

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency

Tuesday, November 18, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.

West Roxbury Branch, 1961 Centre Street, West Roxbury, 02132

Alice Hennessey Community Room

DRAFT MINUTES

The Meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (“BPL”) held on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. at the West Roxbury Branch Library.

All present at the meeting included: Vice Chair Evelyn Arana Ortiz and Trustees: Navjeet Bal, Joe Berman, Jim Canales, Cheryl Cronin, Jeff Hawkins, Julie Kim (via Zoom), José Massó III, Senator Mike Rush, Christian Westra, and Lynn Perry Wooten. John Hailer, Ray Liu, Porsha Olayiwola, and Jonathan Lavine were absent.

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

Vice Chair Arana presided and called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m. She acknowledged the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) welcome statement. The Clerk reminded all that the meeting was being recorded for administrative purposes and reviewed the process for signing up for public comments.

The first matter of business was the approval of the meeting minutes from September 30, 2025. No comments or edits were made, and the board voted to approve them.

Ms. Arana thanked the West Roxbury Branch for hosting this Board meeting and thanked the Friends for the refreshments provided.

Sheila Scott, Branch Librarian, provided an overview of the West Roxbury Branch. She noted the branch opened in 1922 and underwent a major renovation in 1989. She described the branch’s service population, which includes the largest concentration of City employees and seniors in the system. Due to this demographic profile, West Roxbury is the only BPL branch with a dedicated Age Strong Librarian. Ms. Scott also reviewed branch staffing and programming.

Bob Gaudet, Co-Chair of the Friends of the West Roxbury Branch, highlighted Friends-supported programming, including courtyard programming, a poetry contest, and author talks.

David Leonard, President of the Boston Public Library, presented his President’s Report. He highlighted the *Revolution!* exhibition at the Central Library, running from October 23, 2025 through April 21, 2026, and noted that the exhibition would be featured on *Chronicle* on November 19.

Mr. Leonard provided an active capital projects update. Fields Corner remains on track. Egleston Square is awaiting an update on funding. Chinatown is nearing completion of its initial renovation, with a more detailed timeline for library buildout forthcoming. South End and West End projects are currently in design. The Brighton roof project will be scoped this year. At the Central Library, roof, HVAC, and fire alarm panel replacement projects are underway. Mr. Leonard noted that active capital projects total approximately \$200 million, not including projects not yet active.

Mr. Leonard reviewed program highlights, noting the conclusion of the Lowell Lecture Series. The Ruth E. Carter Lecture drew 275 in-person attendees and 100 virtual attendees. The Ken Fulk Lecture drew 250 in-person attendees and 200 virtual attendees.

He also highlighted branch investments supported by the BPL Fund through the Catalyst Branch Fund, which will support 41 programs across all 25 branches with a \$76,000 investment. At West Roxbury, funding supports puppet storytelling and crafts programming and the Age Strong Librarian position.

President Leonard then provided Strategic Plan Updates by goal area.

Under Lifelong Learner, updates included cataloging of the Founding Research Collection, selection underway for a new Children’s Musician in Residence funded by the LEGO Foundation, the launch of Hello Hatchlings in 2026, and expansion of Browse/Borrow/Board.

Under Community Engager, he noted civic engagement definitional work underway and collaborative projects with Simmons University and Brown University.

Under Trusted Resource, he reported that 75% of staff have completed Intellectual Freedom training, with all new staff required to complete training within their first 60 days. He also highlighted a new Chromebook lending program supported by a Comcast grant. In response to Trustee questions, Mr. Leonard explained how staff are trained to respond to challenges to materials, including those related to LGBTQ+ content, within legal parameters.

He highlighted recent Massachusetts legislation related to Right to Read, and the e-Book Bill were passed thanks in part to Senator Mike Rush and members of the Senate.

Under Welcome Destination, Mr. Leonard reported that two Special Collections projects have been approved for 2026 and that all branch librarians are being trained in Library Customer Assistance protocols.

Mr. Leonard reviewed Organizational Readiness initiatives, including a partnership with Simmons University to create internship and fellowship pathways leading to floating librarian positions, a Brown Bag Lunch series to support internal knowledge-sharing, identification of a project management tool for adoption in 2026, and implementation of a trauma-informed approach. Trustees discussed the importance of communicating successes and increasing public visibility of BPL initiatives.

Mr. Leonard provided an update on the Bridge to McKim initiative, noting anonymous foundation funding and that the project is currently in the strategic services planning phase. Next steps include hiring a project manager and institutional archivist and developing a fundraising readiness plan. He also reviewed the year-long Visioning Project, which addresses experience, collections, operations, service, and space.

Emily Tokarczyk, Chief Financial Officer, presented the votes from the Finance and Audit Committee. She reviewed the recommendation to enter contract negotiations with The Catered Affair for operation of the Central Library retail space, to be rebranded as Studio 700. Proposed enhancements include expanded retail offerings, creative programming, and design improvements. The proposed contract term is five years. A detailed discussion followed regarding programming goals, governance, and delegation of approval authority.

Following discussion, the Board took the following actions. They revised the verbiage and broke it into two separate votes. . A motion was duly made, seconded and voted the following:

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the Boston Public Library to enter into contract negotiations with The Catered Affair for a five-year contract for the Central Library retail space.”

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve delegating approval of the negotiated contract with The Catered Affair to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees.”

President Leonard then requested delegation of approval authority for the McKim Owner’s Project Manager (OPM) contract to allow additional time for negotiations.

They had some discussion and then a motion was duly made, seconded and voted:

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve delegating approval of the McKim Owner’s Project Manager contract to the Finance and Audit Committee.”

Vice Chair Arana reviewed the new Time-Sensitive Collections Acquisition Approval Process intended to allow expedited review of auction items. She explained that Special Collections will prepare a proposal outlining the significance, value, and need for the item, which will be reviewed by the President, and the Board Chair and Vice Chair. Ms. Tokarczyk noted that acquisitions exceeding \$200,000 would require full Board approval. There were no questions.

Vice Chair Arana called for New Business and Public Comment for which there was none.

With no further business, Vice Chair Arana adjourned the meeting at 4:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Carver
Clerk of the Board