

# TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee

Tuesday, June 15, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

Held virtually via Zoom

## MINUTES

A meeting of the Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, June 15, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Present at the meeting were: Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee Chair and Trustee Evelyn Arana-Ortiz, Committee Members: Trustee Rep. Chynah Tyler, Che Madyun, Friend of the Roxbury Branch Library, Priscilla Foley, Director of Neighborhood Services/Branches Also attending were: Dianna Preusser, Assistant Neighborhood Services/Branches Manager, Candelaria Silva-Collins, Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Project Manager and Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board. Committee members Sarah-Ann Shaw and Allen Knight were not present.

The Clerk noted the meeting was being recorded. Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee (“Committee”) Chair Evelyn Arana- Ortiz presided and called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. She thanked everyone for coming and read the opening statement:

“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 Massachusett 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.’”*

Next, roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum.

First item on agenda was approval of meeting minutes from March 1,2021. They were approved via a roll call vote.

Ms. Arana-Ortiz reviewed the current year’s fund distribution amount of \$103, 010.83 with a carryover of \$139,929.35, for a total budget for programming of \$242,940.18.

Priscilla Foley, Director of Neighborhood Services, was asked to give brief updates on the BPL. She noted the dedicated staff helped all year with BPL to Go services at the branch locations throughout the system. They did recently some in-person computer use at the Central library. As of June 1<sup>st</sup>, the Central Library was reopened to the public and received lots of excited patrons to be back in the building. The Braches reopened on June 14<sup>th</sup> and seeing a slow start but anticipate that building as time goes on. She noted patrons were welcomed to come in and use computers, printing services, and checking out books. Currently not able to do in person programming, but hopeful that would be added later in the year. Some programming was being offered outside and online.

Next, Program Manager, Candelaria Silva-Collins reviewed the spreadsheet of applications for the FY 2021-22 year, provided within the meeting materials. (She noted there were a couple of proposals that were added late the night before and were not included on that list.) She noted there were a few who attended the technical session but opted not to apply at this time.

1. Jaqueline Johnson, new applicant looking to do a collage workshop. She is a Roxbury resident and a Friend of the Roxbury Branch Library. Her program focuses on elementary students within grades 3-5, with a focus on African American women artists. It includes hands-on activities, history of artists, and plans to have 1-2 guest artists. She would meet at 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. during April school vacation week and/or on Saturday during Women's History month. Her budget request was for \$1,630 and her target audience was for parents and children.

The Committee had no opposition to this application, her application was approved.

2. Take Back the Kitchen with the Haley House, they are a return applicant. Proposed programming is for families; consisting of 4 classes and 4 classes for seniors with a proposed hybrid instruction. Professionally trained chefs would do an in-person tasting. Families that participated would be sent home with a potted herb to grow from their community farm site. Seniors would focus on preparing healthier options. The budget request was \$5,901.72 with a start in October on evenings and weekends. One instructor is a well-known long-time Roxbury resident and they have extended outreach. Flexibility was great for standalone classes and ability to offer hybrid if needed. They would access the branch's kitchen.

The Committee had no opposition to this application, and the applications was approved.

3. Gil Ferreira of Byte Size Labs, is a new applicant looking to teach coding to 13-19 year olds. He speaks multiple languages, has over 15 years of IT experience, and has worked with teens in the past. His program would teach how to code and make a professional website and share career paths. Instruction would be afterschool and budget request was \$5,280. This group would use one of the smaller meeting rooms.

The Committee was excited with this new applicant. They noted it was a great opportunity for children to learn a unique skill set they can use that will set them up for success. The Committee had no objections to this applicant, and the application was approved.

4. Bonita Jones, Meditation and Mindfulness, is a repeat applicant who was looking to host six 2 hour sessions for 12 sessions over the fall and spring. The classes could accommodate 15-25 people in-person, or 100 people virtually. She would utilize the community room. She has the capability to do virtual or hybrid if needed. This applicant had a great resume and recommendations. The budget request was for \$6,000. Ms. Silva-Collins pointed out that no yoga is taught during this program.

The Committee discussed some communications difficulties in receiving reports in a timely manner in the past from this grantee. This program was well attended when first held in person in the branch but was not when held at a remote location during the renovation.

The Committee chose to hold off on determining their decision with this application to hear the differences with similar proposals. Later, after careful review, they voted to approve her first session

in the fall but not the second session held in the spring. Therefore, the Committee approved \$3,000.

5. Arts Emerson is a repeat applicant. The instructor, Akiba Abaka, would be applying for the 8<sup>th</sup> year (started in 2014). It was for five sessions that run 4-5 weeks each of the “Play Reading Book Club”. This is a popular program that is well attended. Former and new participants would be encouraged with a focus on ages 13 and up (based on play content) with a maximum of 30 people. The budget request is \$6,000 and use the Branch community room.

The Committee asked a few questions regarding the participant target age. The Committee had no objections, but asked for their proposal to have better clarity on their targeted age and approved this application.

6. Joel Mackall is a returning applicant. He is proposing to teach an African American history teaching series. It would be a teach-in series around major holidays (such as: MLK Day, Juneteenth, Kwanzaa, etc.) His budget request was for \$3096.38 and utilize the Branch meeting room.

Joel Mackall, his second proposal was for a genealogy boot camp, “Tracing our Roots”. This was a granted program in the past and they are always popular. He is a Roxbury resident, has a great track record with all age groups, and has great local outreach. The budget request was for \$2903.30 and would use the Branch meeting room.

There were no objections to this applicant and approved both proposals.

7. Christina Iris Evans Ferreira, an individual who is a new applicant, who was proposing “Movers and Shakers” for children and families over the summer for 6 sessions for up to 50 participants. She is certified to teach yoga to accessible challenged children. Her program would provide movement, craft, and storytelling. It was noted that her visual instruction can overcome language barriers for non-English speaking students. She can do promoted Instagram and Facebook posts. She has a person that works with her that does graphic and illustrated work. The budget request is \$3,417.

Christina Iris Evans Ferreira had a second proposal for “Movement and Journaling”. It would provide movement and class integration through activities and drama reflection. The target audience is for adults up to 8 participants. There would be group practice of yoga, 20 min of journaling, and 20 minutes of group discussion. She is looking to host it on weekday evenings. Her scheduling would need to be tweaked to ensure branch is open. The budget request is \$4653. She works locally and does work with the Guild in Dorchester. She had a solid proposal with letters of recommendations. It was not meditative but not specifically designed for stress reduction.

The group discussed the differences of the three similar proposals. The Committee felt the focus on families was important and focused on those in the immediate geographic area.

The Committee decided after some discussion to approve the “Movers and Shakers” proposal geared toward families by Christina Iris Evens Ferreira to be offered during the day over the summer. They agreed to approve her second proposal, “Movement and Journaling” for adults

pending the execution of her first program.

Ms. Silva-Collins added that it was wise to fund one program for new applicant first to see how well they execute it before fully funding all of them. This supports those programs that are best suited for the needs of the community as well as those that are well-received and attended in the past.

Ms. Silva-Collins explained that she asked what the Friends, the Trustees, and staff wanted to see in regards to programming and then held an info/tech session for potential applicants. Marketing plans are executed to ensure that the public is aware of the free programs being offered.

Rep Tyler explained that although she respects the process and efforts made as far as community process, however she did not see anything based around CORI friendly programs which concerned her as it is a major issue in this community. She wanted better clarity in regards to what the community wants.

The Committee understood Rep. Tyler's concerns, however it was explained that when the Roxbury branch closed for the renovation, there was a community survey done to see what programs were needed most to focus on during the closure as well as some of the programs they wanted to see.

The results showed generally that the community was looking for family programs. The Committee suggested doing another mail-in survey to ensure the needs are still met and allow the community to weigh in.

However, after some concerns over the need to have CORI friendly programs and support programs on re-entry into the workforce, Ms. Arana-Ortiz suggested having the CORI concerns discussed with the newly formed BPL Community Engagement Committee to see if there may be some suggestions for additional ways to address this. They also suggested possibly creating a rubric to rank the RFPs.

8. Faith Johnson, is an individual new applicant. The budget request is for \$1,230.37 Creativity as a Meditation via visual arts over the summer focused on adults. The classes can accommodate 3 to 15 people for 3 sessions on Saturdays. The class would offer meditative exercises followed by an exploration of water coloring and visual arts. She had recommendations and lots of experience.

It was noted that as of June 15th, the Branch is not open on Saturdays and these classes would have to be offered online or moved to different day.

The Committee had no objections to this proposal and approved the application.

9. Carlos Vargas, is a repeat applicant. He is proposing piano classes to children over the summer (specifically for returning students as a refresher course over 4 sessions) There would be 5 children in each session ages 5-15 years old. This would be offered online via Zoom in breakout rooms. Classes could be taught in English or Spanish. The budget request is for \$1,500. It was noted there is one substitute teacher to assist him.

Mr. Vargas was also proposing to have piano classes over fall to spring for ages 5 to 15 years old. This would be open to new students as well as returning students. The instructor preferred to teach the class at the Boston Conservatory but could be held at the Branch if needed. The budget request is \$6,000 on Saturdays.

The Committee discussed concerns over offering the course at the Boston Conservatory and the uncertainty of the Branch not being open on Saturdays.

The Committee approved his application for the summer program being held virtually.

The Committee voted to have the fall program funded, but only at the Branch and not the Boston Conservatory.

John Kordalewski with the Makanda Project, is a returning applicant. They have been funded since 2008. It is a 13-member ensemble. They would offer two timed concerts if capacity limits restricted number of attendees in the Branch community room. One concert would feature new youth artists and one will have Mass Art classes. They would limit the featured performer to a local performer just in case there are travel restrictions. They have a great network and outreach, and many recommendations. It was noted this is always a popular event and loved by many in the community. The budget request was for \$7,000. They would also stream the event for those not able to attend.

The Committee suggested asking if there could be some sort of visual presentation.

The Committee had no objections to this application and it was approved.

10. Zahirah Nur Truth with ZNT Arts is a new applicant. Her proposal was for Watercolor Experiments for older youth and adults. The budget request was for \$2,632. It would be for Saturday mornings in August for 1.5 hours via Zoom up to 15 applicants over 3-part series.

The Committee suggested offering in person at the branch weekday rather than virtual on Saturdays.

Zahirah Nur Truth second proposal was for “Decorating Your Space with Joy”. The target audience is older teens to young adults. The course would run in the fall in November on Wednesday evenings for 1.5 hours. The focus would be on how to create a sacred space at home that centers joy. The budget request is \$1,425.

The Committee had some concerns that this particular program may be the right fit for the Library.

Ms. Nur Truth’s third proposal was for families/adults and children 3 to 10 years old over the April vacation week called “Health is Wealth” art making. The course would teach about food sustainability, food deserts, and healthy food choices based on USDA guidelines. They budget request was \$5,683.85.

The Committee discussed the three proposals and expressed some concerns they had regarding ZNT’s last two proposals. They agreed the concepts were good but were not thorough enough. They hoped she could apply later with a more thought out proposal at a later time. This applicant asked for funds for supplies in advance which was against the program’s current reimbursement structure. They committee decided to decline all three of ZNT’s applications.

Next, the Committee discussed that they typically fund \$5,000 to the branch each year, but decided to grant \$7,000 this year in light of not receiving funds the year prior.

They Committee discussed that they would do a mid-year RFP in January to try to engage new

participants in hopes to encourage around areas of workforce development.

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

Ms. Arana-Ortiz asked for Public Comment.

Elizabeth Nagarajah, President of the Friends of the Roxbury Library stated that she loved hearing all of the proposals. She thought they were thoroughly discussed and funded. Ms. Arana-Ortiz thanked her for attending the meeting.

Ms. Arana-Ortiz noted that Ms. Collins-Silva prepares a summary that is presented to the Board of Trustees in September. They would meet again in November to review RFPs for December. The Clerk would schedule the meeting accordingly.

Ms. Silva-Collins was approved \$2,000 for the advertisement budget.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:45p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela R. Carver