

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency

Tuesday, November 17, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

via Zoom: <https://boston-public-library.zoom.us/j/84619128969>

DRAFT MINUTES

A Meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston as a Corporation and Administrative Agency was held on Tuesday, November 17, 2020 via Zoom at 8:30 a.m..

Present at the meeting were: Chair, Robert Gallery and Vice-Chair Evelyn Arana-Ortiz and Trustees: Zamawa Arenas, Ben Bradlee, Cheryl Cronin, Priscilla Douglas, Linda Dorcena Forry, John Hailer, and Representative Chynah Tyler. Jabari Asim and Jeff Hawkins were not present due to scheduling conflicts. 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 8:31 a.m. and addressed the order of business. Mr. Gallery thanked everyone for their presence. A roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum. Mr. Gallery called for the approval of the minutes of the last meeting. With no edits or comments, a motion was duly made and seconded. The Trustees unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of September 29, 2020 through a roll call vote. Members of the public were reminded to sign up to give public comment via the chat feature of the Zoom call.

David Leonard was asked to give the President's report. Mr. Leonard explained he will be providing updates mainly on the current realities and aspects of operations and services. Mr. Leonard noted two highlights. The first was regarding the Roxbury Branch. The soft opening went well and they received a great article in *The Banner*. He noted the public was not able to go into the building yet, but has now joined the other branches in offering "BPL to Go" services. The Library is working with Mayor Walsh's office on a virtual tour, which will feature highlights from various staff and stakeholders in an effort try to fill in the gaps of not being able to be inside the branch in person. He hoped the branch would be able to host an in person celebration as soon as it is safe to do so.

The 2nd highlight, was that the BPL had just celebrated their annual employee appreciation event. In particular, this event recognized four employees that reached 25 years of service (Amy Manson Reese, Becky Manos, Julio Chang, and James Tran) and also recognized the work of several outstanding members of the staff. Many of the trustees were able to offer virtually greetings, which were played at the start of the meeting. The greetings and event overall were just a couple of uplifting and upbeat moments of our reality from the last few weeks.

Mr. Leonard welcomed the guest speakers of YW Boston. The Library has partnered with YW to help address issues of diversity, inequity, and inclusion and to incorporate those principles in our work moving forward. Kemarah Sika and Everett Shorey of YW gave brief introductions and explained briefly what the scope of work ahead was. They explained the mission of YW Boston as promoting the elimination of racism as well as empowering women, and promoting peace, justice and dignity for all. YW Boston's focus is on creating inclusive environments within organizations to create racial and gender equality within the City of Boston Ms. Sika explained their strategy to achieve this was focusing specifically on thought leadership, advocacy, diversity, equity, and inclusion services through a two-phased approach. YW takes a multi-pronged approach through four outlined steps.

1. Discovery and Assessment: YW determines the company's goals and objectives. They figure out what 25 employees would best assist with developing a fine-tuned action plan with a variety of steps, ownership, and recognizing what levels of support are necessary to create that change.
2. Dialogue Series: The 25 determined employees do significant work on themselves to identify their own racial identities and how those identities come together as groups, the history of race

and racism, as well as thinking explicitly about the change that they can make within their own state of influence. This cohort of people are who they expect to have influence within the BPL and throughout, in the relationships and culture of the organization.

3. Action Plan Development: This group designs and executes the action plan steps for the organization.
4. Follow-up and Outcomes: YW provides support for accountability and resources to implement that action plan over a 12-month period.

Phase 1 was about creating clear, transparent communications. YW sent out surveys to the entire BPL organization as well as partners that work with the BPL and collected over 250 surveys. Based on the survey results, they would be conducting interviews and hosting five different focus groups. The surveys determined 180 people were selected (by nominations or volunteered) for YW to talk to. Ms Sika added the more employees were looking through an equity lens, the better. Rather than bring in an outside solution, a 25 person group was designed to think about what specific actions the BPL needed to take in order to achieve their organizational change goals.

The Trustees asked a few questions about the strategy, culture questions, and timelines. Mr. Leonard thanked the YW team for joining the meeting and expressed their excitement to work together.

Next item on the agenda was the proposal to rename the South End Branch Library community room. Mr. Leonard introduced Yvette Jarreau, President of the South End Branch. Ms. Jarreau thanked the Trustees and noted the purpose of her presentation was to introduce a proposal to rename the South End Branch library's community room after Marleen Nienhuis. She explained Ms. Nienhuis had a deep love for the City of Boston and the BPL. She founded the Friends of the South End Branch and served 14 years as its President. She was a devoted advocate for increasing budgets for the improvement of the Branch. Her most recent accomplishments were fundraising efforts for planting new bulbs in the park along with other improvements to the branch, and assisted with the creation of the "South End Writes" program. Ms. Jarreau thanked all who assisted her in the process and noted that the Friends had submitted all the necessary documentation required of this proposal, including support letters from the Mayor, City Council, and FOSEL.

David Leonard confirmed that all documents were in order. He added that in a professional role, Ms. Nienhuis had been a staunch advocate and the Library administration supported this proposal. The Trustees added some kind words of appreciation for Ms. Nienhuis for her advocacy and support of the BPL and its mission along their pleasure in seeing this recognition to honor her efforts. Mr. Gallery called for a motion that was duly made, seconded and,

VOTED: "that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the dedication and renaming of the Community Room at the South end Branch library, the "Marleen Nienhuis Community Room."

Next, the agenda turned to Current Operations Reality for services, presented by Michael Colford and Eamon Shelton. Mr. Colford explained they were still very much participating in the "BPL to Go" service and "Printing to Go" systemwide, which allows the community to pick up holds and documents at the door, as well as answering patrons' reader and reference calls at all locations. In addition, computer use was offered at the Central Library. Mr. Colford explained that most other services are still on hold, due to COVID-19 restrictions. He gave a brief overview of the online programs, noting it was not a comprehensive review. He noted some popular programs, which included such adults programs as the Author Talk Series, poetry reading, and the Never Too Late group and Community Learning's Tech Goes Home. Teens were being engaged with gaming programs on Twitch and valuable training for jobs. Children's Meeting Book Bundles were growing in popularity and several successful parent groups have been developed.

Mr. Shelton noted that Information Technology Department, under the leadership of Kurt Mansperger, assisted with all technology needs for staff working remotely and with public computer use at the Central Library. Security assignments have been adjusted to accommodate BPL to Go at all locations. BPL front line custodians and staff have adjusted to COVID-19 protocols, which required frequent cleaning. Mr. Shelton noted he had to add more staff to accommodate the demand. The carpenters have built Plexiglas dividers and, along with the painters, have done several building upgrades. The Shipping/Receiving Department had delivered books successfully while short staffed. Mr. Shelton added that they were assisting other City of Boston departments by delivering some needed supplies during the shortage impacts of the pandemic.

Ms. Laura Irmischer, Chief of Collections reviewed the Collection usage and services stats. She highlighted the great work of all the collections and research librarians who have worked diligently to promote the online and physical collections since the BPL closed. She reported on the usage of the collections since March 16, 2020, there were 57,677 new E-card registrations and 162, 203 physical items checked out since “BPL to Go” was launched. There were 2.3 million items borrowed across all platforms and formats. In comparison to the previous year, eCard registrations were up 24%, physical checkouts (as expected) were down 49%, and online usage were up 37%.

Ms. Irmischer dove a little deeper into the comparison of physical collections vs. digital collections usage. The first quarter statistics showed there was 50/50 usage between them in the previous year in comparison to the dramatic proportion change to digital this year. Digital borrowing now made up 73% of all circulation.

Mr. Irmischer reviewed how people were using the physical collections pointing out that dvds borrowing was down from 24% last year to only 8.7% this year. On the other hand, fiction books were on the rise up to 42% from 32% last year. Looking at the age breakdown of the BPL users across the system; 55% were adults, 5% teens, and 40% is Children’s. She gave the example of Parker Hill, noting it had the highest teen usage increase. Using these statistics helps to inform the collection decisions and allows them to see who was or was not using the collections while access to our patrons is limited. This information was insightful to see how things have changed, who has learned how to use our system, and who needs more outreach.

In conclusion, Ms. Irmischer highlighted a few new online products focused on children materials. These resources have been made available to Boston Public Schools. They included “MakeMake”, which provides Spanish language eBooks for children. The collection has 300 eBooks and includes picture books read-along books, and interactive book. They also provided BookFlix, which was a literacy resource, primarily in English and pairs interactive, fictional video storybooks with related nonfiction eBooks for 3-9 year olds.

Mr. Leonard gave a brief review of the active major projects. He noted the Rare Books Renovation was on track and on schedule, with an anticipated move-in of the collections in late 2021 and a possible reopening to the public in 2022 and would provide further updates as we approach the end of the project. In addition, the Johnson roof replacement was nearing completion, the Adams Street Branch project was on target with an anticipated opening ceremony of some sort in late spring 2021. Just behind that project is the interior and structural renovation of the Roslindale Branch, which he anticipated to be complete in late spring of 2021 or summer for a reopening. Hyde Park Branch was going to reopen in January/February 2021. This project was largely a structural waterproofing project in the lower levels and some interior improvements in key areas. The BPL was proceeding with the McKim fountain and courtyard area. The Johnson women’s locker room project was anticipated to begin shortly. Faneuil Branch was in the bidding process but the renovation would allow for an accessible entrance. The West End and Egleston Branches were in Programming Studies and had already hosted community meetings

for each branch. These two sites were under consideration for mixed usage with housing above them. The McKim Master Plan recently kicked off for a full exploration of the building, with a particular focus on the third floor and the plaza, which will make the entire building accessible. In addition, the McKim fire alarm panel replacement was wrapping up the design phase. Codman Square Programming Study was in early stages of selecting designers and would have a full community process to define the requirements for a future Codman Square improvement. Mr. Shelton explained a couple of mixed use/test fit projects for two different locations, the Chinatown branch and Uphams Corner. Lastly, the projects remaining for later dates included: Research Collections Preservation Plan, Fields Corner Branch Design Study, the North End Study and the South End Branch Study. Mr. Shelton concluded by noting it was an unprecedented slate of projects for the institution and thanked the entire planning team but in particular the Major Projects team for guiding them through these projects.

Mr. Leonard asked Ms. Donaghey to give a report on the status of the FY21 Fiscal revenues. She explained at the May meeting they presented Mayor Walsh's FY21 budget, which was \$41.6 million. After City Council approval it was reduced by approximately \$250,000, noting the BPL was part of the budget reduction conversations. They were aware and in support of that change which consisted of two components; \$150,000 reduction in salary costs and \$100,000 reduction for facilities costs.

Ms. Donaghey explained the second major source for BPL funding was State Funding. She noted that due to COVID-19 there was no budget passed this year, but rather the state had approved one-twelfth budget until final budget revisions were determined. She remained optimistic that the Library for the Commonwealth funding would be at least level-funding and that the state aid appropriation might be increased.

Lastly, Ms. Donaghey reviewed other revenue that funds costs not included in city or state budgets. We receive these through additional funding sources, such as the Library's affiliates, restricted and unrestricted trusts and special event revenue, including restaurant leases. State aid and restricted revenues were stable this year. Due to the shut down in the 3rd quarter of FY20, the BPL lost the revenue of the 4th quarter from restaurant leases and all special events. Ms. Donaghey explained that they Library has built up reserves over the last number of years, to prepare for possible economic downturns. While we had not anticipated a full cessation of event revenue, the Library has built sufficient reserves, including specific reserves for salaries, that should be sufficient to weather the current economic downturn.

Mr. Leonard noted to Mr. Gallery that in the interest of time, we would do quick BPL Fund ("BPLF") status update. Paula Sakey was introduced to the Board as the new Executive Director of the BPL Fund. She noted that the Fund was in good place due to the work that her predecessor, Mary Flynn Myers, had done. . Most of her time has been on building the infrastructure of the department. They are fully staffed department of seven employees and are focusing in on the key functional areas of Finance, Operations, Individual Giving (which is their Annual Giving and Leadership Giving Program), Communications, and corporate/relations programs.

The BPL Fund has seen many accomplishments over the past few months. She highlighted a few of these, including, including: the launch of Planned Giving, creating the 1848 Society to recognize donors who include BPLF or BPL in their estate plan, and Gift Planning with an integrated website. Focusing on a multi-channel annual fund appeal through which they have encouraged over 600 new donors to support the Fund. She was pleased to announce they have achieved unrestricted giving to date beyond what they received in total of last fiscal year. They are well on their way of achieving their goal of \$1 million dollar of unrestricted giving. The BPLF Board is an enthusiastic board, thinking very carefully and strategically about how they diversify that board to reflect skillsets and demographics of our communities we serve. .

Ms. Sakey discussed some examples of the progress they have had with restricted giving. The restricted priorities focused around some key areas: youth engagement, digital equity, and workforce development

programming, as well as work in the branches such as the supporting the new nutrition lab at the Roxbury Branch. The BPLF received great support from Foundations, individuals, and organizations that have helped support the library's homework assistance program, Wi-Fi hotspot expansion program, support of enhancements to our anti-racist reading collection, as well as services and programs around financial and technical literacy and ESL programming. She had tentatively received early commitment for support for programming and staff for the new nutrition lab. She thanked everyone of their support. She noted they are in start-up mode but quickly moving away from capacity building support to sustainability.

Mr. Leonard concluded his report. Mr. Gallery asked for any new business for which there was none. Mr. Gallery then asked for public comment.

David Vieira, Member of the CityWide Friends thanked Mayor Walsh, the Trustees, and President Leonard for continuing the work on all of the capital projects. The public was fully engaged and excited about these projects and looking forward to next steps. He also wanted to thank the Board for honoring Marleen Nienhuis at the South End Branch and noted it was wonderful to see her honored this way. He said that many of the Friends groups have been working with their branch librarians to see if there could be some loosening up of the restrictions that the librarians have to add to the collections at the local neighborhoods. Many of them are not able to bring gift books into the collections without a lot of red tape. There are a lot of patrons who find that the only way they can appreciate their library was to make a donation to their branch in honor of people who have passed or a special event. A letter of support was sent to President Leonard from various Friends Groups and he hoped that something could happen to help loosen that up. He wished everyone a pleasant Thanksgiving.

Mr. Leonard acknowledged Mr. Vieira's comments regarding collections. He noted there was a robust and thorough dialogue between branch staff and the collection development team about improving our ability to support the needs of the patrons both in Boston and Massachusetts while continuing to put a focus on the physical collections at branches in ongoing conversations, including with our Library Union.

Mr. Leonard noted Rachel Miselman's question in the Chat regarding mixed use. He explained that exploration through the capital projects continued to be ongoing. The two active projects under consideration with programming studies were Egleston and the West End Branches. We anticipate that future programming studies will also ask the question, though not every site is feasible, to look at that option. He explained that the use of the term "mixed-use" in Boston typically means use for housing and particularly affordable housing.

In regards to the John Adams library, the Trustees have directed us to do some additional research on this matter and the legalities pertaining to that matter. That work is ongoing and they will report to the Trustees later. Mr. Leonard also gave some directions to the website to find the anti-racist lists.

Yvette Jarreau, President of FOSEL, asked a question regarding the slide for the upcoming capital projects. The North End had a price tag for the study was \$1.5 million and South End study was only \$100,000. She asked for clarity on the disparity. Mr. Leonard explained that the North End figures reflected an old figure that included partial study and design costs. The general standard was to show the Programming study as standalone figure in the \$75,000-100,000 range. The design numbers for the South End would be proposed in a future cycle.

Mr. Gallery thanked everyone for their presence and for supporting the library. He wished everyone well over the upcoming holiday season. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Carver