

# TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

## Meeting of the Trustees Community Engagement Committee Wednesday, January 11, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. Central Library, Commonwealth Salon

### MINUTES

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Community Engagement Committee (“Committee”) was held at the Central Library, 700 Boylston Street, Boston MA 02116 in the Commonwealth Salon on Wednesday, January 11, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

Present at the meeting included: Committee Chair, Linda Dorcena Forry, Committee Vice Chair, Jose C. Masso III, and Committee Members: Michelle Coleman, John Linehan, Dayron Miles, Pam Waterman, President David Leonard, and Rep. Chynah Tyler (via Zoom). Joe Berman, Evelyn Arana-Ortiz, Imari Jeffries, and Nam Pham were absent.

Also, present were Chair of the Board, Priscilla Douglas, Clerk of the Board, Pamela Carver, BPL staff members, and members of the public.

Ms. Dorcena Forry called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m., which was also streamed via Zoom for the public. She read the Trustees EDI statement. The Clerk took a roll call and determined there was a quorum. Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded and to sign up for Public Comment.

The first matter of business was the approval of meeting minutes of the October 25, 2022 meeting.

Ms. Forry read the BPL’s Principles and introduced the Community Engagement Committee Draft Charter for discussion and approval. They reviewed the charter line by line and provided some minor edits. Once the edits were agreed upon, Ms. Forry made a motion to approve the Committee charter. The motion was duly made, seconded, and voted,

**VOTED: “that, the Community Engagement Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston vote to adopt the Charter as discussed and determined on January 11, 2023.”**

Mr. Leonard introduced Priscilla Foley, Director of Neighborhood Services, to report on branch staff outreach. Mr. Leonard noted that Ms. Foley oversees the staff of all 25 branches throughout the system.

Ms. Foley noted that the work of the BPL begins with hiring and onboarding. There was a new employee orientation just that day with over 20 new employees to help move the goals and messaging of the BPL forward. She explained that regarding community engagement, her staff not only provides services and programs at the branches, they also bring services to the neighborhoods. They try to bring services to where the people are. Staff do outreach into community centers, day care centers, parks, and schools.

Ms. Foley spoke of various marketing tools that have proven to be valuable such as surveys, mailings, and flyers. A recent survey revealed that residents were not aware of a lot of the services and benefits provided at the library. They included things like taxi vouchers, museum passes, tax preparation, and homework assistance for students.

Ms. Foley noted the importance of connecting neighborhoods to their branches with literacy, lifelong learning, and fun. She explained that their efforts include all ages in areas of workforce development, technical support, ESL classes, and learning about music and poetry. She provided some examples of various organizations that the BPL collaborates with to strengthen this work and to ensure we are a partner as a City Hall resource for all Boston residents and beyond.

The Committee discussed some of the branches to showcase the uniqueness each of them has within their neighborhoods. Spotlighting a few such as: Egleston, West Roxbury, Roxbury, South Boston, and Hyde Park.

They noted that some branches had a stronger youth presence while others had more seniors. The neighborhoods were diverse in cultures that were represented and where technology was not readily available to residents in that community. The discussion noted that the branch libraries anchored the neighborhood in many ways.

Mr. Leonard noted that post renovation typically shows an increase in patron usage, but Roslindale and Roxbury have been slow to recover their usage number, possibly due to COVID as well.

Next, Lisa Pollack, Chief of Communications and Strategy reviewed the Library's communications overview. She explained the Communications department oversees all 26 locations and all 12,000 programs. They serve as the in-house strategic communications agency that oversees marketing, public relations, internal communications, social media, and web services.

The priorities included EDI, developing economic and workforce equity, youth engagement, and civic engagement. She reviewed the members of her team and the schedule of work each month and each quarter. Ms. Pollack explained some of her goals to try to improve patron acquisition and engagement.

The Committee discussed doing less with more focus on what we are already doing.

Ms. Forry moved onto future discussion topics with staff. She noted they will be hearing about strategic partnerships and equitable service delivery in upcoming meetings.

Ms. Forry asked for new business. The Committee discussed doing an orientation video to show patrons all that the library has beyond books and story times for patrons to view when getting a library card to try to redefine the library more as "not just a card, but a key".

Ms. Forry asked for public comment for which there was none. With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Pamela R. Carver. Clerk of the Board*

## **Community Engagement Committee Charter 2023**

In line with the Trustees' roles of oversight and governance, this committee will propose a set of specific guiding principles to the Library and Board that supports the following:

- An endorsement of more responsive programming based on local community need, the fullness of their diversity and equity (program 'with' not 'for').
- Increase outreach to our neighborhoods, the Commonwealth at large, including non-users and difficult to reach communities.
- Support a robust communications plan to increase patron acquisition and user engagement by highlighting the library in all its richness.
- Support specific opportunities for strategic collaboration with branch library Friends' groups and other partners to increase community participation.
- Review reports and recommendations on issues affecting community engagement and comment as appropriate.
- Provide Recommendations to the Board of Trustees on community engagement issues.
- Support the development of a long-range strategic plan for community engagement.

As with all BPL Trustee Committees, appointments are made by the BPL Chair as is the selection of a chair and vice chair. The President of the Library will be a voting member of the committee.

Additional staff roles will be appointed as non-voting ex-officio members.