

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Strategic Community Engagement Committee

Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

Held via Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Strategic Community Engagement Committee held virtually on Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Present at the meeting included: Committee Chair Joyce Linehan, and members Evelyn Arana-Ortiz, Vice Chair along with members: Joe Berman, Michelle Coleman, David Leonard, John Linehan, Dayron J. Miles, Nam Pham, Chynah Tyler, Pam Waterman. Committee members Imari K. Paris Jeffries and Zamawa Arenas were absent.

Also, present were the Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, along with BPL Staff and members of the public.

The Meeting of the Trustees Strategic Community Engagement Committee (“Committee”) was called to order at 8:31 a.m. Ms. Joyce Linehan presided and welcomed all to the meeting. She began by reading the Trustees reaffirmation welcoming statement.

The Clerk took a roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum. Attendees were reminded that the meeting was being recorded.

Ms. Linehan explained that the agenda was focused on discussing a couple of BPL partnerships. She introduced King Boston representatives, Duncan Ramage-Healey and Greg Ball to give their presentation to the Committee regarding their partnership with the BPL.

Mr. Ramage-Healey started by explaining their vision for an inclusive and equitable Boston worthy of all and where BIPOC thrive. King Boston’s mission was to dismantle structural racism together with diverse partners, such as BPL. He gave a brief overview of “The Embrace” King memorial that was would be installed in the Boston Common once fabrication was complete and a breakdown of their institution practices regarding community organizing, hiring, and intergenerational learning practices. They were working on developing a dashboard to share their research data, tracking and analysis of legislation and litigation.

Mr. Ball explained the importance of their role in cultural representations through such projects as The Embrace Memorial, the inaugural Embrace Ideas Festival, celebrating Juneteenth, the Good Trouble Podcast, and the Voices on King and One Night in Boston Film Series. Their goal is to build connection and conversations to expand the ideals of equity and inclusion throughout the City of Boston and beyond. Mr. Ball discussed some partnership ideas they are working on with the BPL. First, King Boston will have a satellite office at the Roxbury Branch to be in the heart of the neighborhood. They will be producing their Good Trouble podcast from the library and they hope to co-create programming with a speaker/author series as well. The Branch would serve as a venue for the festival programming as well.

The Committee discussed their excitement for the potential impact that the BPL and King Boston partnership could have through future brainstorming and collaborations. The Committee members asked several questions regarding how they could be helpful and be involved in the festival which would be in June.

Next, Dayron Miles talked about the Arnold Experience collaboration between the BPL and the American Repertoire Theatre (“ART”). He explained how they developed the idea of this collaboration out of

response of the pandemic and the need for the community to breathe freely again. They focused their performers around four separate themes: resiliency, healing, wellness, and joy. They created audio movement books, to enhance self-mediation and relaxation. The ART hosted some pop-up live group performances as well as encouraged self-guided audio plays. In addition, in collaboration with Angela Veizaga of the BPL, they created adult and young people's reading lists. This collaboration was providing this free to the public. He hoped to provide an update on potential collaborations at a future meeting.

Mr. Michael Colford, Director of Library Services, added that ART was also involved in the partnership with Company One Theatre that would be hosting a performance in the spring.

Ms. Linehan stated that she had several conversations with various branch staff and friends groups since their initial meeting in October. She explained to them that this committee was charged with figuring out ways to support deeper engagement within the neighborhoods around the branches, without being intrusive of their efforts. She noted the conversations were varied and underscored the different personalities of the neighborhoods in which the branches exist. Some common thoughts that emerged were that they wished for support to better communicate with their neighborhood to both attract new patrons and also to keep current patrons engaged and interested. They discussed their desire to invest in better technology and provide more language resources. Ms. Linehan explained some of the individual conversations and some of her insights from her discussions with six branches: Parker Hill, Upham's Corner, East Boston, Fields Corner, Honan Allston, and Codman Square.

Mr. Pham mentioned his involvement of the initial study that was done regarding expanding the Fields Corner Branch into a multi-use building which started the conversations of mixed use throughout the City of Boston,

The Committee and several BPL managers had a discussion regarding the snapshot of Ms. Linehan's findings from her branch visits. They clarified that Friends groups worked independent of the BPL and consisted solely of volunteers. Some groups were more active and involved than others. Perhaps the BPL may try to help assist with facilitate sharing best practices among the friends groups at the Annual Friends Breakfast in March. The Committee expressed their interest in seeing the engagement reports that the branches submitted to see where they could assist those efforts.

Ms. Linehan called for approval of the October 8, 2021 meeting minutes. A motion was made, seconded and they were unanimously approved through a roll call vote.

Ms. Linehan asked for new business for which there was none. She called for public comment.

Ms. Laura Gang, long term Roslindale resident and member of the Roslindale Friends Group, expressed how pleased she was with the committee's discussions. She wanted to look into other city's libraries relationships with their Friends groups. She asked for assistance from the committee with this. She gave a brief background of the Roslindale Friends Group activities. She felt there was disconnection between Central and the branches as well as the Friends Groups and the City-Wide Friends. She offered to assist in any way to help assist with sharing of information within the various groups.

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela R. Carver, Clerk of the Board