

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency

Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 8:30am

Via Zoom

MINUTES

The Meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (“BPL”) held on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom.

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, Jeff Hawkins, Julie Kim (departed at 9:15am), Jonathan Lavine, Porsha Olayiwola, Senator Mike Rush, Christian Westra, and Lynn Perry Wooten. Trustee Jose C. Masso III was absent.

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

Chair Liu presided and called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. He 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 November 18, 2025. No comments or edits were made, and the Board voted to approve them.

David Leonard, President of the Boston Public Library, presented his President’s Report. He thanked Trustees for attending the meeting virtually and highlighted recent Library involvement in City events, including the Mayor’s inauguration, during which the Aitken Bible from Special Collections was used for the Mayor’s second swearing-in ceremony. He also noted that the inaugural celebration was held at the Central Library and that the Mayor participated in a storytime program at the Brighton Branch, reading *Make Way for Ducklings*. Trustees commented favorably on the Library’s representation at these events.

Beth Prindle, Director of Research & Special Collections, provided an update on the Revolution! Exhibition, noting that it has attracted more than 50,000 visitors since its opening in October. She shared that visitor feedback is being collected through surveys and that special tours are being offered. Planning is underway for the next exhibition following its conclusion in April.

Mr. Leonard provided an active capital projects update. Fields Corner, a project of approximately \$31 million, continues to advance, as does the South End Branch project.

Mr. Leonard then provided a Strategic Plan overview. He reminded Trustees that the Strategic Plan was approved in December 2025 and is structured as a five-year plan, with Fiscal Year 2026 representing the first year of implementation. He outlined the core framework, including Mission, Vision and Values, Roles, Goals, Initiatives, and Tactics and Tasks. He reported that there are currently 39 active projects, each with a designated project lead and executive sponsor. Project status includes 21 Green, 14 Yellow, 1 Red, 1 Completed, and 2 Not Started.

Sarah Zaphiris, Chief of Staff, added some highlights of the Strategic Plan, including key organizational priorities. Mr. Leonard noted that a half-day professional development session for managers and supervisors is planned for March and that work is ongoing on the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Roadmap.

A discussion followed regarding Strategic Plan implementation. Trustees discussed the importance of prioritizing tactical initiatives while maintaining alignment with the overall five-year vision. Mr. Leonard noted the importance of balancing large, high-impact initiatives with day-to-day patron-facing improvements, emphasizing that both are essential to advancing the Library’s mission. Trustees also discussed the importance of staff engagement, organizational capacity, and measurable progress during the first year of implementation.

Mr. Leonard and staff also discussed the development of staff interest groups to support Strategic Plan initiatives. These groups will focus on Reader's Advisory and Curation, Artificial Intelligence, Civic Engagement, and Workforce Development. Trustees expressed support for these efforts, particularly the emphasis on reading and literacy.

Mr. Leonard then provided an update on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget process. He noted that, due to broader fiscal challenges facing the City, departments have been asked to prepare budget scenarios reflecting a 2% reduction from Fiscal Year 2026 levels. The Library's Fiscal Year 2026 appropriation is \$50,770,930, with a Fiscal Year 2027 reduction target of \$49,755,511.

Emily Tokarczyk, Chief Financial Officer, provided additional details, noting that initial budget submissions were completed on January 12 and that meetings with the City's Budget Office are scheduled for early March. The Mayor's proposed budget is expected in May.

A discussion followed regarding potential strategies to mitigate the impact of budget reductions. Mr. Leonard noted that many Library costs are fixed and that maintaining service levels under reduced funding will be challenging. He emphasized the Library's critical role during periods of economic uncertainty and the goal of minimizing impacts to service hours and staffing to the extent possible.

Mr. Leonard concluded the President's Report. There were no contracts or votes presented.

Chair Liu called for New Business. For which there was none. He then called for Public Comment.

Elissa Cadillic, President of ASFSCME 1526 raised her concerns regarding potential budget reductions, staffing impacts, and the importance of collaboration with union leadership.

Alyce Lee, President of the Associates of the Boston Public Library highlighted the organization's support of the current exhibition and announced upcoming programming, including a "100-Year Book Debate." She also announced the Associates' new Executive Director, Amanda Doyle Bouvier, and noted continued support for Library staff and the Special Collections initiatives.

Dr. Liu announced the next meeting of the Trustees will be held on March 24, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. at the Codman Square Branch (subject to change).

With no further business, Chair Liu adjourned the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Carver
Clerk of the Board