

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. Held via Zoom

MINUTES

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Finance and Audit Committee was held virtually on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, via Zoom at 8:30 a.m.

Present at the meeting including Committee Chair Evelyn Arana and Committee members: Jeff Hawkins, Senator Mike Rush, and President David Leonard. John Hailer was absent.

Also present were Chief Financial Officer Emily Tokarczyk, Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, BPL staff, and members of the public.

Ms. Arana presided and called the Meeting of the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee (“Committee”) to order at 8:30 a.m. She read the welcoming EDI statement. The clerk took roll call and determined there was a quorum. The Clerk noted that the meeting was being recorded for administrative purposes and provided instructions for public comment participation.

The first matter of business was the approval of the meeting minutes from December 16, 2025 with no comments or edits, the minutes were approved.

Chair Arana invited Chief Financial Officer Emily Tokarczyk to provide an update on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

Ms. Tokarczyk outlined the City’s budget guidance, noting that the Library was tasked with reducing approximately \$2 million from a total budget target of approximately \$52 million. The submitted budget reflects level funding consistent with the prior year’s actual budget.

She explained that potential areas of investment include facilities, materials, IT, and staffing; however, final impacts remain uncertain pending the City’s review process. The budget was submitted on January 12, followed by discussions with the Office of Budget Management (OBM) in February. The Mayor’s proposed budget is expected to be released on April 8, with City Council hearings to follow in April and May. Final adoption is anticipated in late June.

Ms. Tokarczyk emphasized that no changes can be made to the submitted budget at this time.

In response to questions from the Committee, she noted that while the Library proposed potential reductions of approximately 2%, final decisions are determined at the City level and may not align with those suggestions. The City allocates funding by line item, and adjustments may require internal trade-offs depending on final decisions.

Committee members noted that the April proposal represents an interim stage and not a final determination.

Keith Gillette presented an overview of updates to the Library’s network infrastructure under the eRate program. The proposed improvements include expanding bandwidth to 10 Gb/s, which will enhance system performance, connectivity, and the quality of video and audio services.

Chair Arana inquired about impacts on hotspot services.

A motion was made, seconded and voted to approve both eRate contracts as a slate.

VOTED: “that, the Board of Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the selected vendor as presented and discussed (Vendor name and exact contract amount is to be determined after deadline of March 5, 2026).”

VOTED: “that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston recommend approval of a one-time contract not to exceed Sixty-Four Thousand Forty-Three Dollars and Forty Cents (\$64,043.40) with ePlus Technology, Inc. of 13593 Dulles Technology Drive, Herndon, VA 20171 to provide 60 of Cisco C9300-NM-8X Network modules as specified with the BPL.”

Michael Colford provided an update on Bibliocommons and related initiatives. He discussed ongoing efforts to support the platform through a combination of private fundraising and public funding via the Library for the Commonwealth.

The Committee discussed the potential long-term implications for e-book platforms, noting that while future changes are possible, no immediate changes are planned.

A motion was duly made, seconded and voted to approve the Bibliocommons In-App Reader Development.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston recommend the Board of Trustees approve the contract with Bibliocommons Corp of 119 Spadina Ave, Suite 1000, Toronto, ON M5V2L1 Canada in the amount not to exceed One Hundred Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$100,000) for development work on an in-app eBook, e-Audio reader.”

Mr. Colford also introduced a proposed artificial intelligence pilot project within the Bibliocommons platform. The tool would operate within a closed library network and would not search the broader internet. Library staff have been evaluating the project and providing input.

Jessica Chapel clarified that the system is being developed by a company focused on library-specific content and does not rely on external web scraping. The tool uses controlled data and user-based algorithms to enhance search functionality.

A motion was duly made, seconded and voted to approve the AI pilot project.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees Finance and Audit Committee of the Public Library of the City of Boston recommend the Board of Trustees approve the contract with Bibliocommons Corp of 119 Spadina Ave, Suite 1000, Toronto, ON M5V2L1 Canada not to exceed Fifty Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents) \$50,000 for development work on an AI pilot around reader's advisory. This will introduce patron assistance in the catalog for finding books to read by working.”

Chair Arana asked for New Business.

Jessica Chapel presented an update on a previously discussed initiative and a recommendation to accept a \$100,000 gift from OpenAI to support a pilot project.

The project focuses on digitization and improving access to Library materials through enhanced metadata creation. The pilot includes scanning materials and developing a processing pipeline, followed by an evaluation phase before any full production rollout.

Ms. Chapel noted that all scanned materials are from controlled, cataloged collections, allowing for quality assurance and parallel testing. She also highlighted the opportunity to address uncatalogued government documents, which represent a significant portion of the Library's holdings.

The Committee discussed the role of artificial intelligence in extracting metadata and improving discoverability. It was clarified that:

- The Library would not grant exclusive access to its collections
- OpenAI would access materials only through standard public APIs
- Public domain materials would remain unrestricted
- Materials with copyright restrictions would require additional permissions, with access limited to metadata

The Committee agreed to defer the matter to the full Board of Trustees pending completion of legal documentation.

Ms. Tokarczyk informed the Committee that the current auditor contract is expiring and that a Request for Proposals (RFP) process will be initiated.

Ms. Arana asked for public comment.

Michael Colford, Director of Library Services, noted the opening of a Company One Theatre production in Rabb Hall, running through the end of March.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:14 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela R. Carver

Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board