

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON
Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency
Tuesday, November 19 2024 at 3:00 p.m.
Mattapan Branch Library, Blue Hill Avenue Mattapan, MA 02126
MINUTES

The Meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (“BPL”) held on Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. at the Mattapan Branch Library in the Yancey Community Room.

All present at the meeting included: Chair, Dr. Ray Liu, Vice Chair Evelyn Arana Ortiz and Trustees: Navjeet Bal, Joe Berman, Jim Canales, Cheryl Cronin, John Hailer, Julie Kim, Jose C. Masso III, Porsha Olayiwola, Christian Westra, and Lynn Perry Wooten. Jeff Hawkins, Jonathan Lavine, and Senator Mike Rush were absent. Also present: Mayor Michelle Wu, Chief Jose Masso, BPL President David Leonard, Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, BPL staff, and members of the public.

Dr. Ray Liu, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m. and provided brief introductory remarks. He acknowledged the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) statement. The Clerk conducted a roll call, confirming a quorum, some trustees had arrived after the initial roll call but noted for the record. Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded and provided instructions on how to sign up for public comment.

Dr. Liu invited David Leonard to give his President’s Report. President David Leonard began by announcing that Mayor Michelle Wu would be attending and would address the Board. Mr. Leonard thanked the host of the meeting, Branch Librarian Maurice Gordon.

Mr. Gordon provided some facts in regard to the Mattapan Branch, noting that outreach numbers are at an all-time high and that diverse programming has been well-supported. He provided a snapshot of some of these programs and introduced the staff at the branch. He thanked the Friends of the Mattapan Library for their support and dedication.

Mr. Leonard introduced two new operations managers to the BPL.

- Jonathan Eshel, Chief of Operations
- Jake Jacevicius, Facilities Daytime and Trades Manager

Each provided a brief overview of their backgrounds and roles at BPL.

Mr. Leonard welcomed Mayor Michelle Wu for attending the Board meeting and invited her to address the room.

Mayor Wu was joined by Chief of Human Services, Jose Masso. Mayor Wu thanked the trustees for their ongoing commitment to serve the BPL as well as the staff who activate our spaces. She highlighted the importance of the Strategic Plan and the four core roles of the BPL. Noting that the library serves as a key part of the foundational infrastructure in our communities. Trusted relationships and creating lifelong learning will be more important moving forward than ever before.

Mayor Wu continued that it was important to know and understand how people are using the library, to connect people. She explained the nationwide comparison in the appendix was very helpful to her in understanding how we stack up with peer cities. She felt a great sense of learning new things and affirmation for the work the BPL does.

Chief Masso explained that he had the opportunity to sit with the BPL Leadership team during one of their brainstorming sessions in regard to the Strategic Plan. He thought it was a magnificent process and noted the incredible amount of work and detail that went into it. A building with books does not make it a library, it is the people. He thanked the staff and patrons for their continued support of the BPL.

Dr. Liu introduced the main topic for the meeting, presenting the Draft Strategic Plan for review, hear feedback, and provide a rich conversation to make any necessary changes prior to a formal vote in December.

Christian Westra, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, expressed gratitude to all contributors and praised the inclusive process. Jose C. Masso III, Vice Chair of the Committee noted that involving diverse voices in the discussion contributed to the Strategic Plan's sense of shared ownership and buy-in.

Erin Corcoran (Gensler) and Margaret Sullivan (Margaret Sullivan Studios) presented the plan, highlighting the roles, initiatives and goals, and emphasizing the importance of shared experiences and strategic alignment to ensure effective and equitable library services.

The four main strategic pillars were discussed:

1. Lifelong Learning and Research Partner
2. Welcoming Destination
3. Trusted Resource
4. Community Engager

Initiatives tied to these pillars include fostering civic participation and expanding the digital reach, with organizational readiness being a key focus.

The discussion prompted questions about multi-language outreach and funding strategies. Trustees debated how the plan could best address funding gaps, priorities, and practical execution strategies, particularly regarding special collections and long-term financial modeling.

Ray Liu and other trustees emphasized the importance of feedback loops and continued dialogue as the Strategic Plan progresses into the implementation phase in the coming year.

Several board members and attendees expressed their gratitude for prioritizing equity and inclusion and their support for the strategic vision. Discussions centered on priorities, funding models (particularly compared with peer libraries), and effective pathways for donor engagement.

Key concerns included:

- The need for a clearer roadmap to prioritize goals.
- Clarifying roles and expectations for funding in alignment with strategic goals.
- Amplifying special collections to attract donor interest.

Board members reflected on how the Strategic Plan could address funding challenges while maintaining inclusivity and innovation.

Ray Liu emphasized two key areas for Board engagement:

1. Helping implement strategic rubrics and value priorities.
2. Providing early feedback on how the plan resonates with personal and professional networks.

The Board thanked the team at Gensler, Margaret Sullivan Studios, and also key staff members who were involved in this process (with a special nod to Chief of Staff Sarah Zaphiris and Chief of Communications Lisa Pollack).

Evelyn Arana Ortiz presented the Finance and Audit Committee report. She shared the following key points, that NEPC was recently acquired by Hightower, but operations will proceed as usual. She noted that the portfolio performance has been strong year-to-date, and a deeper analysis will take place in January.

Chief Financial Officer, Emily Tokarczyk presented the FY24 Gift Report, outlining official contributions. She noted that there are also additional donations sent directly to branches that were not reflected in this report.

Next, Ms. Tokarczyk explained the Foreign Wire Transfer Proposal. The Board was asked to approve a new policy related to special collections acquisitions via foreign wire transfer. This was introduced to address concerns regarding payment methods with international vendors while implementing safeguards to mitigate fraud risks. The Finance and Audit had already reviewed this proposal and were recommending the Board to approve it. The Board had some discussions on payment limits. A motion was duly made, seconded and voted to approve.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the use of foreign wire transfers to purchase select items that would be unobtainable through the use of standard payment methods. Foreign wire transfer option would include the following controls:

- **Only utilized when all standard methods have been exhausted**
- **Only utilized with vendors/auction houses deemed reputable**
- **Requires electronic approval by three senior managers (excluding requesting personnel).”**

Mr. Liu asked for any new business for which there was none. He asked for Public Comment.

Alyce Lee, Chair of the Associates Board, commented on how pleased she was with the Strategic Plan. She noted that the Associates were able to fund/complete several projects that support the work of the plan which included bringing first newspaper by abolitionist, The Emancipator and the first magazine written, edited and published by black women. She noted that perhaps there are ways The Associates can amplify the principles of the Strategic Plan. She announced it was the last evening for Koussevitzky, Innovator: A Night to Remember event which was very well attended.

Elissa Cadillic, President of AFSCME1526 said with her training hat on regarding the focus of the strategic plan, that the organization was inclusive. Most plans have continued to silo her staff, she appreciated that there was not just a strong focus on special collections but rather having a chance for everyone to participate. There are lots of barriers to breakdown. She noted she had over 300 in the bargaining unit and now we are well below that. When thinking of funding, think of positions, think of learning management system- if we truly want to invest in staff

Joseph Eubanks of the Trotter Civic Association said he was at the Egleston Library earlier. All of the trees had hanger makers on them to be cut down. He is very leery of capital projects not ensuring some green space is kept intact. He also hoped that post covid that the projects are completed in a timely manner and not dragged on for several years.

Janis McManus said that Boston is known for our large and oldest library. She was a supporter and frequent user of our libraries. She noted we have much to learn and learn much. She commented that she was thinking of Mr. Knight who has been a committed member of the community.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Carver

Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board