council about the charter on May 11.

Trustee Titelbaum questioned the sandbags outside the Courtyard Entrance of the Main Library. Director Merlin explained that the bags prevent debris from falling into the gutters; the design of the building wing is such that detritus can get into the grates when there is wind. Apart from a large awning, which would be unsightly, there is no present solution. Director Merlin will look into this as well.

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## **New Business**

### **George Peabody Medal**

Trustee Najjar reported that the ceremony for the George Peabody medal will be the same as before. Before the pandemic, the pinning had been done at graduation so that honorees may be recognized by their peers. Since the pandemic, the Trustees have decided whether the pinning will take place at graduation or convocation. The medal ceremony, which is separate from the pinning ceremony, takes place in the Sutton Room. Trustee Najjar went on to say that since only the students receiving the pin and medal are invited, that the event can take place in the Sutton Room. There is a short speech about the history of the award and students also receive a book listing the name of every recipient, including their own. Trustee Najjar believes that a smaller ceremony is more meaningful. After feedback from President O'Brien and Trustee Pappas, it was agreed that the pinning would take place at graduation.

### **Sharon Janus**

There will be a dinner for Senior Public Services Librarian Sharon Janus at Kowloon restaurant and a cake at the Library to thank her for her decades of service. President O'Brien asked the Board if they felt it appropriate to do more for Sharon, and to follow suit for longtime employees going forward. Director Merlin will be in communication. There will be an email vote.

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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 unanimously passed.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, June 5 at 6:30pm in the Tech Lab of the Main Library.

Submitted by,

Sarah Boçi

Recording Secretary