

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON
Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency (First Meeting)
Tuesday, May 23, 2023 at 8:30am
Central Library, 700 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116

MINUTES

The annual meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (“BPL”) held on Tuesday, May 23, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. at the Central Library in the Rabb Hall.

All present at the meeting included: Chair Priscilla H. Douglas, Vice Chair Evelyn Arana Ortiz and Trustees: Jabari Asim, Navjeet Bal, Joe Berman, Ben Bradlee, Jr., Cheryl Cronin, John Hailer, Jose C. Masso III, and Christian Westra. Not present: Linda Dorcena Forry, Jeff Hawkins, Sen. Mike Rush, Rep. Chynah Tyler, and Lynn Perry Wooten Also present: Boston Public Library President David Leonard, Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, BPL staff, and members of the public.

Chair Priscilla H. Douglas presided, and called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. She invited Joe Berman to read the EDI reaffirmation statement. A roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum. Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded and to sign up for Public Comment by 9:00 a.m.

Ms. Douglas offered brief welcome remarks. She noted the successful LMEC and Associates events and thanked the Friends for their ongoing support.

The clerk noted meeting minutes from March 21, 2023 would be approved at the next Board meeting, apologizing for the delay due to a family emergency.

David Leonard introduced Josh Rosenthal, the new Director of Operations. Mr. Rosenthal gave a brief background to his professional experience and noted he was excited to do great work with the BPL.

David Leonard announced that this was the last full board meeting for Ellen Donaghey, Chief Financial Officer, who would be retiring after a decade of service at the BPL and a lifetime of public service in June 2023. They paused for the trustees’ comments and words of gratitude for Ms. Donaghey.

Mr. Roosevelt Weeks was the invited guest from the Austin Public Library. He explained there are 22 locations, and their Central location was voted by Time magazine as the best location. Their goal is to serve everyone, and they recently passed their strategic plan which focused on:

1. Develop spaces for community.
2. Foster relationships
3. To Expand Library access (homeless and immigrants, give library card with an ID to allow for services throughout the city.) Trying to ensure all voices are heard.
4. Engaging the staff

From the plan they came up with a clear vision statement. A mode of equity, inclusion, access, and diversity. Mission statement is “Inspiring all to discover, learn, and create.”

Like many libraries, they were dealing with book banning, the health and safety of staff. and managing services.

The board engaged in a question/answer session with Mr. Weeks. The questions revolved around their strategic plan and effective ways they engage their communities. How they address book banning, focus on

mental health and social work with patrons. They also addressed their filming policy and focusing on de-escalation training.

Mr. Leonard introduced Chief Jose Masso of the City of Boston's Office of Human Services. He briefly explained the goals of his cabinet are to meet where the people are and that libraries play a critical role in that. He was looking forward to a longer discussion with the board at our September meeting.

Next, Ashley Groffenberger, the City of Boston's Chief Financial Officer was introduced. She was relatively new having only been in this position for 10 months. She gave a brief background on professional background. She explained that the Mayor introduced FY24 and saw growth in the operating budget of 6.4 %. It grew the capital plan by \$6 million dollars.

Ms. Groffenberger noted she would let Ellen Donaghey give a full report on the FY24 budget, but that Mayor Wu makes family a focus of her administration and looks for opportunities to invest in all generations across the city and we will see those investments in the BPL's budget.

Next, Mr. Leonard added that this was the second year, post pandemic, to see a steady budget. He was pleased to have new hires and that vacancy levels finally dipped below fifty. However, it would be several months before comfortable operating wise.

As heard from our guest speakers, Mr. Weeks and Mr. Szabo, meeting needs of the community, efforts that are mostly led by Michael Colford and his team, and funding by BPL Fund and the City, our efforts allow us to pivot to be where the community's needs present themselves.

Mr. Leonard continued that collection work and reading is strong. There were lots of services aimed at closing the digital divide.

He noted there were a couple updates on developments. The law department was continuing to review the Filming policy, and the existing policy was in place for now, but revising with guiding principles of de-escalation. They will come back to the Board with an updated version in the future.

Library Services and Collections in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, selected 20 bus routes to "Browse, Borrow, and Board". This initiative has been picked up across the country, targeting people who do not already have library cards. Several hundred connected already.

Keith Gillette, the CTO, selected a board management platform called OnBoard Meetings. We looked forward to streamlining board meeting information and would be rolling out training in late summer. Mr. Leonard noted that the BPL Fund has adopted this same platform as well.

Mr. Leonard concluded the President's report by thanking the BPL's partners.

Next, Evelyn Arana Ortiz gave the F&A report. She invited Ms. Donaghey to give her final review of the Mayor's FY 24 budget. Ms. Donaghey explained that this is the largest increase we have seen in years. The library was approved \$750,000 for new positions. This will add custodians, human resources staff, and expand library branch hours until 5pm on Saturdays. They also will be adding a multilingual position, a social worker, and two peer navigators.

Mr. Leonard added that they were without an approved union contract.

With no questions, a motion was duly made, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve.

VOTED: "that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve to accept Mayor Michelle Wu's FY2 Recommended Operating and Capital Budget."

Next, Ms. Arana Ortiz reviewed the four annual votes. She explained that the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund Committee supports the Roxbury branch’s supplemental programming.

They voted on the four annual votes as a slate. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston authorize the President, or designee, on behalf of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston, to enter into a contract or contracts for various goods or services relating to the Boston Public Library Critical Repair Budget for the period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 provided that each contract entered into pursuant to this authorization shall have been estimated to be less than one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00). In no event will the contracts cumulatively exceed three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00).”

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston enter into a non-advertised contract, as authorized under G.L., c.30-B, Section 7(a), referred to as a “Procurement of Library Books,” between the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (a Corporation under Chapter 114 of the Acts of 1878), and the vendors listed therein (including any subsidiaries or agents), for the acquisitions of books and for certain other library bibliographical acquisitions materials, in an amount not to exceed the amount appropriated in the Library Department budget for books and other related bibliographical acquisitions materials, during the period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.”

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the expenditure from the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund in an amount not to exceed One hundred Ten Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty-Six Dollars (\$110,886.00) to support the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund Programmatic Plan for FY24 as recommended by the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee and to be presented at an upcoming meeting.”

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston delegate approval of any contract deemed to be of a critical nature by the President of the Library during the period between May 2023 and September 2023 to the Finance and Audit Committee.”

Next the Board discussed the 2023-2024 Trustees schedule. The vote was for the dates, but the times and locations would be determined soon). Ms. Douglas explained that the meetings would be a combination of Executive Board and Full board.

With no questions, or comments, a motion was duly made, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the proposed schedule of Trustees meetings for 2023-2024 as noted below, such meetings to be full meeting of the board or alternately of the executive committee, on occasion.”

- Tuesday, September 26 2023, location/time TBD
- Tuesday, November 7, 2023, location/time TBD
- Tuesday, January 30, 2024, location/time TBD
- Tuesday, March 26, 2024, location/time TBD
- Tuesday May 21, 2024, Annual Meeting, location/time TBD

**All Meetings dates/times/location are subject to change; see BPL website for details*

Ms. Douglas called for any New Business. She mentioned ‘Barrier Breakers’ which was an exhibit honoring some MLB players that broke the color barrier would be coming to Boston. A few trustees were working collaboratively to highlight around Juneteenth. The Library would have a supportive role by offering highlighted booklists, author talks, and key collections at the BPL .

Ms. Douglas called for Public comment. The clerk reminded all that they would be called int the order received and be given 2 minutes to speak.

Yvette Jarreau, head of South End Library Friends asked when will the capital appropriate funds for the branch renovation. The clerk explained questions will be answered later to follow up.

Greg Tobin, of the Roslindale Friends, suggested that they would be thrilled to host a trustees meeting at the newly renovated Roslindale branch.

Elissa Cadillac, AFSCME president, thanked Ellen Donaghey and wished he well on her retirement. She explained that AFSCME reached a tentative agreement on April 13th and on April 27th indicated that it was ratified and was now waiting for City approval. They recently met, noting their contract has not been funded in years, have 6.8% increase coming and will have Retro pay back to 2020. They have not received raises since 2020. Asked that the Trustees reach out to Mayor Wu to settle this already agreed upon contract.

The next topic on the agenda was a vote to enter Executive Session. The purpose was to discuss updates to the Collective bargaining contracts under exemption 2 of MA Open Meeting Law.

A motion was duly made, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve to enter executive session.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve to enter into Executive Session for the purpose to discuss collective bargaining updates.”

**Executive Session will convene at the conclusion of the public meetings. The Board of Trustees will not reconvene in a public session.*

With no further business, Ms. Douglas adjourned the first meeting at 9:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board