

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency

Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

A Meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston as a Corporation and Administrative Agency was held via Zoom on January 18, 2022 at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Present at the meeting were: Chair, Priscilla H. Douglas and Vice-Chair Evelyn Arana-Ortiz and Trustees: Zamawa Arenas, Navjeet Bal, Joe Berman, Ben Bradlee, Cheryl Cronin, Linda Dorcena Forry, Joyce Linehan, Senator Michael Rush, and Representative Chynah Tyler. Trustees John Hailer and Christian Westra were absent. Also present were: David Leonard, President, Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board, along with BPL staff and members of the public.

Chair Priscilla H. Douglas called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. and began by reading the Trustees reaffirmation statement. Ms. Douglas thanked Mayor Wu for being an advocate for the Library as well as all of the BPL affiliates and partners. Ms. Douglas explained that the Board will hear about the BPL “becoming anti-racist” and will hear us lead with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“EDI”) and not “DEI” to align with our wider conversations and initiatives underway to create inclusive organizations. Organizations have discovered that when you focus on equity, it drives cultural change, and aligns squarely with our “free to all”.

All in attendance were reminded that the meeting was being recorded and to sign up for public comment before the sign up period closed. A roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum.. The meeting minutes from November 16, 2021 were approved via a roll call vote.

David Leonard was asked to give his President’s report. He began with the current operating reality and recognizing library workers who were at the heart of everything that they do. He explained that the Library Journal chose not to recognize an individual for their ‘Librarian of the Year’, but rather chose to award library workers everywhere for taking care of themselves, patrons, and one another through tough times. He commended the staff for their swift assistance to the BPHC and Mayor Wu with COVID test kit distribution during the height of the Omicron surge.

The Roslindale Branch reopening was presided over by Mayor Wu and Chair Douglas and was a great success with several hundreds of patrons attending.

Next, Mr. Leonard focused on where we are in relation to COVID-19, in the middle of the new surge. Our approach is handling the staff cases as they occur and encouraging those who are sick to stay home and managing to work through that now.

The BPL was among many departments approved to allow eligible staff to work from home to reduce the number of people in our larger city buildings. There were about eighty employees who were approved to work remotely until January 31st. The BPL continues to provide masks to patrons, and KN95 masks are available to staff who need them in addition to making time available for them to get tested and/or receive vaccinations. The BPL was currently working with modified services. Per the City’s mandate, masks were still required of patrons and staff within all BPL buildings. Proof of vaccinations would be required at the Café and at private events at the library.

Mr. Leonard reviewed the vacancy progress, noting that the number of vacancies had decreased since August/September, dropping from ninety-six down to sixty-six. There was a slight uptick in January due

to retirements and staff on leave. Filling vacancies remained a top priority and expected to see the number decline in the coming months.

Mr. Leonard reviewed some organizational updates. As a result of the recent departure of the Chief of Collections, there were some interim appointments made to oversee the Collections Department. Melissa Andrews will oversee Collections Development, Eben English will oversee Digital Services, and Beth Prindle, Head of Special Collections, will now report to the President.

Additionally, Priscilla Foley, Director of Neighborhood Services would also report to the President and Maija Meadows Hasegawa was promoted internally as the fourth Assistant Neighborhood Services Manager. Mr. Leonard noted some statewide responsibilities were shifted to Angela Veizaga, Director of Strategic Partnerships. Keith Gillette was introduced as the new Chief Technology Officer and gave brief welcome remarks.

Michael Colford, Director of Library Services gave a report on Library Services. He echoed his appreciation of the staff for their resiliency during these challenging times. He noted the hours of operation will remain reduced for the time being due to the considerable number of vacancies. We have temporarily returned to virtual programming and will review when appropriate to return to in-person programming. They have allowed some class visits under set strict guidelines. There was updated signage at all locations on wellness checking. Branches were evaluating space between their public computers to ensure it was adequate for patrons. Expiration dates of library cards were extended from October 2021 to June 2023 to ease the flow of having to renew in person.

The Board paused to ask several questions regarding the Covid protocols and the effects the BPL is seeing from the Omicron surge on the number of patrons coming to the buildings.

Mr. Leonard continued with an update on the BPL Equity agenda. By way of background, he began with recapping how the BPL got to where they were and the timeline they are on. He noted that in May 2020 following the death of George Floyd began the new dialogue on racial equity and justice. This led to the formation of an informal staff working group and later an approved statement of the Trustees on our Racial Equity Commitment in August 2020.

Throughout late 2020 and 2021 the 'Repairing America' Series ran and it focused on the public raising up issues relative to these matters.

Today his presentation focused on the organization's work with YW Boston between two phases, the first was discovery and ran July 2020- December 2020 and the second working with a defined cohort, was run from February 2021- October 2021. Although helpful, they wished the process was more inclusive of a larger number of staff and reflected more results during that time period.

The cohort gave several recommendations and as a result, eight volunteer working groups would be launched in late January. An Equity Coordinator position was approved and they were finalizing their candidate interviews and anticipated the finalist to start in February 2022. The focus of this position would be to keep them on track on all the ranges of EDI issues and the working groups.

Mr. Leonard explained the City of Boston engaged in a three-step Citywide REAL (Racial Equity and Leadership) training for all employees. Two steps were already completed and the third was to launch in 2022. The BPL had over 461 employees complete the training, which was the fastest city department to reach this level of compliance.

Mr. Leonard reviewed the (self-reporting) demographics of the BPL and City provided in the posted meeting materials. The graph showed that the library statistics remained relatively stable from 2019-2022. He pointed out there was a slight increase of Hispanic employees and hoped as vacancies were filled, would reflect new percentages.

The BIPOC snapshot of employees based on levels of positions was reviewed. In many cases, higher levels of management were lower than they need to be. In terms of PSA union membership (which consists mostly of librarians), 16% identify as a person of color versus AFSCME membership which reflected 61%. Reflecting a sense of the diversity within the organization.

Mr. Leonard gave a brief background of the eight new working groups that would be comprised of employee volunteers. They were: Including Decision Making & Transparency, Internal Communications, Recruiting & Hiring, Professional Development, BIPOC Resource Group, Indigenous Peoples Issues Group, Climate Change Response Team, and Collections Management procedure review (incorporating EDI principles).

The Board had a discussion on how they planned to build an employment pipeline in the future, metrics, representation at branches, and professional partnerships with higher education institutions.

Mr. Leonard concluded his report by noting some key 2022 actions they were working toward were to articulate and manage a timeline for these working groups. Another was seeking new external organization for ongoing cultural competency work to complement the work already accomplished with YW Boston.

Mr. Leonard reiterated the goals of being equity-led and becoming an anti-racist organization. To build a healthier culture that promotes equity, diversity, and inclusion and to ensure our collections and services work is informed around EDI principles.

Next, Ms. Arana-Ortiz gave the Finance and Audit Committee report. She noted there was contract overseeing the Research Collections Project that would be externally funded from a major gift from a BPL Fund anonymous donor and The Associates of the BPL. The Committee had already reviewed the contract and approved it for recommendation to the Board, but invited Ms. Prindle to briefly explain it.

Beth Prindle, Head of Special Collections, reviewed the 2-year contract with Hepzibah Rapoport Consulting. She explained this position would be overseeing the project management for the Research Collections Project. The project would develop, implement, and oversee the completion of cleaning, inventorying, cataloging, storing, and providing access to hundreds of thousands of the library's most significant research holdings, which are among some of the library's oldest collections.

Ms. Arana-Ortiz made a motion that was duly made, seconded, and voted unanimously via a roll call vote,

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston vote to approve a contract not to exceed One Hundred Ninety-Nine Thousand Six Hundred Forty Dollars and Zero Cents (\$199,640) with Hepzibah Rapoport Consulting, 34 Belmont St, Apt 2, Somerville, MA 02144. They were the most responsive and responsible bidder in a public Request for Proposal (RFP) process, advertised under M.G.L. 30B, a contract for as specified for two years with the BPL to serve as project consultant to develop, implement, and oversee completion of a major initiative to clean, inventory, catalog, store, and provide access to hundreds of thousands of the library's most significant research holdings. The Boston Public Library Evaluation Committee performed an evaluation of the proposals submitted by the vendors as described in the RFP documents, and

through this process determined the proposal presented by: Hepzibah Rapoport Consulting represented the best value for the Boston Public Library.”

Ms. Douglas asked for New Business. She recognized Trustee Jabari Asim on the accomplishment of his new novel, *Yonder*. Ms. Douglas reminded the audience of some of the upcoming BPL programs focused around Black History Month.

Ms. Douglas asked for public comment.

Elissa Cadillic, President of AFSCME 1526. She noted that her membership held the largest diverse group of employees at the BPL. She thanked the management for recognizing the work of the staff. She noted most of the senior leadership positions required an MLS degree. Therefore, there was no realistic pathway for AFSCME members to achieve these positions. She felt not everyone should be required to attain these degrees. She also asked that the financial contract thresholds be noted on the Trustees website.

Ms. Douglas reminded everyone that the next meeting was on March 15th. With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela Carver,
Clerk of the Board of Trustees