

**TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON**  
**Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency (First Meeting)**  
Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.  
via Zoom

**MINUTES**

The annual meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (“BPL”) held on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom conference call.

All Trustees were present at the meeting including: Chair Priscilla H. Douglas, Vice Chair Evelyn Arana-Ortiz Trustees: Zamawa Arenas, Jabari Asim, Navjeet Bal, Joe Berman, Ben Bradlee, Jr., Cheryl Cronin, Linda Dorcena Forry, John Hailer, Jeff Hawkins, Joyce Linehan, Senator Mike Rush, Representative Chynah Tyler, and Christian Westra. Also present: Boston Public Library President David Leonard, Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, Boston Public Library staff, and members of the public.

Chair Priscilla H. Douglas presided, and called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. A roll call was taken determining there was a quorum. Ms. Douglas acknowledged that Mr. Leonard and his staff would review the accomplishments of 2021, but she wanted to recognize some highlights.

Ms. Douglas acknowledged the success of the Repairing America theme and all the programs in the neighborhoods which were designed to invite conversations, explore new ideas, and develop new job skills that launched in January. She encouraged everyone to watch them.

She began by reading an excerpt from the institutional statement that was ratified by the Board in September 2020:

*“The Trustees of The Boston Public Library reaffirm our commitment to racial equity and to principles of diversity equity and inclusion, more broadly.*

*The Library is formally committed to becoming an anti-racist organization in response to systemic racism, inequity, and injustice prevalent in our society.*

*We acknowledge also that the Boston Public Library’s Central Library stands on land that was once a water-based ecosystem providing sustenance for the indigenous Massachusetts people and is a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange among nations.*

*We are committed to land acknowledgements for all locations at which we operate. We reaffirm this commitment to set the context for our planning, deliberations, and public engagement so that they take place from the spirit of welcome and respect, found in our motto ‘free to all.’”*

Ms. Douglas asked that all Trustees adopt these principles. A motion was duly made, seconded and voted unanimously to approve via a roll call,

**VOTED: “that the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston and that Committee Chairs use and adopt the opening statement as presented for all the public Trustees meetings.”**

Ms. Douglas’ second matter of business was the approval of the meeting minutes from March 23, 2021. A  
*Pamela R. Carver, Clerk of the Board 9.28.21*

motion was duly made, seconded, and approved unanimously by the board without questions or comments.

Ms. Douglas continued that she was reviewing all the Trustees committees. She thanked the former Special Collections Committee members, with a particular nod to Dr. Bill Stoneman for his years as Chair. She recognized each member by name and thanked them for their service to the BPL. The new members of the Special Collections Committee were currently being selected. Ms. Douglas noted the formation of a new Committee with the working title “Strategic Community Engagement” and asked Joyce Linehan to Chair it. She noted that the committee members would be taking deeper dives into and determining the committees’ charters. All committee members would be posted on the BPL website.

David Leonard began his President’s report by reviewing the FY2021-2022 Initiatives and Goals that would be presented at the upcoming budget meeting with the Boston City Council. Key accomplishments over the last year were summarized. Noting that during the reality of COVID, a robust group of services were offered, and highlighted the digital equity work manifested through the lending of hot spots, Chromebooks, and extending Wi-Fi at different locations. Book bundles and craft kits were offered as one more way we could replace the ability to come into the branches. They held virtual tours and to the McKim Building. He predicted the BPL would be at the highest circulation total at 5.2 million items (included BPL to Go program and digital lending) and anticipated the statistics as we turn to the year ahead. Additionally, there were seventy-seven thousand new ecard sign ups.

Mr. Leonard noted some major achievements regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (“DEI”) were the Repair America programs, the formal ratification of the DEI statement and the work around it. Including a \$75,000 grant coordinated through the BPL Fund to increase the Library’s anti-racist materials, and the work with YW Boston as an equity consulting partner. He noted the significant impacts on the branches (even while they were closed) particularly the completion of the Roxbury, Adams, and upcoming Roslindale branches.

Additional accomplishments included the virtual services of Tech Goes Home, ESL conversation circles, a rebooted Homework Assistance program, and the launch of the Future Readers Club.

Next, Mr. Leonard presented the five-year Strategic Roadmap, which will serve as a bridge from the full Compass Plan towards a future strategic planning exercise. This Roadmap document covers key principles that will help shape the work of the library over the next five years with a deep and robust stakeholder engagement.

Mr. Leonard noted that through the expanded digital access to the collections, nearly all manuscripts have been digitized. He added that with respect to the Mayor’s proposed budget and a key FY22 initiative, they would initiate the permanent elimination of fines for adults. It was an exciting development that they have been given the revenue relief with the Trustees consent and approval vote to proceed with the elimination.

Within Library Services, they were prioritizing and expanding youth engagement, workforce development programming, an additional out of school time programming with stronger collaborations with Boston Public Schools. With respect with ongoing and new initiatives, will be assessing our collections storage needs at Central and at the Archival Center, implementing a new collections security policy, and developing a digital preservation plan.

The President's office focus was on reopening, recovery, and renewal while developing support and our Affiliates collaboration.

Mr. Leonard reviewed the capital projects and investments. He highlighted completed/completing projects such as Adams and Roslindale branches, the Rare Books renovation, and the McKim Master Plan programming study. Some continuing projects included the Faneuil Branch renovation, the McKim fire panel, and several programming studies. He noted some projects kicking off in FY22 included Fields Corner design, the South End, North End, and South Boston programming studies. He also noted they were actively engaged with other city departments for the planning of the new Chinatown branch and the new Uphams Corner Branch.

Mr. Leonard continued with key priorities for Collections included the executing on the \$2.1 million grant to revitalize the library's Founding Research Collection; anticipate Phase One will continue through 2023. Language access and equitable outreach has become a particular priority for the City of Boston and the BPL will be doing that work in conjunction with the Language and Communications Access ("LCA") department.

The board had a discussion and answered some questions regarding some of the new initiatives and work with the LCA department.

Mr. Leonard gave a brief update on the BPL's reopening plans, which were not able to make a public announcement to any specific dates, but anticipated it to be over the course of the month of June 2021. The Trustees discussed their anticipation of continuing online services vs. in person and the staff's ability to work through the pandemic. Mr. Leonard noted they were short staffed across the entire system due to vacancies and working diligently to fill these positions to be best prepared for reopening.

The Trustees thanked the BPL staff for their continued service and commitment to serving our patrons, as well as all the accolades they received during the pandemic.

Upon the conclusion of Mr. Leonard's President's report, Ms. Douglas called for a motion to approve that was duly made, seconded and approved via a roll call vote,

**VOTED: "that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the BPL Strategic Roadmap as presented at the Board meeting on May 18, 2021."**

Next, Ms. Evelyn Arana-Ortiz gave the updates for the Finance and Audit Committee. She asked Ms. Donaghey to review Mayor Janey's FY22 Operating and Capital Budgets. Ms. Donaghey explained the key funding sources of the BPL include: City, External Affiliates funds, and Enterprise funding. She reviewed the chart that outlined the FY22 budget which was included in the accompanying meeting materials. This explained four new positions, salaries, utilities, repairs/maintenance, contracted services, and miscellaneous costs. The FY22 budget was \$51,634,300.

Next, Ms. Donaghey reviewed the Capital Projects Budgets chart which outlined the costs of all renovation and study projects. The FY22 budget was \$20,977,918.

After some discussion and questions, Ms. Arana-Ortiz called for a motion that was duly made and

seconded and voted to approve via a roll call vote,

**VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston vote to accept Mayor Kim Janey’s FY22 Recommended Operating and Capital Budgets, subject to further amendments in advance of final approval by City Council.”**

Ms. Arana-Ortiz reviewed and explained each of the annual votes. She asked if there were any questions for which there were none. She called for motion, that was duly made and voted to approve via a roll call vote,

**VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston authorize the President, or designee, on behalf of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston, to enter into a contract or contracts for various goods or services relating to the Boston Public Library Critical Repair Budget for the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 provided that each contract entered into pursuant to this authorization shall have been estimated to be less than one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00). In no event will the contracts cumulatively exceed three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00).”**

**VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston enter into a non-advertised contract, as authorized under G.L., c.30-B, Section 7(a), referred to as a “Procurement of Library Books,” between the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (a Corporation under Chapter 114 of the Acts of 1878), and the vendors listed therein (including any subsidiaries or agents), for the acquisitions of books and for certain other library bibliographical acquisitions materials, in an amount not to exceed the amount appropriated in the Library Department budget for books and other related bibliographical acquisitions materials, during the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.”**

**VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the expenditure from the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund in an amount not to exceed Two Hundred Forty Two Thousand Nine Hundred Forty Dollars and eighteen cents (\$242,940.18) to support the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund Programmatic Plan for FY22 as recommended by the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee and to be presented at an upcoming meeting.”**

**VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston delegate approval of any contract deemed to be of a critical nature by the President of the Library during the period between May 2021 and September 2021 to the Finance and Audit Committee.”**

Ms. Irmischer, Chief of Collections explained that the BPL would be putting out an RFP to hire a project manager to oversee a \$2.1 million project funded by a grant. That person would be responsible for identifying the different components of the grant which involved inventory cleaning, cataloging, and preserving the collection. The vote is to ask the Board to delegate the approval of this contract for the RFP to hire a project manager to the Finance and Audit Committee. The delegation was requested due to the summer hiatus of the board and to ensure the contract is approved in a timely manner.

A motion was duly made, seconded, and voted to approve via a roll call vote,

**VOTED: “that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee recommend that the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston delegate approval of the Research Collection Consultant Contract to the Finance and Audit Committee due to the timing of the vote needed to award.”**

Ms. Arana-Ortiz explained the next vote was for a contract to assess the storage space we have, to measure the size of our research collection, and determine storage space needs now and in the future. Ms. Irmischer added that this was the first step in a long term storage strategy. It is the BPL's assessment to understand how much our collection should be using and how much space we need, so that we can do a lot more planning for the best storage conditions for our collections.

A motion was duly made, seconded, and voted to approve via a roll call vote.

**VOTED: “that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee recommend that the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston authorize a contract in the amount of \$171,178.00 (one hundred seventy one thousand, one hundred seventy eight dollars) with Perry Dean Rogers Partners Architects, 177 Milk Street, Seventh Floor, Boston, MA 02109, the most highly advantageous vendor, for the study and analysis of the Research Collection Space and Storage per the Request for Proposal (“RFP”) specifications.”**

Lastly, Ms. Arana-Ortiz explained the fine forgiveness vote. She noted that she was very excited to take this matter to Trustee vote. Mr. Colford explained that last year, the City and Trustees voted to eliminate fines for all patrons under the age of eighteen. This current vote would eliminate fines for all patrons. He noted that accrual of fines was largely an equity issue that puts a barrier between some communities from using the Library. Fines are often insurmountable to people that are affected most due to economic hardship and prevents their future use of library materials. Some positive implications of eliminating fines are it eliminates those barriers for equal access to the Library reinforcing our mission statement of “free to all”. Mr. Colford explained that the fines referred to “late fees” and not for loss of books.

Mr. Leonard clarified that procedurally we are required by the City of Boston, to give us revenue relief permission to proceed with this. Therefore, it is part of the City's budget, which the City Council will vote on by June 30th. This vote will allow the ability to make the policy changes consistent with this. While we have eliminated all fines during COVID, this will allow us to officially put into place permanently starting July 1<sup>st</sup>.

With no questions, Ms. Arana-Ortiz called for a motion that was duly made and seconded, and voted to approve unanimously via a roll call vote.

**VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston authorize the President of the Boston Public Library to implement any and all policy changes to permanently waive and eliminate late fines on all regular library materials, in concert with Mayor Janey's FY22 City of Boston Operating Budget.”**

Ms. Douglas moved onto the Board of Trustees 2021-2022 Schedule. The dates were presented and approved by the Board. The schedule would be posted on the BPL website under the Trustees page (noting all dates and times were subject to change).

Ms. Douglas asked for any New Business for which there was none and she welcomed Public Comment.

Mr. David Vieira, member of the City-Wide Friends noted that there was no mention of the Hyde Park Branch library. He added that the branch had been closed during the entire COVID period due to a water remediation project. He made the observation that it took longer to do this project than the entire Adams Street branch renovation. He asked Mr. Leonard for a timeline on when he could expect the Hyde Park branch to reopen. The clerk noted that someone would reach out to him after the meeting to address his question.

Elissa Cadillic, President of AFSCME 1526. She noted when the Trustees voted to eliminate youth fines, she spoke in favor of eliminating fines for all. So to echo what was heard, this will increase access to our resources for many of our patrons. As President of AFSCME 1526, half of their membership actually feel that the strategic roadmap outlined by President Leonard does not go far enough to building a staff culture for all, based on respect and professional development. It is not enough to become an anti-racist organization. We also have to address the perpetuated inequity staff and lack of true professional growth within the BPL. Her members were the face of diversity and yet all too often are not afforded the respect or recognition of the work they do. They are excluded from many of the BPL initiatives because of a lack of respect by co-workers and some leadership. This is the very opposite of creating an inclusive workplace, a good start would be for leadership to define professionals as they see it, and not depend on a definition under MA General Law, relative to BPL staff. It was unclear if the YW Boston work would address this issue. Depending on recommendations that may solely focus on racial inequity, while important, may not make any changes to the internal workings of the BPL. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of air quality within buildings. Our HVAC systems across our branches, need a lot of TLC. A report of the air exchanges per hour shows many of our branches are not providing adequate air circulation. As we think about protecting workers and the public, it needs to be addressed. She gave an example of the North End's inefficiencies and other buildings that have been told they would not be fixed. This is unacceptable to both workers and the public. She also asked that the Trustees examine the hiring practices for the practical implementation of the funding Research Collection Plan. Once the project is set to begin, to determine if they represent the best use of the funds by the library. The proposed plan is once the contracted project manager is hired, to outsource the handling of those materials, instead of hiring library employees to safeguard their collections. Instead, the Chief of Collections prefers to pay money to supporting the salary of corporations and external contractors, instead of investing in good paying jobs, and working towards increasing the diversity and equity within our Library.

Marie Firmin, a lifelong Roxbury resident, and Founder and President of BlackBiz Development Group, LLC. She wanted to talk about the digital divide in the black community. She added that even though you boast that you went from serving families to a digital platform. A lot of families did not get served. She wondered how the BPL would compensate for that with the budget and with programs that are going to support families and students in the community. Also, that the library is used very differently these days than it was when she was growing up. Many families and students use the libraries as refuge because their houses are overcrowded or because they are homeless. Wondered when a discussion around those kinds of issues would be had. She was in favor of changing the name to Nubian Library for a number of reasons. She can write the Board to let them know all the reasons that she is totally in favor, not to think that it should have been a natural process. You name the library after the square. She was not sure why they had to fight to rename it Nubian Library. She was hoping that with all the wonderful things that are happening for the library this year, because of the pandemic where so many families have lost members, she hoped that the Trustees see that the Nubian library is very important and significant in this time and day. The thanked them for serving.

Yvette Jarreau, thanked everyone for all that they have been doing in support of the library services over the last year plus. She asked if the money for the South End Programming Study was being rolled over from FY21.

Elizabeth Nagarajah, President of the Friends of the Roxbury Branch Library, on behalf of their

Board, there has been a two-year discussion on the renaming of the branch. While they have meet with Mr. Sadiki Kambon, who is one of the big pushes on the renaming of the library, the Friends did support the Board of Trustees in naming the library the “Roxbury Branch Library”. She wanted to go on record that the Friends are still standing by that support, so that is known. She hoped that as we listen to the various comments that we can come to a conclusion on the official name of “Roxbury Branch Library”.

Ms. Douglas moved onto the next agenda item regarding Executive Session for the purpose to discuss the status of the legal guardianship of the John Adams Library under Exemption 3 of MA Open Meeting Law. She explained that the Board needed to take a vote to enter into Executive Session immediately following the 2nd public meeting. They Board would not reconvene in a public session. A motion was duly made, seconded, and voted to approve via a roll call vote.

**VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston vote to enter into Executive Session.”**

With no further business, Ms. Douglas adjourned the first meeting at 10:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Pamela Carver*