PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of Meeting

October 6, 2026

The meeting was called to order by Trustee Stephanie Najjar at 6:30 pm, with quorum having been reached by 6:29 pm.

The roll call was taken:

Present	**Absent**
Ruth Titelbaum	Stephanie Dallaire
Katrina Vassallo	Cassandra Loizides
Stephanie Najjar	Jennifer Smith
Peter Bakula	Frances Gallugi
Stacie Dolin	Kate O'Brien
Anne Quinn	
Caitlin Guyette	

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 Vassallo. The motion was seconded by Trustee Titelbaum.
All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Receipt of Communications

No new communications.

Director's Report

Budget
I have attached the budget for your review and am happy to answer any questions.

Building & Grounds
New computer boards have been ordered for the two boilers at the Main Library. At the West and South Branches, all preventative maintenance has been completed for the winter, and the systems have been pressure tested.

Last week's heavy rainstorm caused a few leaks at the West Branch and one on the third floor of the Main Library. The roofer came out to inspect the issues and made a few small patches. They will be returning at the end of this week to complete a larger repair to the rubber roof at the West Branch. I'm happy to report that there has been no leaking in the courtyard foyer since the cracked concrete along the doors was repaired in August.

The Teen Room renovation is progressing well. All LED fixtures have been installed, and painting is underway.

Policy & Procedure
An updated Creativity Lab Policy is being presented to the Board for consideration tonight. I am happy to explain the reasoning behind each of the changes during the discussion of New Business. I am requesting that the Board of Trustees vote to approve the updated policy.

Programs & Services

Adult Services
Adult Services has an exciting lineup of fall programming beginning this month. The Fall Concert Series kicks off Monday, October 5, with the Avalyn Reed Trio. On Wednesday, October 7, Theo Theoharis returns for a discussion of Lincoln in the Bardo by George Saunders. On Thursday, October 8, the Main Library welcomes author Brad Timm, who will present his book Wildlife Out Your Window. Drawing from his book, Timm explores the hidden behaviors, adaptations, and ecological roles of New England's familiar birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and other wildlife.

Public Services
In order to provide more accurate visitor information for the Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) that is due every August, the Public Services Department organized a visitor tally at the Main Public Service Desk, Main Children's Desk, and the South and West Branches. The tally will be conducted during a selected week each quarter, Monday through Saturday. During the September 14-19 tally period, the Main Public Service Desk recorded 643 visitors entering through the Main entrance, with Tuesday being the busiest day at 146 visitors. The Main Children's entrance recorded 443 visitors, with Thursday being the busiest day at 122 visitors. South Branch recorded 281 visitors, with Tuesday being the busiest day at 82 visitors, while

West Branch recorded 469 visitors, with Monday being the busiest day at 126 visitors. In total, the three library locations recorded 1,836 visitors throughout the course of the week.

Children's Department
Many exciting projects are underway in the Children's Department. With the help of Library Aides, Senior Children's Librarian Meeghan has completed a review of more than 1,000 picture books as part of a collection weeding project. The department will also be adding subject stickers such as "School Stories," "Emotions," and "Mental Health" to help patrons more easily find books by topic, with assistance from Assistant Teen/Children's Librarian Emily Bouffard. Meeghan is also collaborating with a Peabody Public Schools elementary art teacher on a kindness rock garden featuring words and images created by students for library patrons to enjoy and take home.

Creativity Lab
Creativity Lab Librarian Justin Allain has been assembling and testing the newly purchased equipment for the Creativity Lab. Once the equipment is ready, he will begin making it available for patron use. As part of his reopening plan, Justin has received several scrap material donations from local businesses, including premium leather, wood, and fabric from local workshops. Justin also plans to visit the branches as part of a pop-up program, bringing a selection of equipment and supplies to introduce branch patrons to the Creativity Lab and its resources. He will visit the West Branch on Wednesday, October 14, and the South Branch on Thursday, October 15.

South Branch
The South Branch Library has a full lineup of programming planned for October. For adults, the branch will host a Cheesecloth Ghost craft program on Thursday, October 1. Former Library Aide Gerri Promise returns on Saturday, October 17, to teach her popular appliqué sewing workshop for adults.

Children's programming will also be busy this month. Kids Art Club returns October 1, with children creating their own Flat Stanley characters to send to the Salem Public Library. The South Branch has received Flat Stanleys from Salem patrons, and participants will take on adventures and document before returning them. Assistant Librarian Betsy Reid will host a pumpkin painting program on Tuesday, October 13, with pumpkins donated by Tillie's Farm. The South Branch will also welcome all three second grade classes from South Memorial Elementary School on October 7 for a library visit, where students will learn about the library and check out books. The classes will continue visiting the branch once a month throughout the school year.

West Branch
October brings a variety of programs and activities to the West Branch, with something planned for both adults and children. The branch will continue its regular book groups, yoga, and TACO. TACO continues to be very popular, with 10-16 teens attending each week. The branch will also offer several special adult programs, including an embroidery spiderweb hoop craft and a Ghost

in a Bottle craft.

Children's West Branch Librarian Aimee Servideo is continuing her regular lineup of programs, including storytimes and Toddler Sensory Bins. She will also offer several seasonal programs, including a Splat Monster craft, Halloween costume making for stuffed animals, and a masking tape mummy craft. Families will also have the opportunity to see nocturnal animals up close during a Creatures of the Night presentation.

Local History
In September, the Local History Department hosted a program for Trails & Sails focused on artifacts related to the Revolutionary War. The department also welcomed several researchers who visited the library and submitted electronic requests for access to archives and rare books.
I'm pleased to announce that the Peabody Institute Library Foundation will be funding my professional trip to London from Sunday, November 1 through Saturday, November 7, to learn more about George Peabody's legacy and contributions to London.
Scheduled activities include a City of London tour, a visit to the George Peabody statue, Evensong at Westminster Abbey, and a viewing of George Peabody's memorial stone. The itinerary also includes a viewing of historical artifacts, a tour of the Blackfriars Estate, and a visit to Thamesmead, which is a major regeneration project in southeast London focused on housing, public spaces, transportation, and community facilities.
The trip will also include a meeting with the Peabody Community Foundation, the charitable arm of Peabody, to learn more about its work supporting residents and communities through programs addressing poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and social isolation.
I would also like to ask the Board to move the November Trustees meeting to Tuesday, November 10. This change would allow me to attend the meeting following my return from London.

Discussion of the Director's Report

Trustee Titelbaum asked about students attending the South Branch and whether they already had library cards. Director Yeo confirmed that they did; when students are in kindergarten, there's a registration program, with forms sent home for parental/guardian signature.

Trustee Najjar gave vocal support to the practice of tallying of patrons to help determine demand for the library branches! She also asked if the pop-up Creativity Lab program was Justin Allain's idea. Director Yeo confirmed that it was. Trustee Najjar also wondered if the Creatures of the Night program could be tied to the Birds and Bubbly fundraiser in some way, as it could be something the Foundation could consider in future.

There was a MOTION to accept the Director's report by Trustee Dolin. The motion was seconded by Trustee Titelbaum.
All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was carried unanimously.

Reports of the Committees and Sub-committees

Audubon: Trustee Loizides was not present.

Events: Trustee Dolin called attention to George Peabody's Birthday. Director Yeo will brainstorm ideas during her trip to London! Dolin: backup plan is that a friend who is a historian and has researched George Peabody could talk about him and his life. WHOOPS MISSED THIS

Buildings and Grounds: Trustee Vassallo had nothing to report.

Policy and Procedures: Trustee Dallaire was not present.

Liaison to the Peabody Institute Library Foundation: Trustee Najjar announced that the sales of whoopie pies, water, and old Library-branded hats and cards netted around $845. The next quarterly Foundation meeting is on October 7th.

Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society: Trustee Quinn announced the hiring of the new Curator, Meghan Wise, who has been at the Peabody Historical Society for three weeks as of this meeting date. She was in the US Navy and gave tours on the deck of the USS Constitution. She is currently working towards certification related to the digitization of museum materials. Director Yeo had the opportunity to meet her and is excited to discuss combining digitization projects. The Peabody Historical Society was also involved in the International Festival, Sails and Trails, and a senior day at Brooksby. The Society has a program to bring third graders to the George Peabody House with one field trip a week, and Society members will talk about the life and times of George Peabody. Following the trip, students will compose essays about their visit. At the end of the year, teachers select the best essays, send them to an evaluating committee who will establish North Shore Bank accounts for the winning students. The September potluck had to be canceled because the barn was overbooked for events (a shame for the potluck, but a major source of income for the Society).

There was a MOTION to accept the reports of the committees and subcommittees by Trustee Titelbaum. The motion was seconded by Trustee Guyette.
All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No
The motion was carried unanimously.

Unfinished Business

There was no discussion of unfinished business.

New Business

The Trustees discussed the Creativity Lab Policy. A copy of the policy with tracked changes was distributed amongst the Trustees. The structure of programming at the Creativity Lab has changed to make most meetings one on one. Each user has to fill out an online registration form and a liability form. It's the library's goal to ensure patrons feel empowered to use the Lab anytime.

Some questions arose about the details of the policy as relates to liability and the safety of minors:

- Trustee Titelbaum asked about age restrictions: The policy notes that the minimum age is 13 to use the Creativity Lab independently, so how do 13-18 year-olds sign up and sign liability waivers? What emails will be used and who will be responsible for minors?
- Trustees Najjar and Guyette noted that child safety is key, and that online sign-up parental restrictions can be skirted easily.
- Trustee Titelbaum noted that family dynamics can change quickly, so there could be a need for a term on the liability because a guardian might not be around anymore. Trustee Bakula asked if parent/guardian information is updated each school year. Trustee Najjar noted that information is updated only if schools are informed that it needs to be, so Trustee Bakula responded that perhaps school year-length registrations might be a good idea.
- Trustee Dolin suggested that the policy be reviewed by Peabody's Human Resources/Legal Departments before it returns to the Trustees, which received general agreement from the other Trustees.
- Director Yeo noted that some of the core aims of the revised policy were making it easier for patrons and reducing the challenge of verifying registrations. When you have a sign up, it's possible to require information to be entered on the registration platform and make some questions mandatory. We need to make sure the online registration can replace a signed form by a parent. Paper forms tend to become buried under a stack of forms, but we have to make sure we can have easy registration that would also satisfy an audit of liability.
- Trustee Najjar noted that this policy opens up questions about liability and events more generally. Director Yeo will run the policy by Peabody HR and then go to the county solicitor if necessary–we will revisit this policy in November.

Some general points about the Creativity Lab were discussed as well:

- Trustee Najjar asked if there are other maker spaces in the area. Director Yeo explained that the Marblehead Library opened one, but consulted our library about it since we have the most extensive one in the region. Trustee Dolin noted that there is a non-library maker space in Lynn, called Brickyard Collaborative that might be worth looking into to see how they manage childrens' registration.

- Director Yeo is very happy about how the Creativity Lab is being run on a one-on-one basis, as it means patrons are supervised and learning more deeply.
- Trustee Titelbaum asked about whether patrons will need to fill out a registration form when Justin Allain attends other branches. Director Yeo responded that he will just be showing off equipment such as portable 3D printers, not necessarily having patrons use the equipment themselves.
- Trustee Quinn asked if policies can be shared with the Trustees ahead of time, including the tracked changes. Director Yeo confirmed that she will share them in the future along with agendas and past minutes.

Director Yeo is considering changing the age at which a child can get a library card without a parental signature.

Trustee Quinn asked about having new group photo taken, since new members have been elected since the last one was taken. We will take a photo at the next December dinner.

There was a MOTION to move the next Trustee meeting to November 10th by Trustee Dolin.
The motion was seconded by Trustee Vassallo.
All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No
The motion was carried unanimously.

Trustee Titelbaum asked if the fiscal information on the back of the monthly Library activity booklets could be updated to the 2025-2026 budget year. Director Yeo responded that the numbers are challenging to obtain so close to the end of the budget year, but that she'd work to update it as soon as possible.

Trustee Najjar plans to send a letter to the City Council about the budget proceedings for 2026-2027 and what our hopes are this year. Trustee Guyette noted that the Trustees discussed writing letters but were asked not to email the Council at the time, and the opportunity passed by.

Director Yeo wants to hold on to as many branches as possible. Different patrons have their preferences for branches–Some patrons don't come to the Main Branch because they don't like the parking, they trust the staff at their local branch, etc. School-aged kids need community libraries because school libraries aren't staffed in the same way as they have been in the past.

Trustee Guyette asked whether funds could be disbursed from the Library Foundation. Trustee Najjar clarified that Foundation funds can't go towards salaries, and Director Yeo added that State Aid can't be committed to salaries either.

The next meeting will be held on November 10, 2026, at 6:30pm in the Sutton Room.

There was a MOTION to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Vassallo. The motion was seconded by Trustee Titelbaum.
All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No
The motion was carried unanimously.

Submitted by Julia Rowny
Recording Secretary