

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency

Thursday, October 3, 2019 at 3:00 p.m.
Boston Public Library, South Boston Branch
646 East Broadway, South Boston, MA 02127

MINUTES

A Meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston as a Corporation and Administrative Agency was held at the South Boston Branch Library, on Thursday, October 3, 2019 at 3:00 p.m.

Present at the meeting: Chair, Robert Gallery and Vice Chair, Evelyn Arana-Ortiz and Trustees: Jabari Asim, Ben Bradlee, Cheryl Cronin, Priscilla Douglas, Linda Dorcena Forry, John Hailer, Jeff Hawkins, and Representative Chynah Tyler. Trustee Zamawa Arenas was not present. Also present were: David Leonard, President, Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board, along with BPL staff and members of the public.

Chair Robert Gallery called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. and addressed the order of business. Mr. Gallery thanked everyone for attending the meeting and welcomed the new trustees, Chynah Tyler and Jeff Hawkins. Next, he invited Jane Bickford, the South Boston Branch Librarian to give welcome remarks

Ms. Bickford thanked the Trustees and welcomed everyone to South Boston. She gave a brief history of the branch, noting it opened as the second branch of the Boston Public Library system in 1872 and the second in the nation. She highlighted some of the popular programming that is offered for all ages including career classes, films, concerts, and ukulele lessons. She ended by expressing her gratitude on behalf of her staff and patrons for the newly renovated courtyard. Next, she introduced Joseph Kebartas, President of the Friends of the South Boston Branch. He thanked the staff, trustees, and Community partners for their continued support. He expressed how much the newly renovated courtyard meant to the patrons and will continue to be for generations to come.

Mr. Gallery thanked Ms. Bickford and the Friends for their support of the branch and their community. He took a roll call and determined there was a quorum. He called for a motion to approve the minutes of the annual May meetings. With no edits or comments, a motion was duly made and seconded. The Trustees voted in favor to approve the minutes of both meetings on May 14, 2019.

Mr. Gallery discussed the additions made to the Trustees Committees which included: Jabari Asim was added to the Special Collections Committee, Linda Dorcena Forry was added to the Governance and Development Committee, Jeff Hawkins was added the Finance and Audit Committee, and Chynah Tyler was added to the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee. He noted the addition of an Executive Committee that will convene to bridge impromptu meetings for time sensitive votes. This committee will consist of himself (Robert Gallery), Evelyn Arana-Ortiz, Zamawa Arenas, Cheryl Cronin, and Priscilla Douglas.

Mr. Leonard gave the President's report and updates. He highlighted the strong summer across the system with the capstone to reading and the *Read Your Way to Fenway* success. He gave credit to the librarians and Farauqua Abuzeit and her team. He noted the BPL Fund's first Gala was a tremendous success in raising \$3.3 million with a strong relationship with the Leventhal Map and Education Center. Next Mr. Leonard briefly updated on the active Capital projects. Adams Street Branch Library closed and has broken ground on the renovation. The Rare Books project is in full swing of preparing for the renovation at Central, and the Roslindale Branch will be closing in a couple of weeks to begin

renovations. He was looking forward to the new opening at the Dudley Branch which was anticipated for spring of 2020. He also highlighted the South Boston Courtyard which will officially be opened at the conclusion of today's meeting.

Mr. Leonard then turned to the topic of the first All Employee Meeting for BPL staff. It will require closing the system for half a day on November 15th, noting he received approval from the City. The purpose was for staff development in the areas of customers service and diversity and inclusion as a team. He also hoped to give a sense of direction heading into the new year. The Trustees applauded this effort to build on the culture of support and participation.

Mr. Leonard noted he will have Governanance and Development updates at a future meeting this year.

Michael Colford was invited to discuss the amnesty and fine forgiveness initiative. Mr. Colford noted that in the past year alone, several members of the Urban Libraries Council have offered fine forgiveness in various capacities including Chicago Public and Baltimore County Public Libraries. He explained that under this proposal, youth would still be required to return overdue books in order to check out additional materials, but would not face a monetary penalty. This initiative is geared towards low income families who have limited resources to pay these fines, but are in most critical need of the services the library provides. He noted In FY18, the BPL collected approximately \$15,000 from library cardholders under the age of 18. This reflected only 11% of the total youth fine balance at the time, indicating that approximately 89% of cardholders under 18 years of age are facing fines, and therefore create barriers for continued use of the library. He explained there would be a press release to notify the public. He also explained that this first proposal was for youth fines, but a later proposal would include amnesty of all fines for BPL cardholders. Mr. Gallery took a motion to approve, it was duly noted and,

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston authorize the President of the Boston Public Library to proceed with the elimination of fines for youth under the age of eighteen who have a Boston Public Library card and approve the waiving of all existing fines for library cardholders under the age of eighteen.”

Next, Laura Irscher was asked to update on the Rare Books Renovation. She began by way of a little background of the mold outbreak in 2015 in the Johnson building which had a climate system not equipped to properly care for the collection. There was not adequate humidity controls. The mold was significant and forced them to close for approximately two months to clean it properly. This developed into a major renovation that is budgeted for \$15.7 million in city capital funding and includes two floors, enhancing the conservation space, adding some museum quality display in the lobby, and improving employee spaces. In preparation for the project, the reading room was closed, they conducted an inventory, and moved the entire collection offsite. She explained they are expecting construction to wrap up by end of 2020 with an acclimation period to follow before moving the collection back in. Ms. Irscher shared some design renderings which highlighted some of the new spaces. The Trustees had some discussion on the project before calling on Beth Prindle and Dr. Martha Mahard to brief them on the Prints and Photography Collection.

Ms. Prindle noted they were thrilled that after four years (2015-2019) to be presenting their final report. She thanked the Associates of the BPL and the Trustees for their continued support. Dr. Mahard noted that this project was an amazing experience which lays the foundation for this extremely rare, Top 20 collection of prints held by an institution worldwide. She noted there were over 1.3 million items in the collection which included many distinguished lithographs, prints, and photographs.

Dr. Mahard explained that in the last three years that she served as the project manager, there were over 40 Simmons graduate students who helped work on the project. She thanked them for their commitment to this project. She noted some highlights which were specific to Boston. The staff inventoried over

350,000 items. She explained they had to create a workflow to amend data and lots of record keeping which is completed.

Dr. Mahard continued that they still have detailed cataloging to do but it is moving forward. Materials were put in proper storage boxes and increased safe storage of files. She noted an example of the strengths of the collection was the Toulouse Lautrec collection which was recently loaned to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She reviewed the systems put in place and digitization efforts to make this once invisible collection accessible to the public. The Trustees offered their gratitude and had some conversation regarding some of the pieces. They commended Dr. Mahard, her team, and the staff for the incredible work and dedication to the collection. Trustee John Hailer noted that this is a legacy project for all future generations.

Next, Ms. Prindle discussed the gift of a Bruno Zupan painting from Galerie D'Orsay to the BPL. Ms. Prindle gave a brief background about Mr. Zupan who was born in Slovenia, spent time in a concentration camp, and emigrated to the United States. His work is held in many permanent collections including the Library of Congress and the United Nations headquarters in New York. He is turning 80 years old and Galerie D'Orsay who has represented his work, wanted to gift this painting to the BPL in his honor. Much of his artwork features the Boston landscape, and this painting in particular is of the Boston Common. Ms. Prindle explained that this gift will be put on public display upon acquisition in the Johnson building and the piece will be digitized. Mr. Gallery called for a motion, was duly made and seconded, and

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve to accept artist Bruno Zupan’s painting ‘The Public Gardens at Twilight Boston Skyline’ as a gift from the Galerie D’Orsay on Newbury Street in honor of Mr. Zupan.”

Mr. Leonard moved to the last item in his report which was a vote to update the policy on Special Collections purchases. He explained that this vote would remove the current limits to be more in line with a regular purchase. It would allow things of a moderate level to go through but will still be reported to the Trustees. He called for a motion, was duly made and seconded, and

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston increase the purchase limits for Special Collections Acquisitions as follows: Objects or Collections valued between \$10,000.00 and \$24,999.99, shall be made at the Library’s discretion, with administrative approval of the Library President or delegate; Objects or Collections valued between \$25,000.00 and \$99,999.99, shall be presented to the Special Collections Committee on Acquisitions for Review and Approval, and will subsequently be reported to the Special Collections Committee; and, Objects or Collections valued at \$100,000.00 or above shall be reviewed by the Special Collections Committee and brought to the Board of Trustees for final approval.”

That concluded the President’s report and Ms. Arana-Ortiz was invited to give the report on the Finance and Audit Committee.

Ms. Arana-Ortiz began by introducing Todd Swisher, the new City of Boston Analyst. Next, Mr. Matthew Hunt from CliftonLarsonAllen, was asked to review the Draft Financial Statements for FY19. Mr. Hunt said the auditing process was similar to previous years, the audit started in August and went smoothly. He thanked the Boston Public Library staff for their timeliness and responsiveness in responding to the auditors’ requests. He reported that it is CliftonLarsonAllen’s policy not to include the

auditor's opinion in the draft financial statement. It is expected that the rating will be "Unmodified," which is the highest available.

In describing the Financial Highlights of the report, Mr. Hunt pointed to the General Fund noting it remained steady with a slight increase and the performance was good overall. He then reported balances in each of the General Fund categories: Restricted Fund (programs and general trust holdings); Unassigned and Assigned Funds (state aid, and enterprise funds from special events which saw a 12% increase this year). He also detailed revenues in the following categories: Intergovernmental Revenues; Special Events; Fees and Fines for Services; Gifts; and Investment Income which he noted had a significant increase due to improved markets and trends. Mr. Hunt continued, pointing out the books expense included digital and printed books, and noted the General Fund expenses, have been as high as \$7 million in recent years but were \$5 million in FY19. These expenses included: Salaries and Benefits; Books and Related materials; Programs; Administrative costs such as Contractual Services and Utilities; and Equipment, Furniture and Repairs and Maintenance. The fluctuation may be due to some non-occurring items such as salaries. He concluded by saying the audit just needs a vote to be completed. Ms. Arana Ortiz called for a motion that was duly made and seconded and,

VOTED: "that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the Boston Public Library's Draft Audited Financial Statements for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2019."

Ms. Donaghey presented the BPL's FY19 Gifts Report. She highlighted the funds raised by the Library's inaugural Boston Marathon team, which totaled almost \$140,000 and will be used to support afterschool programming. She also noted the City-Wide Friends' generous \$40,000 donation had been deposited shortly after the start of FY20 so is not reflected in this gift report. She also noted a significant increase from the Associates of the Boston Public Library. There were no questions or comments.

Next, Ms. Arana-Ortiz gave the report for the Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee. She began by congratulating and welcoming Trustee Chynah Tyler to the committee. She explained the history of how this trust was created back in the 1800s for the purpose of literacy, instruction, and programming at the Dudley Branch. She noted they funded several successful programs for over 700 participants from all age groups and genres during the branch closure. Some examples included: Piano lessons for children, cooking classes for families, cell phone instruction for seniors, mindfulness classes, . They are looking forward to the Branch reopening and continuing in the new space.

Mr. Gallery moved onto New Business. David Leonard talked about the South Boston Courtyard Project which makes the outdoor space accessible to be enjoyed by all. It was one of four projects in the City of Boston budget. Mr. Leonard thanked the Dedhams Savings Bank for their generous grant and the Friends Group for their help in securing this generous donation. Mr. Leonard called up the three branch managers who were recognized by public applause.

Mr. Gallery asked if there was any Public Comment.

Elissa Cadilic, President of AFSCME welcomed the new trustees and explained she represents the BPL employees. She noted that the proposal for fine forgiveness was for youth fines but suggested they take it a step further as other parts of the country do and encourage the trustees to go fine free for everyone. A member of the Friends of South Boston noted the community room in South Boston was never so clean and she commended the Branch staff for their efforts. She asked when they can expect South Boston to be on the list for a refresh. Mr. Leonard explained the process of analyzing the branches which created a five year plan. He noted that the courtyard was placed as a "down payment" for the future.

Cindy Dye, librarian from the Fields Corner Branch spoke about the Jordan Collection. She expressed her concerns that it has not been given attention over the last several years. Mr. Leonard agreed to meet with her to discuss this moving forward.

Louisa Stephens from the Associates of the BPL stated that the new Writer in Residence started on October 2nd at the BPL. She invited the trustees to a welcome reception on October 16th.

David Vieira from the City-Wide Friends noted the great program offered to seniors to use cell phones by the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust. He noted that sometimes he speaks as a patron and others as a member of the City-Wide Friends, today he is speaking as both. He noted that although the Trustee meetings are set up in advance, he noticed that one of the future meetings was moved to the Central Library. He expressed the importance of having them at the branches to allow for the different settings within the neighborhoods for all to attend. He thanked Ellen Donaghey for mentioning the donation from the City-Wide Friends on her Gift report. Mr. Vieira commended Cindy Dye for speaking up about the Jordan Collection. He ended with a reminder that there is a book sale in the lower level of the Central Library that weekend.

Mr. Gallery thanked everyone for attending and the public comments. He addressed Ms. Dye by saying he assumed the first step would be to talk to management. He appreciated her passion that she and her colleagues have. He noted that the Trustees have traveled more to the branches than they have in the past. He thanked the South Boston Branch for hosting and the Friends group for the refreshments. With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m. The group gathered on the newly renovated courtyard for a picture immediately following.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela Carver
Clerk of the Board of Trustees