

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee Tuesday, September 21, 2021, 8:30 a.m. Held via Zoom

MINUTES

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Finance and Audit Committee was held virtually on Tuesday, September 21, 2021 via Zoom.

Present at the meeting included: Committee Chair Evelyn Arana-Ortiz and Committee members: Zamawa Arenas, Navjeet Ball, John Hailer, Mike Rush, and President David Leonard. Jeff Hawkins was absent due to a conflict.

Also present were Boston Public Library staff including Chief Financial Officer Ellen Donaghey, Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, and other BPL staff members along with members of the public. Ms. Arana-Ortiz presiding, called the Meeting of the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee (“Committee”) to order at 8:31 a.m. Roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum. Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded.

The Chair read the welcoming statement, which stated, “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 will take place from the spirit of welcome and respect, found in our motto ‘free to all.’”*

First matter of business was approval of meeting minutes of August 24, 2021. With no comments or edits, the minutes were approved via a roll call vote.

Next, Matthew Hunt from CliftonLarsonAllen (“CLA”) reviewed a summary of the draft FY21 Financial Statements. Mr. Hunt noted that Covid prompted them to do most of the audit remotely with some in person field procedures. There were no disagreements with management and it went smoothly. The auditor’s opinion was unmodified which is highest opinion available; essentially this means that based on their audit work, that the financial statements are free of any material misstatements. He explained that the BPLF, which is a component of the BPL, is audited separately.

Mr. Hunt noted key highlights of the fund balances that carry over to FY2022. The funds are broken into four categories. The General Fund balance increased approximately 6.4% or by \$318,000. Restricted Funds which are funds with external restrictions (ex. Endowed with specific purpose) had a balance of \$1.3 million. He noted that the committed funds (used for neighborhood outreach) was \$37,000 and assigned funds was at \$2.2 million (for IT, salaries, furniture, and operating fund) These funds are determined by trustee vote or management intent or decision.

The remaining unassigned funds was at \$1,690,388 which had increased by 26% or \$348,000.

Non- major funds balances represent the principal of the BPL’s trust funds. The principal (our invested funds held by the City Treasurer) cannot be expended and had a balance of \$77.9 million. For the

spendable portion of funds: the restricted trust funds were at \$11.0 million, -non-restricted funds were at \$9.0 million, and general trust (various restricted grants/gifts) had a balance of \$1.6 million.

Mr. Hunt noted revenues performed very well despite the Covid-19 pandemic. He noted one significant decrease due to the pandemic was reflected in event revenue, which was only \$43,000 in FY21. He highlighted contributions and gifts were up significantly to \$3.9 million and investment markets had done very well.

Mr. Hunt reviewed Trends/Fluctuations over past 5 years in revenue, which have been relatively consistent. He pointed out two significant fluctuations. The first was a significant decrease in Fund revenue from FY17 to FY18 due to changes at the Fund and the FY21 fluctuation in event revenue due to the pandemic.

He also noted that the audit only reviews Trustee funds, and does not include the Library's City funding, which is included in the City's audit.

A few questions were asked clarifying the BPL's budget breakdown of Trustees Funds vs. City and state funding, and how it was separated.

Ms. Arana-Ortiz explained that each year there is a special project or initiative that is funded, but there was not one selected in past year. However, open to discuss if there was one that wanted to tackle.

A motion was duly made, seconded, and voted to recommend to approve to the Full Board via a roll call vote:

VOTED: “that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston recommend the Board of Trustees approve the Boston Public Library’s Audited Financial Statements for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021.”

Next, Michael Colford, reviewed the program partner contracts. Ms. Donaghey explained that the process for identifying program partners includes putting out a public call for partners to submit proposals, which are then reviewed and recommended by Mr. Colford and members of Library Services and then presented to the Trustees for approval.

Mr. Colford explained the first partner is New England Blacks in Philanthropy. This is part of a \$30,000 grant the BPL Fund received from the Highland Foundation. We have contracted with this group to do \$10,000 worth of work on G Code skill development training for adult learners. The training focuses on in-depth coding and financial literacy

Next, Mr. Colford discussed a \$100,000 partnership with Tech Goes Home. This will focus on digital literacy skills through instructional classes. At the end of the program, students will be given a laptop and hot spot. Mr. Colford noted that the program had a fairly high cost of \$700 per participant. During the pandemic, the Library agreed to let Tech Goes Home flip the process and give out the equipment to students at the beginning of the program. He explained this was a wonderful way to provide access to technology to those who did not have it. We will also be doing training with children focusing on early literacy. This contract would be funded through three different funding sources: the distributions from the Dr. Samuel Abbot Green Memorial Fund, which is used to fund literacy programs, City of Boston funding for returning citizens, and a Fidelity Trust for Library youth programming.

Next was the Jewish Vocational Services (“JVS”). This \$100,000 contract will provide a series of employment focused workshops and coaching for individuals enrolled in ESOL services. It will include development of curriculum for non-English speakers and provide 1 on 1 career coaching to those who need assistance. This funding comes from a gift from the Highland Street Foundation through the BPL Fund.

American Programs Bureau is an agency that represents numerous authors and speakers. The Library has used them in the past and is now seeking to fund up to \$125,000 for several programs throughout the year. This will include the marquee speaking series, the Lowell Lectures, various author events, and other "Joy Agenda" programming at multiple branches throughout the City. Mr. Colford used the example of the contracting with Maria from Sesame Street as part of Hispanic Heritage Month. There are two funding sources for this contract, a \$75,000 grant from the Nord Family Foundation and Janey's Joy Agenda funding.

Company One Theatre is a returning partner. They conducted both the Library's first theatrical production in 2018, which was a great success, and a second in 2019. The cost of the spring 2022 production will be approximately \$100,000 both for direct and in kind costs, such as custodial costs. In addition to the production, Company One will conduct several workshops for the public throughout the year with the BPL. Funding comes from the Lowell Foundation, trust funds and the City's Joy Agenda funding.

Grub Street is another long term partner. They run two very successful programs for the Library, "Write Down the Street" for adults and a young adult writing program. These programs are currently being offered virtually but we are hoping to return to in person work later this year. These programs help develop cultural identities and memoir projects. Grub Street has a similar target audience as the Library and their mission aligns very well with the BPL. Funding would come from a Fidelity Youth trust fund and other Library program trust funds.

The Trustees discussed some of their own experiences working with these partners and expressed how pleased they were with the work being done. With on questions, Ms. Arana Ortiz made a motion that was duly made, seconded and, voted to approve each of the contracts via a roll call vote for each contract:

VOTED: "that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve a contract not to exceed twenty-five thousand dollars and zero cents (\$25,000) of direct costs to be entered into with New England Blacks in Philanthropy, 101 Federal St #1900, Boston, MA 02110, to present their G-CODE and other skills development training at the Boston Public Library."

VOTED: "that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve a contract not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars and zero cents (\$100,000) of direct costs to be entered into with Tech Goes Home, 867 Boylston St 5th floor, Boston, MA 02116, to support the library staff in running digital literacy skills training classes that provides a laptop and hotspot, or other means of providing internet access in multiple branches throughout the City of Boston."

VOTED: "that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve a contract not to exceed twenty-five thousand dollars and zero cents (\$25,000) of direct costs to be entered into with Jewish Vocational Service in Boston ('JVS'), 75 Federal St, Boston, MA 02110 to provide a series of employment-focused workshops, office hours sessions, and individualized coaching for individuals enrolled in BPL's ESOL services."

VOTED: "that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve a contract not to exceed one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$125,000) to be entered into with American Program Bureau, One Gateway Center, Suite 751, Newton, MA 02458, to support the marquee speaking series including the Lowell Lecture, select author events, and other "Joy Agenda" programming in multiple branches throughout the City of Boston."

VOTED: “that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve a contract not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) of direct and in-kind costs to be entered into with Company One Theatre of 539 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02116 to conduct a 5-week public theatrical production, and other programming throughout the year.”

VOTED: "that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve a contract not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) of direct costs to be entered into with Grub Street to present their Write Down the Street and Young Adult writing programs, as well as select workshops in collaboration with the Community Learning Department in multiple branches and other neighborhood locations throughout the City of Boston.”

Ellen Donaghey moved onto the employment agreement with former Chief Technology Officer, Kurt Mansperger. She noted this was a transition position to help assist with the completion of several ongoing IT projects and initiatives until his replacement is hired. They were currently interviewing applicants and hope to find his replacement soon. Ms. Donaghey explained that the City has approved this employment agreement but that we also felt we should have Trustee approval. Ms. Arana-Ortiz made a motion that was duly made, seconded, and voted to approve via a roll call vote:

VOTED: “that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve an employee agreement with Kurt Mansperger of 86 Lake Attitash Road, Amesbury, MA 01913, formerly Chief Technology Officer for the Boston Public Library, to assist in ensuring the continued effective and efficient delivery of technology-dependent library services, to both staff and patrons, not to exceed fifty thousand dollars and zero cents (\$50,000).”

Next, Ms. Laura Irsmscher, reviewed a contract with BiblioTemps, a service through the Massachusetts Library System. BiblioTemps provides temporary workers who specialize in library services. By way of background, Ms. Irsmscher explained there was a backlog of work that had been deferred during Covid, along with a number of key vacancies that were affecting the cataloging team. Catalog records are the information the public uses to search for items in the library’s collection. The library continues to work on filling permanent positions, this contract is merely a bridge to manage the workload until positions are filled.

Mr. Leonard explained that one of the Library’s challenges over the coming six months is to get back to full-staffing. As of last week, approximately 20% of the Library’s positions are empty. While we are moving aggressively to fill these vacancies, many of our vacancies are filled through internal transfers so it can be a long process to have net new employees. He also noted that this vote was not to replace full time positions, but merely to supplement expertise or bridge vacancies in the interim.

Ms. Arana-Ortiz called for a motion that was duly made, seconded, and voted to approve via a roll call vote:

VOTED: “that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve a contract not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars and zero cents (\$100,000) to be entered into with BiblioTemps, a program of the Massachusetts Library System, 33 Boston Post Road West, Suite 400, Marlborough, MA 01752 for temporary library services.”

Ellen Donaghey reviewed the gift report for the Fiscal Year 2021. She explained that the BPL reports on gifts received annually in lieu of asking for permission to accept each gift individually. This year, most donations were given to the Fund. The exceptions were primarily those gifts received from the Friend

groups, gifts received through estate planning and the marathon team donations. The gift report totaled 3,859,260. She noted that City-Wide Friends donation came in just after the close of the fiscal year and so will be reported next year.

Ms. Arana-Ortiz asked for any New Business for which there was none. Ms. Arana-Ortiz asked for Public comment.

Elissa Cadillic, President of the AFSCME 1526, commented on the Kurt Mansperger contract. She noted that AFSCME 1526 protests this contract, pointing out that Mr. Mansperger chose to leave the BPL management and the City of Boston. They are required to live in the city as part of being an employee and have under 10 years of service in their bargaining unit. She added that the city was holding residency hearings for individuals and union members who make significantly less than Mr. Mansperger. She understood someone was needed to handle technology, but felt this was a way for Mr. Mansperger to avoid the residency clause as indicated that his contract states he lives in Amesbury.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela R. Carver, Clerk of the Board