

PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of Meeting

May 5, 2026

The meeting was called to order by President Kate O'Brien at 6:31 pm, with quorum having been reached by 6:26 pm.

The roll call was taken:

Present

Ruth Titelbaum
Jennifer Smith
Stephanie Najjar
Peter Bakula
Anne Quinn
Stacie Dolin
Stephanie Dallaire
Caitlin Guyette
Cassandra Loizides
Kate O'Brien

Absent

Katrina Vassallo
Frances Gallugi

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 Smith.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Receipt of Communications

No new communications.

Director's Report

Staffing

I'm pleased to announce that Joshua Trelegan has been selected for the West Branch Assistant Librarian position after three years of dedicated service as a Library Aide at the Peabody Institute Library. He will begin his new role on Monday, May 11.

Building & Grounds

The staff bathroom at the West Branch Library has experienced recurring plumbing and clogging issues. The problem was addressed and resolved in April, after which the Facilities Department installed a new sink vanity and repainted the walls. The issue returned last week, and Facilities has since contacted the Department of Public Works to determine whether the cause may be related to street-level plumbing. I expect to have more information within the next few days.

The bulbs and globe fixtures for the Main Library's exterior lighting have arrived and are expected to be installed this week.

Policy

In response to a NOBLE member library potentially facing decertification, an updated Lending to Residents of Municipalities with Decertified Libraries Policy will be shared this evening. The revised policy clarifies the services available to affected residents, as well as any limitations on borrowing and access. Its goal is to ensure consistency, transparency, and compliance with Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners requirements while maintaining equitable service standards for Peabody patrons.

Budget

An updated FY27 budget proposal was submitted to the Mayor this week and is before you this evening. As discussed at the last meeting, all departments were asked to prepare budgets reflecting a 5% decrease due to citywide financial constraints. In response, I submitted a revised proposal that included the elimination of two vacant Library Aide positions, resulting in a \$43,582 reduction.

Despite this adjustment, I was informed that the library is still requesting the highest percentage increase among all city departments, and that the budget must be reduced to \$1,978,376. This figure represents the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR), which is calculated using the average of the prior three years' municipal appropriations for operating expenses, increased by 2.5%. This amount reflects a 2.5% increase over FY26 and would allow the library to maintain full certification with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

To meet the MAR target, an additional reduction of approximately \$92,000 is required. To achieve further savings, we plan to reduce database subscriptions through NOBLE, lowering costs within the Software/IT line. In addition, the Books & Subscriptions budget will be reduced

by \$25,858, with trust and grant funds used to offset this reduction in order to meet the state requirement that 12% of the budget be allocated to books and materials.

Even with these adjustments, the remaining reductions will need to come from staffing and operating hours. As a result, I will be forced to propose the elimination of evening and weekend hours at branch locations to meet the required budget target.

These reductions would have the following impacts:

- Loss of evening and Saturday access, limiting availability of computers, printing, and other essential resources for working individuals and families
- Elimination of programs and services outside of standard daytime hours, significantly decreasing overall accessibility for the community
- Reduction in part-time staffing hours across all locations, with a disproportionate impact on Library Aides and potential imbalances in daytime staffing levels
- Reduced flexibility to support programs, outreach efforts, and evolving service demands
- Limited capacity to expand services, respond to increased demand, or maintain current service models across locations

Programs & Initiatives

The Peabody Institute Library Foundation's annual *Birds & Bubbly* fundraiser was a strong success, generating a total net profit of \$8,152.30. The event was supported by \$9,000 in sponsorships and ticket sales of just under 100 attendees. Guests enjoyed beer, wine, and bubbly, along with an engaging presentation by John Hebert, Director of Bird Conservation at Mass Audubon.

Old Business

The George Peabody Medal Award Ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26 at 6:00PM in the Sutton Room of the Main Library. Individual invitation letters have been mailed to all eight students, and email invitations have been sent to local representatives, elected officials, and community members.

Discussion of the Director's Report

The Trustees began with a discussion of the budget. Trustee Najjar asked for clarification on more of the differences between pre-and post-cut budgets. Director Yeo's response:

- We need to be mindful of reduction in hours; the Main Library needs to be open for 63 hours a week and is currently open 64 hours.
- Cuts to line items: Books/subscriptions must be 12% of budget, but we can cut and supplement that with trust funds and state aid. Some databases can be cut from the IT/software line.

- With these cuts, the budget was still \$2M, but the main way to reduce the budget is to reduce staffing and hours. Director Yeo has another meeting with the mayor for a budget/finance/auditing update next week. The Library still needs to cut about \$130k to meet the target.
- A 2.5% yearly budget increase is in line with other departments.

Trustee Quinn asked about the state of the Marblehead library and whether it was closing. Director Yeo responded that they wouldn't necessarily close; they're working on getting an override on the ballot. There are tiers of services the library can provide based on the funds they receive from the city. There needs to be a balance between other libraries in the NOBLE (North of Boston Library Exchange) network helping them out, but not too much, as that could indicate that the library doesn't need to stand alone.

Trustee Bakula asked what cuts would be needed to get level funding. Director Yeo noted that all line items would be the same except the books and subscriptions line.

Trustee Najjar encouraged Director Yeo to provide an update on the results of the budget meeting before the next time the Trustees meet, so that the Trustees could call representatives and the City Council, since this is now a familiar position for the Library.

Director Yeo noted that the Peabody Library might escape decertification at the cost of closing branches if things continue in this way, but believes the city councillors will support the library. She noted that NOBLE is going to send out a sheet of what each database costs and that she'll look closely at the statistics of which databases are being used. Boston Public Libraries have a lot of accessible services Massachusetts residents can use, so the Peabody Library can advertise those.

Trustee Titlebaum asked about how the trust funds are invested. Director Yeo will get the information from Ross Titelbaum, the City Treasurer. Trustee Quinn added that the Trustees asked for information about the trust funds in the past that it was challenging to get that information.

The discussion returned to Library hours. Director Yeo will ask the branch managers what the busiest hours are and use that information to determine a balance of daytime hours and hours that working families can access the Libraries. A few suggestions arose from the Trustees. Trustee Guyette asked if it was possible to be closed Mondays instead, or have seasonal hours. Trustee Dallaire noted that the Main Branch is closed on Sundays in the summer and asked if it could be closed on Sundays year round. Director Yeo responded that the Library needs to hit a certain number of evening and weekend hours to meet its certification targets.

Director Yeo attended State Aid's open hours, and got some ideas about how to reduce hours and possibly cut PC support from NOBLE. The Library does have a Tech Services librarian but Yeo believes the skill and dedication from the NOBLE program is unmatched. She also attended a presentation about the state of libraries in general

Trustee Bakula returned to the idea of reducing summer hours. Director Yeo noted the popularity of the free lunches and summer reading programming but that she was very interested in exploring the idea of seasonal hours. Trustee Quinn asked about examining programming, such as the free lunch program, that aren't directly related to the central mission of education. Director Yeo and other trustees noted that Project Bread handles the lunches, and we get them from the schools, so that they do not use Library funds, and they require a maximum of two hours out of the day for full-time staff and temporary workers from MassHire. Our mission is not just about education but also about community outreach. Providing statistics for the number of kids attending the library for lunches helps our numbers and usage for future budget cycles and reports for the city.

As for other programs, Director Yeo explained that grant money pays for museum passes and overages (like the telephone line item), but we want to save that money as much as we can. The city's Facilities Department has taken over some of our costs for building improvements and will help with as much as they can.

The Trustees discussed some ways the public can help the library. Trustee Guyette put forth the idea that the Library could fundraise for specific items, such as "buy a computer for the library" donations. Trustee Dolin asked if the library accepts donations. Director Yeo responded that Creativity Lab Librarian Justin Allain is skilled at soliciting donations and fixing anything that needs it so it can be used. The library consortium also gives away items to other libraries.

Director Yeo recommended that Trustees not reach out to the City Council or Mayor until she updates the Trustees about the results of her meeting.

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports of the Committees and Sub-committees

Audubon: Nothing to report.

Building and grounds: Trustee Vassallo not present.

Policy and Procedures: Trustee Dallaire put forth the “Lending to Residents of Municipalities with Decertified Libraries” for our Trustee discussion and approval.

Liaison to the Peabody Institute Library Foundation: (Trustee Najjar) The Birds and Bubbly fundraiser was very successful! Trustee Titlebaum provided feedback about the setup; during the presentation, lots of people were very loud, and encouraged adding more seating around the space.

Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society: (Trustee Quinn) Curator Sophia Richter left at the end of April to leave for the Maine Maritime Museum. Richter was excellent at getting staff to come together around collection management. Materials that were stored in the vault, such as historical ledgers, when City Hall was renovated were given to the Society. The membership dinner is May 23.

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

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

New Business

President O’Brien noted that the Trustees usually receive an invite to walk in the Memorial Day Parade, but she hadn’t heard anything yet about it.

Director Yeo announced that the bench honoring former Trustee Rick Shruhan is ready for installation, so she’d like to have an unveiling of the bench for the Trustees. Trustee Bakula felt Rick’s birthday might be an appropriate time until he heard it was in the winter. Director Yeo wants to consult with Rick’s family, since they want to be involved with the unveiling of the bench.

There was a MOTION to accept the Lending to Residents of Municipalities with Decertified Libraries Procedure by Trustee Dallaire. The motion was seconded by Trustee Smith.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

The Trustees had voted to no longer allow virtual meetings, but President O’Brien wanted to propose a vote on the possibility of virtual meetings for inclement weather events such as the March meeting. Since Trustee meetings need to be open to the public, a Zoom meeting link must be available on the agenda for the City’s website. The Trustees will discuss it in more detail at their next meeting, and vote about procedure and whether that trustees can attend any meeting virtually. The sound quality in the rooms the Trustees usually meet in is not great

for Zoom meetings. The Tech Lab is a possibility for meetings but it can be loud if noise comes in from other rooms.

The Trustees agreed that they needed to reshare a contact list in case of meeting cancellations.

Trustee Guyette noted that someone reached out to her and mentioned overhearing some inappropriate language when they called the library. Director Yeo wanted more information about the incident and wanted to address it with the staff.

Unfinished Business

President O'Brien addressed the Trustees' prior discussions of creating an events committee to replace the personnel committee. The committee would manage events such as George Peabody's Birthday, the Peabody Medals, and attending graduation. Replacing an old committee with a new one did not require a vote, so President O'Brien declared the committee replaced with Trustee Dolin as the committee leader.

The next meeting will be held on June 2, 2026, at 6:30pm in the Sutton Room.

There was a MOTION to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee Dolin.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Submitted by Julia Rowny

Recording Secretary