

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency

Tuesday, September 30, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom

MINUTES

The Meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (“BPL”) held on Tuesday, September 30, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. Via Zoom.

All present at the meeting included: Chair, Dr. Ray Liu, Vice Chair Evelyn Arana and Trustees: Navjeet Bal, Joe Berman, Jim Canales, Cheryl Cronin, Jeff Hawkins, Julie Kim, Jonathan Lavine, Jose Masso III, Porsha Olayiwola, Senator Mike Rush, Christian Westra, and Lynn Perry Wooten (left early). John Hailer was absent.

BPL President David Leonard, Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, BPL staff, and members of the public were also present.

Dr. Liu presided and called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. he acknowledged the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) welcome statement. The Clerk conducted a roll call, confirming a quorum, and reminded all that the meeting was being recorded for administrative purposes. The public were provided with instructions on how to sign up for public comment.

The first matter of business was the approval of the annual meeting minutes from June 18, 2025. No comments or edits were made, and the board voted to approve them.

David Leonard was asked to give his President’s Report. President Leonard noted that accomplishments of the past months were due to the extraordinary efforts of staff during a challenging period. He introduced two new managers: Michael Lennon, Assistant Safety and Stewardship Program Manager and Julius Osula, Facilities Manager- Nights & Weekends. He announced and congratulated BPL employee Mari McCullough for receiving the 2025 Shattuck Award.

Mr. Leonard reviewed the Branch Capital Projects which included:

- Fields Corner: Groundbreaking held May 6, 2025; anticipated opening Fall 2026.
- Chinatown: Groundbreaking held September 17, 2025; library fit out to begin in approximately 18 months.
- Columbia Road: Approved for multi-use; awaiting the Governor’s approval following passage in the House and Senate.

Mr. Leonard noted he will give a comprehensive project review at the next meeting .

Mr. Leonard next briefed the board about the McKim Restoration & Transformation Project, giving an overview of the ongoing restoration and service transformation. Additional detail will be provided with future updates.

Garrett Dash Nelson and Charlie Cooney presented the Leventhal Map & Education Center (LMEC) Strategic Vision. They gave a brief background on the LMEC that was founded in 2004 with endowment and map collection from Norman B. Leventhal.

The LMEC Executive Committee with TDC (Liz Curtis) as consultant led the strategic vision process. They held key conversations with members of the BPL Leadership and Trustees, the BPL Fund. The scope was to define an ambitious future vision for the Leventhal Center that honors its founding spirit but moves beyond identity as a “room for old maps”. They will focus on three key areas: study of maps & geography, learning, and civic discovery in alignment with the BPL’s strategic plan goals.

They ended up noting what was next. They will align fundraising and governance between LMEC, BPL, and BPLF. Continuing with input from stakeholders at BPL, BPL Fund, City, and external partners. Form staff and board “task forces” to identify short- and medium-term next steps on spaces and programs.

Trustees were encouraged to schedule time with Garrett and Charlie during their visits to the Library.

Beth Prindle, Director of Research and Special Collections introduced the Library's first major exhibition in over 10 years, titled Revolution! opening October 23, 2025 for a six-month run. Some of the key highlights include it aligns with "Boston 250" and our nations quincentennial. This effort builds on three years of "Road to Revolution" programming. It is Supported by funds from the Bridge to McKim Campaign and the BPL Fund. It draws from 100+ artworks and documentary items from BPL Special Collections and was curated by the Arts Team with cross-departmental collaboration.

Questions raised included research methodology, virtual availability of the exhibition, and the possibility of integrating music.

President Leonard provided an update on FY26 strategic plan implementation efforts. He provided a plan overview; noting it was approved December 2024. The focus on iterative processes with measurable success metric resulting in the creation of a BPL Staff Initiative & Task Tracker. There is an emphasis on staff professional development.

Mr. Leonard noted some sample activities that promoted these goals. They included:

- A. Workforce Development: McKim Restoration & Transformation; branch capital projects.
- B. Civic Engagement: Year-one exploration and recommendations.
- C. Lifelong Learning & Research: Promote collections reflecting diverse communities; Exhibition 250 and additional initiatives forthcoming.

Leonard reviewed expectations and deliverables for each quarter of FY26.

Dr. Liu noted the importance of communicating staff achievements and being realistic about pacing; acknowledging that not all initiatives can be completed in the first year Mr. Leonard concluded his report by noting that trustee engagement will be increased, beginning with individual conversations between Trustees and the President by the end of the year.

Evelyn Arana gave the Finance and Audit Committee Report. She reported that the Committee met with auditors to review draft financial reports for Trustee Funds and no major findings were noted. She made a motion to approve the financial report. The motion was moved and seconded and approved.

VOTED: "that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the Boston Public Library's Draft Audited Financial Statements for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2025."

Ms. Arana gave the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee report. She reviewed updates to the committee's structure. Deandra Williams, BPL Programs Supervisor, will lead the fund programs. The committee received 34 applications and awarded 17 grants, and the branch collectively received \$6,400. The total of the funding distributed was \$114,333.

Programs funded are intergenerational and include instruction, arts & culture, community engagement, and health & wellness initiatives. Ms. Arana noted ongoing community interest in after-hours programming. Due to staffing and resource constraints, extended hours remain challenging, though demand is strong.

Next, Dr. Liu called for New Business. He gave some trustees announcements. Cheryl Cronin will step down from the Boston Public Market after ten years. "José Massó Day" was proclaimed by Mayor Wu on September 13. Trustee Evelyn Arana was nominated for *Excellence in Latinos* at the MA State House by former trustee, Rep. Tyler. Trustee Jim Canales was appointed President of the Isabella Gardner Museum. All were applauded for their various achievements.

Next, Emily Tokarczyk and Ms. Arana gave a brief update to the Retail Contract (RFP). The RFP for the retail lease has been released and proposals due October 10, 2025. The contract is for a 5-year term beginning August 2026. Three Trustees agreed to participate in the selection process (Arana, Cronin, and Olayiwola).

A question was raised regarding alternative uses for the space. President Leonard will share the RFP with Trustees.

Dr. Liu called for Public Comment.

Meg Campbell expressed concern about the lack of handicap accessibility in the Uphams Corner renovation plan, specifically regarding the removal of accessible parking spots. Requested the City ensure the continued availability of accessible parking for individuals who must travel by car and she asked for the final timeline, citing past concerns and delays.

With no further business, Dr. Liu adjourned the meeting at 10:12am.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela R. Carver

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Clerk of the Board