

# **TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON**

## **Meeting of the Trustees Strategic Planning Committee**

**Friday, May 10, 2024, at 8:30 a.m.**

**Central Library, Commonwealth Salon**

### **DRAFT MINUTES**

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Strategic Planning Committee (“Committee”) was held at the Central Library, 700 Boylston Street, Boston MA 02116 in the Commonwealth Salon on May 10, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. and the meeting was streamed via Zoom for the public.

Members who were present at the meeting, included Committee Chair, Christian Westra, Committee Vice Chair, Jose C. Masso III, and Committee Members: Joe Berman, Heidi Brooks, Jennifer Hawes, Dr. Ray Liu, Paula Sakey, and President David Leonard. Members Jonathan Soroff, Cheryl Cronin and Rahn Dorsey were absent.

Also, present were Chair of the Board, Priscilla Douglas, Clerk of the Board, Pamela Carver, BPL staff, and members of the public. Members of the Gensler team and Margaret Sullivan Studios were also present.

Mr. Christian Westra called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. He 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 March 28, 2024. With no comments or edits, the meeting minutes were approved.

Mr. David Leonard began by acknowledging the commitment of time, energy and brain power for this process. He thanked the committee members, the trustees, and staff who have various roles in this process. He welcomed Jennifer Hawes, Roslindale Branch librarian, as a new committee member.

President Leonard opened the first agenda topic of landscape review and discussion by explaining the BPL’s current state and point of view and the City of Boston’s current goals.

Mr. Leonard reviewed the operational mission statement and the City’s Human Services Cabinet in which the BPL resides. He introduced the members of the Board of Trustees which serves as the BPL’s governance branch. He noted the three overlapping sectors: education and learning, arts and culture, and human and civic services; all are reflected in our focus on service and access. The strategies are around 4 pillars: collections, physical spaces and programs, services and outreach, and cultural heritage: preservation, digitization, and activation.

Mr. Leonard noted that the BPL’s impact returned to 99% pre-pandemic levels as of December 2023.(not in the exact way as before, but as far as reach we are).

Next, Mr. Leonard explained how the budget was determined. The breakdown is from city, affiliates, state, Inter Library Loan/Library for the Commonwealth (ILL/LFC), trust funds, and other enterprise funds. The city gives the bulk of our funding at around 80% of our budget. Trust funds are 80% are restricted use. The estimated amount of the endowment is \$71M. He explained the figures reviewed were the actual for FY22, but budgeted amounts reflected FY23 and FY24. Mr. Leonard showed a snapshot of the collections and the vast breakdown of circulating collections 9%, special collections of 16%, and research collections 75%.

He explained the active capital projects, which handle the transfer and renovation of our buildings, reflect unprecedented funding in the upcoming year. He showed the active list of seven projects, making a special note of McKim building transformation with the city’s commitment of \$50M. This will allow us to go to other stakeholders to ask for assistance with funding.

He concluded his review by noting that the main theme of Mayor Wu’s State of the City was “home”, and we will see this run through as we work it into our priorities.

Erin Corcoran of Gensler and Margaret Sullivan of Margaret Sullivan Studios (“MSS”) reviewed public library case  
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stories / peer review. They referenced a few case studies from other libraries, including San Francisco.

Ms. Corcoran reviewed a snapshot of Boston which has a population of 693,000(8.5 % average annual growth rate since 2010, \$86k is median household income (13% higher than US average) , and 27% of residents are foreign born (14% higher than US average).

Ms. Corcoran continued, “Meeting people where they are”. She showed a slide of libraries, the population captured in walkability to libraries; 73% of Bostonians are within 15 minutes of walkability to the BPL. On average, 20K residents within a 15-min walk or 75% of Bostonians.

Creating engagement throughout the city, they showed which branches were visited more. They discussed the comparisons and accuracy of the figures. Contending with historical challenges, looked at homeownership vs. renting to reflect the socio-economic outcomes for redlined communities.

Ms. Sullivan noted nine popular themes reflected in contemporary libraries across the country and what is causing impacts/themes. They include: providing active learning experiences, supporting career and workforce development, understanding the whole person, championing an inclusive democracy, activating spaces and collections, building community at the neighborhood level, committing to EDI and anti-racism, operating with a collective impact model, and developing pipelines for internal growth.

They showed several successful examples of peer libraries using these themes in their programming and initiatives.

The committee members asked several questions and discussed the themes.

The Gensler and MSS moved to the emerging framework and priorities. They explained the workshops and what conversations were developed. The emerging framework of mission, values, and vision will determine strategic priorities. Emerging priorities have come up from all conversations they have had with the various stakeholders. The remainder of the meeting was to have discussions on the emerging framework with the committee. Some emerging themes were:

1. Life-Long learning (curiosity)
2. Cultural commons (belonging)
3. Social Advocate (agency)
4. Welcoming destination (delight)
5. Community outreach (engagement)

Mr. Westra noted asked for new business. He noted Gensler will give an update to the Board of Trustees on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Berman noted they will also update the Special Collections Committee on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Westra asked for public comment for which there was none. The meeting was adjourned at 10:56 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Pamela R. Carver, Clerk of the Board*