

PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of Meeting

April 7, 2026

The meeting was called to order by Trustee Gallugi at 6:32 pm, with quorum having been reached by 6:20 pm.

The roll call was taken:

Present - THIS IS THE ACTUAL LIST

Ruth Titelbaum
Katrina Vassallo
Jennifer Smith
Stephanie Najjar
Peter Bakula
Stacie Dolin
Frances Gallugi
Stephanie Dallaire
Caitlin Guyette

Absent

Anne Quinn
Cassandra Loizides
Kate O'Brien

Public Comments

None.

Approval and Discussion of Minutes from Previous Meetings

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Receipt of Communications

No new communications.

Director's Report

Staffing

West Branch Assistant Librarian Lauren Tryder has been selected for the Technical Services Library Assistant position. We will be starting interviews for the West Branch Assistant Librarian role this week.

Budget

The proposed FY27 budget was submitted to the Mayor at the end of last month, and the library's budget meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 15.

Building & Grounds

The old raised plant beds have been removed from the West Branch garden, and the area near the Planet Aid bins have been cleared of all trash and debris. The Facilities Department addressed the large ceiling water stain in the Children's Area by buffing it in preparation for repainting.

DPW has been contacted regarding repainting the parking space lines in the West Branch parking lot, with work anticipated after July 1.

Programs & Initiatives

Adult Services

Plans for the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class have been finalized. The class will meet twice weekly at the Main Library, beginning June 9, and will run for eight weeks with sessions held on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings.

The Winter–Spring Sunday Matinee Film Series began in February and will run through May, featuring *Coma* in April and *Never Cry Wolf* in May. The series will shift schedules for the summer due to Sunday closures.

Beginning in late June, the Main Library will offer a weekly American Revolution film series, including *1776* and selected episodes from *Liberty! The American Revolution*, *John Adams*, and *Sons of Liberty*. America250 Activity Bingo will run concurrently, encouraging patron engagement through reading, local visits, and interaction with founding documents.

Public Services

English Conversation Circles continue to grow with six groups now meeting weekly and a total of 18 participants. A new one-on-one English tutoring session has also been introduced to support a patron seeking more intensive instruction.

The Citizenship Study Group remains active with five participants attending weekly. Four have submitted their naturalization applications and are awaiting interview appointments, while the fifth is expected to apply within the next few months.

Weekly Ancestry help sessions continue to be in high demand and are typically booked a month in advance. Patrons receive guidance on using Ancestry through the library's website, along with other available digital resources for continued access at home.

Teen Department

Senior Teen Librarian Amory Thomas has applied for two teen summer interns through MassHire to support the Summer Foods program and assist with basic library duties. Planning for Summer Foods is also underway in coordination with the school's food services, including logistics such as pickup, quantity, and timing.

Summer Reading materials from iREAD have been received, supporting this year's theme, "Plant a Seed, Read." Planning for summer teen programming is in progress. March programs saw strong attendance, including the monthly movie night and an SAT prep class. April will feature additional offerings, including polymer clay earring making, potato chip tasting, and expanded programming during April vacation week.

Amory is also working with a program manager from UMass Lowell to explore grant funding for replacing the Teen Room gaming computers. Currently, only half of the eight computers are reliably functional, and all are approximately eight years old. Replacing them with updated desktops is a top priority.

Children's Department

March was another busy month for the Children's Department. Storytimes continued to reach record attendance, including one Baby Storytime with 35 participants. Senior Children's Librarian Meeghan Bresnahan also expanded outreach efforts, participating in multiple school visits and events, reaching approximately 150 students.

April will include additional school visits and special programs, including two sessions with Joy Marzolf of The Joys of Nature, focusing on endangered species and featuring live animals.

Creativity Lab

Creativity Lab was featured as the cover story in North of Boston Magazine, bringing valuable visibility and positive attention to the library.

This spring, Creativity Lab Librarian Justin Allain will launch a lure-making series beginning with clear minnows. He is also collaborating with the Historical Society to 3D print veteran grave markers for unmarked graves. Justin plans to reapply for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grant to support his plastic recycling project. He also plans to update the website to include a status list of lab equipment, allowing patrons to see when machines are under repair or awaiting materials.

Local History Department

Last month, Local History Librarian Catherine Badal worked with the art appraiser of the Winston Artory Group to assess the library's high-value items. She also began a catalog cleanup of local history periodicals in the Sutton Room, completing five titles (approximately 250 items), with a sixth, larger series currently in progress.

South Branch

The South Branch Library will offer several adult programs in April, including an acrylic painting workshop with local artist Brooke Lambert, an appliqué workshop led by former Library Aide Gerri Promise, and a watercolor collage program.

Programming for April school vacation week will include a variety of children's activities, such as a Pokémon paper craft, a sunflower planting program with storytime, and a bird feeder making workshop.

West Branch

The West Branch continues to offer regular programming, including Adult Yoga, fiction and nonfiction book groups, and TACO on Tuesdays. This month's adult craft program, a soap-making workshop with Kulina Folk Art Studios, is already fully registered prior to advertising. April will be a busy month in the Children's Room. In addition to ongoing programs, West Branch Children's Librarian Aimee Servideo will offer special activities including a DIY cookie bar, a free-form crafternoon, and a superhero academy. A chicken hatching program is also planned, with eggs arriving later in April and expected to hatch in mid-May.

Discussion of the Director's Report

Trustee Dolin asked about the water stain in the children's area at the West Branch and whether it was evidence that the roof was still leaking. Director Yeo said that the leaks have been patched. The stain is old and the tiles will be replaced as well.

Trustee Titelbaum asked for more details about the budget. Director Yeo provided some clarifications:

- There had not been much communication with the City about the library's budget specifically. The City has asked that department heads reduce their budgets by 5%, which would be \$96,000.
- There are three paths forward that Director Yeo could propose:
 - Options: The Library stays level funded. (As a side note, the funds for the software IT services line have been put back so we're not overdrawn.)
 - Option 2: We close Saturday branch hours. This affects 7 part time employees.
 - Option 3: We close Saturday branch hours and night hours. This affects 10 part time employees.
- The Main Library has to have 63 hours a week to be eligible for some state funding and is currently open for 64 hours. The branches don't have to adhere to that standard, but we don't want to reduce hours anywhere.

Trustee Dallaire asked if it was possible to reduce hours by closing in the mornings and staying open later. Director Yeo noted that if branch hours were cut or changed, full time Branch staff might have to relocate to the Main Library to make their 70 hours over a two week pay period.

Trustee Bakula asked about the city plan for electricity and the reason for the electricity line item in the budget. Director Yeo noted that the electricity line item was present in every department's budget, so that is a good question for the Finance Director.

Trustee Najjar asked whether we were level funded this past fiscal year. Director Yeo affirmed that we were; we needed to cut the software/IT line but gave it back from reserves. There is some wiggle room in the subscriptions and databases so some were cut back. The books and subscriptions line item has to equal 12% of the overall budget, so it must increase as the budget increases. Trustee Najjar followed up with an inquiry about whether other departments needed to worry about cutting staff. Director Yeo said she was unsure—perhaps some schools do, but more will become clear at the City Council meeting. The Head of Social Services said that a comment was made by the Finance Department not to cut hours but it wasn't written to individual departments as a directive. The Library is not in a position to require an override but might get to that point eventually. Trustee Najjar said that the Trustees should be proactive about identifying council people that could help the Library. She encouraged Trustees to do their due diligence, to reach out to those they feel comfortable speaking with, and to ask for support. Director Yeo did not want to overly concern the Trustees before she speaks to the Mayor, and that she needs the full picture before anyone communicates with the City. All the information needs to come out before anyone sends emails.

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports of the Committees and Sub-committees

Audubon: (Trustee Loizides) Nothing to report.

Personnel: Nothing to report other than what was in the Director's Report.

Policy and Procedures: (Trustee Dailleire) Nothing to report. Director Yeo noted that the Library will discuss the policy about lending to non-certified communities, as the Marblehead Library is in danger of being decertified.

Liaison to the Peabody Institute Library Foundation: (Trustee Najjar): Birds and Bubbly is May first, and our first big push is ticket sales. The informational flyer is on the Library's website. Trustees asked about how to share the library's formal post and Trustee Guyette suggested that the social media algorithm picks up a picture more rapidly than linking to another post. Director Yeo noted that the Library has been doing good outreach, as staff are spreading the word and passing out flyers. There was a Zoom planning meeting on April 8th at 5:30PM. Trustee Vassallo asked about a sponsorship letter for the event, and Trustee Najjar responded that it is on the Foundation's website.

Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society: Trustee Quinn was not present.

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

New Business

The Trustees congratulated Trustee Titelbaum on the birth of her granddaughter!

The Trustees agreed that being present at the June budget meetings matters. The Mayor and the Council notice, even if they do not provide a comment.

Unfinished Business

Trustee Dolin noted that at the end of the January meeting, it was proposed to form an Events Committee for keeping track of details on events such as the celebration of George Peabody's birthday. President O'Brien makes appointments, so Director Yeo said that creating a committee will be added to next month's new business.

A short discussion of event planning followed for the awarding of the Peabody Medals: The high school takes care of medals, and Director Yeo takes care of letters and booklets. Trustee noted that there has been a mixup in the past as to who invites the families, and asked if the original booklet still exists. If so, it would be great to have a website of previous George Peabody medal recipients as part of the local history page on the website. There are multigenerational winners of the medal, which is fantastic. Stephanie Dallaire will represent the Library Trustees at graduation.

The next meeting will be held on May 5, 2026, at 6:30pm in the Trustees Room.

There was a MOTION to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Dolin . 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