

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency
Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom

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 March 15, 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: Navjeet Bal, Joe Berman, Ben Bradlee, Linda Dorcena Forry, John Hailer, Joyce Linehan, Senator Michael Rush, Representative Chynah Tyler, and Christian Westra. Trustees Zamawa Arenas, Cheryl Cronin, and Jeff Hawkins were absent (noted: John Hailer joined after roll call was taken). 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 8:34 a.m. and began by reading the Trustees reaffirmation statement. She made brief welcoming remarks and thanked all for their support and for being present. A roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum. The meeting minutes from January 18, 2022 were approved via a roll call vote. Members of the public were reminded that the meeting was being recorded and to sign up for Public Comment by 9:00 a.m.

Mr. Leonard was asked for his President's report and began by noting two key staffing changes. He acknowledged Caroline Driscoll's work as legal advisor at the BPL for the past four years. She will transition into a new position within the City's Law Office as the Ethics Advisor for the City of Boston. The BPL was assigned a new Assistant Corporation Counsel, Jaclyn Munson who will assist the BPL with any legal matters. Ms. Driscoll will remain involved to shepherd any larger BPL topics that are still outstanding.

Mr. Leonard then introduced Roudnie Celestin, the new Equity Coordinator/Program Officer. Ms. Celestin previously worked in the City of Boston's Neighborhood Services Department. Ms. Celestin thanked all for the warm welcome and noted her excitement to continue the equity and inclusion work at the Library.

Mr. Leonard continued with general updates. March 5, 2022 was a milestone day for the BPL regarding the pandemic. The BPL returned to Saturday service. It was also the first day that the mask mandate was relaxed. For now, the guidance is recommended use of masks, but they are not required. Mr. Leonard discussed a few incidents in recent months. There were four anti-mask protests that interrupted service. The BPL acted quickly, and those individuals involved had been trespassed for violating of the Appropriate Library Use Policy. Additionally, there was an attempt to vandalize the Maya Angelou bust. The bust had been sent for preservation work. He noted that the matter was still under police investigation.

Mr. Leonard continued they were in continued dialogue with City colleagues concerning offering additional services. Continuing to move towards adding a gradual return to full operating hours and services. Vacancy levels have impacted our capacity more so than covid concerns at this point. Look to see a combination of virtual, in-person, and hybrid programming in the months ahead.

Ms. Ellen Donaghey, Chief Financial Officer reviewed the FY23 Budget Submission. She explained it was a baseline for maintenance requests as well as external funding (also known as Trustee funds) projections.

There are several components that make up the budget request, including several policy documents. The city budget includes permanent employees, overtime, unemployment, workers compensation, building repairs and service equipment costs. Other costs included contracted services such as security, funds designated to be given to other entities (earmarks), facility inspections, pest control services, and other items. The total budget was \$42,744,436 which was a 1.2% increase from FY22 or roughly \$500,000.

Ms. Donaghey explained that the BPL is a City department and a separate 501(c)3 nonprofit. The City budget pays for most routine costs, such as the majority of staffing, half the collections budget and infrastructure costs such as utilities and maintenance. The Trustee funds pay for all the special things the library does – the programming, literacy funds, community outreach, often bibliocycles, equipment used by public and staff, and costs associated with updating branch furniture, etc.

Ms. Donaghey explained the External budget represent hundreds of underling funds and so is an estimate of next year's costs. These funds include monies from six various resources, including the Affiliates, several forms of state aid, Trust Fund spending, and enterprise money from special events. The FY23 budget was \$9,426,621 which was relatively level with the year prior (a slight difference of \$31,122). At the May meeting the Trustees will be asked for an approval vote for the overall FY23 budget once it is published by the Mayor.

Mr. Leonard reviewed the FY23 Capital Project requests. Immediate work ahead was completing the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department renovation which was anticipated to reopen later in 2022. Other projects included the Faneuil Branch renovation which was under construction and reopening in 2023. The McKim Fire Panel was slated to be replaced and was currently in design phase. The Codman Square Branch was in its programming study which was completing in April 2022. Other projects included Central Library façade study and repairs, the Chinatown Branch design and fit out, and the Fields Corner Branch design and construction.

Mr. Leonard noted some projects that were in dialogue with the City regarding moving forward to next phase included Research Collections Preservation and Storage, the McKim Master Plan, Eggleston Square Branch design, and Uphams Corner and West End Branch design and fit out. Three projects were funded in previous years but awaiting city capacity to begin them. They included the North End, South End, and South Boston programming studies.

Mr. Leonard concluded that there were two new project requests for FY23 for the Connolly and Hyde Park Branch improvements.

There was some discussion regarding equity with the RFP process on the capital projects.

Next, Michael Colford, Director of Library Services reviewed the Reach numbers from June 2021-January 2022 to give insight into the data usage since the return to service in comparison to pre-pandemic. He explained that Reach is a combined measure of five categories: number of patrons attending programs, visitors, circulation, wireless sessions, and computer sessions. The numbers reflect that we had a slow start back in June 2021. There was a peak with the return of college students in the fall and a slight dip with the Omicron variant surge in early winter. The BPL is still only at 50% of our Reach numbers to where they were prior to the pandemic. He reviewed the Reach charts that reflected each branch location specifically and pointed out some anomalies. There were significant trends of seeing higher digital downloads of eBooks and audiobooks for circulation. He noted that more than half of the locations had over a 50% increase in visitor numbers in recent months which was a promising sign. The wireless sessions were up reflecting the free Wi-Fi zones and outdoor seeing areas added to branches were a successful investment. Computer usage was still low possibly due to the mask mandate but anticipated these numbers to increase each month.

Evelyn Arana-Ortiz reviewed the Finance and Audit Committee votes. There was a proposal for the Kirstein Business Library and Innovation Center to enclose their eleven alcove areas with Kirstein trust funds. The bid was anticipated to be over \$100,000 and to be back in spring. She explained the vote was to delegate approval for this award of contract to the Finance and Audit Committee.

With no questions, a motion was duly made, seconded, and voted via a roll call vote,

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston recommend delegating approval of the contract award for the Kirstein Business Library and Innovation Center glass enclosure to the Finance and Audit Committee.”

Ms. Arana-Ortiz noted that the Finance and Audit Committee was recommending an extension for the McKim Catering contract for The Catered Affair by a period of twelve months to October 31, 2023, to allow for rebooking cancelled events during the pandemic and for a smoother transition period should a new vendor is chosen for this catering RFP which was about to go out to bid.

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

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston extend the Catering and McKim restaurant Contract with the Catered Affair, 70 Ledgewood Place, Rockland, MA 02370 by a period of twelve months to October 31, 2023.”

Ms. Arana-Ortiz thought prudent to invite NEPC to update the Trustees on the BPL investments due to the ongoing crisis in Russia and the Ukraine.

Mr. Sebastian Grzejka, Principal of NEPC, reviewed an executive summary of the investment portfolio. NEPC did not recommend any changes to the current allocation. Mr. Grzejka noted that the long-term performance was strong on both an absolute and relative basis. January’s performance was impacted by recent market volatility; however, active management of the portfolio kept exposure to Russian securities to a minimum. He noted that the BPL asset allocations were very diversified and fixed income assets have shown strong returns. Mr. Grzejka explained the impacts that regional impacts can have generally on volatility, and they will monitor it on an ongoing basis and suggest any recommendations for reallocation as needed in the future.

Ms. Douglas called for New Business. Ms. Arana-Ortiz asked for the board to think about how they will be meeting in the upcoming year with the public. She suggested they discuss at a future meeting. Joe Berman added that The Associates of the BPL would be hosting their annual “*Literary Lights*” gala in person on April 10, 2022, and more information could be found at The Associates website.

Ms. Douglas called for Public Comment.

Paula Coar noted she had been advocating for the name of the Roxbury branch to be “Nubian Square Library”. She added that they would be asking for Mayor Wu’s support. The black and brown community voted for the area to be named Nubian Square and want the library to be changed to Nubian Square Library and will continue to advocate for this.

Ms. Douglas thanked Ms. Coar for her comments. She explained that the library administration has fully briefed the Mayor’s office on the history of the name change from “Dudley” to “Roxbury” branch. The Trustees consider this a closed matter and are supportive of the Library administration’s continued reference to the branch as the Roxbury Branch Library in Nubian Square.

Marie Firmin, lifelong Roxbury resident and former teacher in the BPS system, commented that she wanted the name changed to Nubian Square Library. She understood that the Trustees consider this a closed matter but does not feel this is a closed matter for them. She believed that the name represented their history and culture and wanted to see it represented like other cultures. She noted it would be pursued despite the Trustees consideration of it being a closed matter. She thanked the Trustees for the work they do and noted that she learned a lot from the meeting.

With no additional business the meeting was adjourned at 10:12 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela Carver,
Clerk of the Board of Trustees