

PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of Meeting

November 3, 2025

The meeting was called to order by President Kate O'Brien at 6:28 pm, with quorum having been reached by 6:25 pm.

The roll call was taken:

Present

Ruth Titelbaum
Jennifer Smith
Stephanie Najjar
Katrina Vassallo
Peter Bakula
Stacie Dolin
Frances Gallugi
Stephanie Dallaire
Kate O'Brien

Absent

Anne Quinn

Public Comments

None.

Approval and Discussion of Minutes from Previous Meetings

A typo from the October minutes misnaming the Kennedy School of Government was brought to the Recording Secretary's attention and amended.

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Receipt of Communications

No new communications.

Director's Report

Staffing

Emily Bouffard accepted one of our vacant Library Aide positions. Interviews are still underway for the remaining Aide position.

Budget

I have included the budget for your review.

Building & Grounds

Several interior and exterior lights are out and have been reported to the Facilities Department for replacement.

Following the Library Board of Trustees meeting on October 7, the elevator was inspected and re-opened after the completion of repairs. It has been operating normally, but late last week a staff member reported a concern after noticing a bounce while the elevator was traveling from the basement to the first floor. The elevator was immediately closed to staff and patrons, and City Elevator was contacted. Upon inspection the next day, it was determined to be a normal re-leveling adjustment.

Policies & Procedures

At the October department head meeting, both administrative and union staff reviewed the library's existing policies and procedures and noted revisions that were needed. Following another review by administration, I will work with Trustee Vassallo to implement the changes.

Programs & Initiatives

The third annual Winter Arts & Crafts Fair will be held at the Main Library on Saturday, November 29 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This event will take place in conjunction with the Holiday Stroll, presented by Peabody Main Streets. Eighteen local artists will be selling handmade goods, including fine art, ceramics, jewelry, apparel, home decor, ornaments, comics, and more.

Public Service Department

The Fall session of the English Conversation Circles officially launched last month, offering seven sessions per week at various morning and evening times. Attendance has averaged two to five participants per class, and Public Service Librarians Justin Liberti and Eileen Finnegan have already updated outreach efforts to help boost participation. Eileen continues to coordinate the

Citizenship Study Groups, which helps patrons prepare for the U.S. Citizenship Exam. The program recently transitioned to a hybrid format to include participants on Zoom. In addition, Eileen has been providing one-on-one Ancestry.com training sessions for patrons. Senior Technology Librarian Lindley Valcarcel, who joined the team in late September, has integrated smoothly into the department. She now leads the Wednesday Drop-in Tech Help program, which served 13 patrons this month.

Adult Services Department

The Fall Concert Series continues this month with Susan and Roy Hagen performing on Wednesday, November 5, and Stephanie James on Monday, November 10. Senior Adult Services & Programming Librarian Gabi Toth reports that, thanks to Trustee Dolin, she has learned to crochet and has been teaching others so they can contribute to the community crafting project. Gabi and Public Services Librarian Eileen Finnegan have applied for a Peabody Cultural Council grant in hopes of offering free English language classes to community members in 2026. These classes would provide more in-depth instruction in addition to the library's existing English Conversation Circles.

Teen Department

Senior Teen Librarian Amory Thomas has had a busy month of programming. The most attended event in October was a Spooky Movie Night in the Sutton Room, which drew 15 teens, followed by an Introduction to Crochet class with 10 participants. She also managed to get an old 3D printer found in storage back up and running, which she plans to incorporate into upcoming Teen Craft programs. Amory hopes that this will encourage more teen use of the Creativity Lab's new 3D printers. For November, Amory has planned an Introduction to Knitting class that ties into the library's community craft project, along with a new Graphic Novel Book Club and several additional crafting events. Beginning this month, she will host a monthly pop-up library at Peabody High School on the first Wednesday of each month, giving students who can't visit the library after school a chance to check out materials and learn about library services. Amory also recently visited Higgins Middle School, where she issued approximately 100 library cards to students in grades 6 and 7. She plans to return in January and hopes to collaborate with 8th grade teachers to expand participation even further.

Children's Department

October was a very busy and successful month for the Children's Department. Senior Children's Librarian Meeghan Bresnahan hosted two school visits, one onsite at the Carroll School and another with a Carroll School class at the Main Library. Meeghan noted that the students were excited to return to the library on their own time, and several have already done so. The Family Literacy Night organized by Peabody Public Schools was also a great success. Meeghan and Senior Teen Librarian Amory Thomas checked out books and introduced families to library resources and services. Library programs in October saw record attendance, including Meeghan's Baby and Toddler Storytimes and Assistant Children's Librarian Patricia Nihan's

Preschool Storytime and Drop-In Craft Nights. The department has several additional school visits and programs planned for November.

Creativity Lab

Creativity Lab Librarian Justin Allain continues to see success with the new Open Lab format, which has helped patrons with little to no experience with the equipment feel more comfortable and confident. As a result, usage has remained high throughout the week with nearly every session filled. Inkwell continues to meet on Mondays and Wednesdays and is now drawing a steady group of young art enthusiasts. Justin is also continuing his efforts to update the lab and expand its offerings, including plans for an Analog Technology Corner and a Recycle & Mending program.

South Branch

Former Library Aide and volunteer Gerri Promise returns to the South Branch on Saturday, November 8 to lead another appliqué sewing workshop. On Thursday, November 13, local beekeeper Nora Neale will present a program about honey bees, where attendees can view part of a beehive and make their own beeswax candle. On Tuesday, November 18, Senior Teen Librarian Amory Thomas will visit the South Branch to teach an Introduction to Crochet class as part of the library's ongoing community craft initiative, Crafting Your Story. The branch will host an Introduction to Medicare program, presented by SHINE, on Thursday, November 20 where a certified counselor will be able to answer questions about Medicare open enrollment. Senior South Branch Librarian Amy Titus continues to represent the library at South Memorial Elementary School Council meetings, which bring together teachers, parents, and community members to help the school achieve its goals.

West Branch

The West Branch continues to offer a variety of programs for adults, including Adult Yoga with Jacqui Orphanos each Monday afternoon. The Fiction Book Group will meet on Thursday, November 6 and the Nonfiction Book Group will meet later in the month on Thursday, November 20. Assistant West Branch Librarian Lauren Tryder will also host a Pressed Flower Craft program on Tuesday, November 18. Many patrons have already begun asking about tax forms and assistance, and staff expect to have more information available by late November or December. Children's Librarian Aimee Servideo has several activities planned for the month as well. Storytime, toddler sensory play, and toddler art sessions will continue, along with a special pie-making event for children ages five and up on Saturday, November 15. Families can also look forward to Play Dough Day at the end of the month and a free-form evening crafting program for older children.

Discussion of the Director's Report

Trustee Titelbaum asked if the library will be able to host a ceremony for the citizenship group. Director Yeo noted that a ceremony was a long-term goal after other building blocks are secure, such as receiving grants and providing ESL support (as it seems needed).

Trustee Vasallo inquired after the book retreat and Director Yeo affirmed its success!

There was a MOTION to accept the Director's report by Trustee Dallaire. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports of the Committees and Sub-committees

Audubon: (Trustee Dolin) Nothing to report.

Building and Grounds: The committee chair position is still vacant.

Personnel: (Trustee Titelbaum) Nothing to report outside of the updates from the Director's Report.

Policy and Procedures: (Trustee Vasallo) Nothing to report.

Liaison to the Peabody Institute Library Foundation: (Trustee Najjar) There will be an Events Committee meeting at 5:30 PM on December 9th. Anyone who wants to help with Birds & Bubbly is welcome, as the meeting will center around picking a theme for the event. Birds and Bubbly will be held Friday, May 1st.

Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society: (Trustee Quinn was not in attendance)

There was a MOTION to accept the reports of the committees and subcommittees by Trustee Gallugi. The motion was seconded by Trustee Dolin

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

New Business

The Trustees discussed plans for the George Peabody Birthday Celebration (as his birthday is in February). Last time there was cake and a local pianist played “Happy Birthday.”

- Trustee Dallaire asked if a cocktail party has ever been considered. President O’Brien noted that any event where alcohol is present would have to be sponsored by the Foundation, not the Trustees.
- Trustee Dolin mentioned she knew that someone was researching Peabody’s life and found a lot of evidence of period recipes. Consequently, she floated the idea that the recipes could be modernized and tied into a tea party setting for the birthday party. President O’Brien said she would email the Foundation and Trustees if Trustee Dolin could provide images of the recipes.
- Director Yeo noted that space for musical performers AND refreshments at the same time at the library would be challenging to set up. Trustee Smith responded that the Performing Arts Society has held a performance at City Hall Auditorium in the past, and it could be a possible choice for the celebration. Trustee Gallugi felt that taking the event out of the library might lose something, but perhaps George Peabody House might be an exciting alternative. A lot of longtime residents haven’t attended since field trips in elementary school, and it would be a fun experience to revisit it with a new perspective!

In December, the Trustees will have their meeting at a restaurant to welcome the newly elected trustee(s). The Assistant Director, Jenny Usovicz, will be invited as well. A discussion of local offerings followed.

There was a MOTION to hold the next meeting on December 2nd at 6PM at Rosemary Thai by Trustee Gallugi. The motion was seconded by Trustee Dallaire.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Unfinished Business

Trustee Gallugi will have the outdoor wreaths put up around the Library by November 23rd.

The next meeting will be held on December 2, 2025, at 6:00pm at Rosemary Thai.

There was a MOTION to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Gallugi. The motion was seconded by Trustee Bakula.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Submitted by

Julia Rowny, Recording Secretary