

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Strategic Community Engagement Committee Thursday, April 7, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. Held via Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Strategic Community Engagement Committee (“Committee”) was held virtually on Thursday, April 7, 2022 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, Imari Jeffries, David Leonard, Dayron J. Miles, Nam Pham, Chynah Tyler, Pam Waterman. Committee members Zamawa Arenas and John Linehan were absent.

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

Ms. Joyce Linehan presided and called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. Attendees were reminded that the meeting was being recorded and explained the public comment process. She began by reading the Trustees reaffirmation welcoming statement. A roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum. She called for a motion that was duly made, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve the meeting minutes of the December 9, 2021 meeting.

Ms. Linehan explained that this meeting’s agenda was focused on reorientating the committee on the library’s focuses and priorities with the goal of developing the committee’s charter.

President David Leonard began by noting how pleased he was to be in dialog with the committee in this context to show the BPL’s focus on the governance, policy, and strategy level. He explained he would be reviewing guidelines and initiatives around community engagement to set some context of where we want to go, in coordination with principles already set in place by the Trustees.

Mr. Leonard reviewed eight current guiding principles that were drawn from the “Strategic RoadMap”, which was adopted by the Trustees last year. The idea was to bridge the original Compass strategic plan to the future plan that will guide them in the next five to ten years

Mr. Leonard reviewed the principles which were becoming an anti-racist organization building a culture of respect. To offer programs and services that build and maintain equity. Building, maintaining, and activating all our collections (circulating, research, and special collections). Improving our reach, awareness, and impact; with fiscal sustainability systemwide. Providing our patrons with public spaces that inspire them. Ensuring our spaces are well-maintained while offering modern infrastructure. Creating patron and staff connections and services through technology. Lastly, is to “expect the unexpected”. The BPL had gone from major challenge to major challenge to a pandemic, learning the importance of being good crisis managers.

Next, Michael Colford, Director of Library Services, reviewed two key programmatic areas that the BPL has identified as priorities in the recovery of the City post- Covid. They were Youth Engagement and Workforce Development.

Youth Engagement included early literacy efforts, a focus on STEM and STEAM efforts for school age children, and the focus on community building through various outreach initiatives for all ages.

Workforce development was the second priority. Preparing individuals one-on-one through ESL classes, digital literacy, and workforce preparedness/development. He announced the first Career Counselor would be starting in mid-April working directly within the community to help people identify career paths, find improved jobs, and assist with vocational counseling. These efforts close the circle with helping patrons from start of application process, to assisting with job placement.

Other key resources that the BPL offer included the Kirstein Business Library and Innovation Center (KBLIC). A flagship business library that offers support to business owners and entrepreneurs.

Mr. Colford explained that we also do a lot of work with various arts & culture organizations and develop civic engagement for all ages. He noted that environmental justice was the theme for FY23.

Mr. Leonard introduced Angela Veizaga, Director of Strategic Partnerships. She began in this new role during the pandemic when we were not doing many partnerships, but felt it was an exciting time as in-person programming was increasing; providing opportunities to get involved with new partnerships.

Ms. Veizaga explained she was the liaison to the library's affiliates (BPL Fund, LMEC, The Associates of the BPL, and the City-Wide Friends). In addition, she also worked with statewide library relationships.

She reviewed some partnerships that have been cultivated over the years. They included the American Repertoire Theatre ("A. R. T."), Pine Street, Boston Globe, Museum of Science, Simmons College, Company One, Grub Street, Ben Franklin Institute, Tech Goes Home, and the MA Trial Court access to Justice initiative.

Mr. Leonard invited Priscilla Foley, Director of Neighborhood Services, to review the branches' roles in community outreach activities. She noted each of the twenty-five branches offered an array of programming to various age groups throughout the system. They included: storytimes, art collaborations, tech support workshops, and created craft kits "to go". The branches also offered sewing classes and chess workshops. These programs are advertised through the BPL and branches' social media, with the assistance of local community organizations, as well as the BPL's various webpages.

Ms. Foley added that staff were offering programs and services outside of our BPL spaces. She noted an example of offering children's programming at the local YMCA, while the Faneuil Branch in Oak Square was closed for renovation. This unique opportunity allows anyone to come to the class vs. those without a YMCA membership. The staff also participate in local farmers' markets and community events.

Ms. Foley noted that the branches appreciate their dedicated Friends groups, who financially support some activities and programming at the branches.

David Leonard noted the term outreach can be interpreted to mean many things. Specifically,

1. Outreach as services outside of the buildings
2. Outreach as localized marketing/relationship building
3. Outreach targeted to specialized populations

The community members discussed the outreach initiatives in greater detail and asked how we measure metrics. They noted the need for more staff to help reinforce these efforts.

Mr. Leonard added that the first inaugural Youth Poet Laureate completed her term and was recently honored with a plaque outside the Teen Central at the Central Library. The second poet was recently

selected and would begin in collaboration with the Arts & Culture Division as well as the BPL. He shared her poem with the committee.

Joyce Linehan asked if there was any New Business. She noted they will plan a future meeting in the fall to discuss the communications strategy with the goal of producing a committee charter. She was currently working on a draft to be presented and discussed at the next meeting

Mr. Imari Jeffries noted that the groundbreaking on the MLK memorial was scheduled for April 27th. The Embrace Festival will be held in the week leading up to the Juneteenth holiday. He encouraged the other members to think about how they or their organizations can support that mission.

Dayron Miles noted *Black Superhero Magic Mama* performance that A.R.T. was working with the BPL in collaboration with Company One were starting on April 21st at the Central Library and were free to all. He also noted that *The Revival of 1776* will be debuting in Boston on May 15th to July 24th.

Evelyn Arana-Ortiz noted she was heading to the Hyde Park branch to attend the extremely popular *Con Salsa* program that features post-revolution Cuban music.

Joe Berman noted that the Associates of the BPL were hosting their annual *Literary Lights* event on Sunday, April 10th, featuring guest speaker, Professor Henry Louis Gates. The proceeds support the collections, manuscripts, arts, and music of the BPL.

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela R. Carver, Clerk of the Board