

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee
Wednesday, April 2, 2025 at 12:00 p.m. via Zoom

MINUTES

A meeting of the Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee (“Committee”) was held on Wednesday, April 2, 2025 at 12:00p.m. via Zoom.

Present at the meeting were: Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee Chair/Trustee Evelyn Arana Ortiz, Committee Members: Priscilla Foley, Allen Knight, and Elizabeth T. Nagarajah, and Jacqueline Johnson.

Also present: Diana Preusser, Assistant Neighborhood Services/Branches Manager, Candelaria Silva-Collins, Fellowes Athenaeum Trust (“FATF”) Program Manager, Michael Colford, Director of Library Services, and Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board. Members of the Public and BPL staff were also in attendance.

The meeting convened at 12:00 p.m. Evelyn Arana Ortiz presided and read the Trustees reaffirmation statement. Participants were reminded that the meeting was being recorded for administrative purposes and outlined the process for public comment. A roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum present.

The first matter of business was approving the meeting minutes from November 21, 2024 which were approved. (Note: Allen Knight abstained.)

Ms. Arana Ortiz reviewed the current FY25 budget and noted the remaining balance was \$4,330.82. Clarification was requested regarding what was included in “branch programs.”

Priscilla Foley gave brief general BPL updates. She noted the board ratified the strategic plan in December 2024 and reviewed the Summer Reading Program that ran from June through August. The committee members had a brief discussion on how the strategic plan would affect the public and how they could engage with the library on its implementation. They also discussed how recent federal budget cuts might affect the library (ex. eRate program).

Candelaria Silva-Collins presented programming highlights for FY25 (December to June). She noted there were no new programs in February beyond ongoing offerings. The spring programs include Art & Meditation, Sewing 102, Roxbury Concert Series, The Calm Experience, and Movers & Makers.

Ms. Silva-Collins noted a couple of challenges. One grant recipient had not submitted invoices, and she received feedback regarding the branch’s limited space availability for the sewing programs.

Next, Michael Colford introduced members of the BPL Programs Department to the committee: Gianna Gifford (Chief of Adult Library Services), Deandra Williams (Adult Programs Supervisor), and Caren Rosales (Systemwide Programs Librarian). He gave a brief background on each and noted the Adult Programs Supervisor position was created in 2024 and the Systemwide Librarian in 2019, noting the department has doubled in size in the past five years.

Mr. Colford explained that the Programs team would be leading the process for granting programs for the FATF. He reviewed the growth of the adult programming team since 2019. Noting that the new structure allows more funding to go directly to programming and strengthens ties to branch staff. Mr. Colford emphasized: this change is not about performance, but a structural decision to increase capacity and continuity and confirmed continued importance of community input and committee involvement.

Ms. Arana Ortiz and Mr. Colford thanked Ms. Silva-Collins for her leadership, documentation, and program structure were commended. Ms. Silva-Collins confirmed her commitment to a smooth transition and

continued collaboration with staff.

The committee discussed some concerns and requested clarifications. Several committee members raised concerns about recent structural changes to the programming department. One member expressed frustration over the lack of transparency and communication surrounding the transition, emphasizing that Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund (FATF) resources should remain focused on the Roxbury branch. Another clarified that the changes were based on organizational needs, not individual performance, and stressed the importance of preserving program quality and integrity.

Questions were raised about how the expanded responsibilities of the new programming department would be managed. It was also noted that maintaining the personal, community-focused approach is essential, and that clear, ongoing communication with the committee and stakeholders must be prioritized.

Staff responded that the department is growing, and performance will be monitored through data collection and evaluation to ensure continued success. Staff also emphasized that the FATF funding will remain for Roxbury Branch programs only (as the endowment is restricted to support supplemental literary programs for the Roxbury Branch).

Ms. Arana Ortiz asked for New Business for which there was none. She called for Public Comment. Each member was reminded they had up to two minutes to speak. The clerk noted that she received some written comments which were shared with the committee and would be posted to the website/trustees page.

Lucy Flores: Expressed support for the Makanda Project at BPL.

Gerard Wiggins: Requested Makanda concerts remain in the same time slot (evenings/weekends).

Tony Brown: Longtime supporter of the Makanda Project, emphasized accessibility and cultural significance.

Bruce Bickerstaff: Raised concerns about continuity and community communication regarding programming transitions.

Evelyn Arana Ortiz responded to the comments. She confirmed that the Makanda Project will not be removed and that the committee looks forward to their proposal for the upcoming year

Allen Knight and Elizabeth Nagarajah emphasized the importance of maintaining programming times and clear communication with project leads like John Kordalewski of the Makanda Project.

The committee members reiterated their strong support for local program .

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela R. Carver