

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee

Wednesday, September 3, 2025 at 10:00am

Shaw-Roxbury Branch, 149 Dudley Street, Roxbury, MA 02119

Learning Lab, 2nd Floor

MINUTES

A meeting of the Trustees Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee (“FATF Committee”) was held on Wednesday, September 3, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. at the Shaw-Roxbury Branch. It was also streamed via Zoom for the public.

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

Also present: Diana Preusser, Assistant Neighborhood Services/Branches Manager, Deandra Williams, Program Supervisor and Fellowes Athenaeum Trust (“FATF”) Program Manager, Caren Rosales, Programs Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board. Members of the public were also in attendance.

The meeting convened at 10:15 am. Committee Chair Evelyn Arana 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 July 30, 2025 which were approved.

Ms. Arana asked the public who were present if they wanted to give Public Comment prior to their consideration of grant applications. Speakers expressed strong support for the Makanda Project and its Saturday evening jazz concert series, highlighting its longstanding community impact, accessibility, and importance to Roxbury residents. Additional comments were received regarding the proposed Nubian Square naming initiative.

The Chair reviewed the FY26 available budget of \$114,333 and the purpose of the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund. The Committee then reviewed applications, discussing program merit, literary and educational value, community engagement, budget, and alignment with the FATF’s mission.

Ms. Deandra Williams began by discussing the 23 applicants.

The Committee approved, declined, or held applications for further consideration as summarized below. Final award amounts reflect the Committee's subsequent email vote on September 12, 2025, implementing equitable budget reductions across all applications.

Applicant	Committee Action
Makanda Project	Approved; staffing costs removed and final award adjusted.
Alda Witherspoon	Held for additional budget review.
Boston Public Quartet	Held pending administrative budget review.
Latino Pioneers	Approved (Chair abstained).
The Amora Experience	Declined; invited to reapply with revised application.
Roxbury Concert Series	Approved.
Piano Programs	Approved.
Castle of Our Skin	Approved for consideration.

HipStory	Approved with reduced funding consideration.
Drumming on Afro/Latin Traditions	Approved for consideration.
Marketing Your Work	Held for consideration.
MassQing Workshops	Approved.
Dans Se Lavi	Declined (mandatory information session not attended).
Take Back the Kitchen	Approved.
Art & Meditation	Declined (mandatory information session not attended).
Greatest MINDS	Approved with budget reduction.
Greater Roxbury Book Fair	Approved with reduced keynote funding.
Chess and Crafts Project	Approved for half the requested sessions.
Afro-Brazilian Dance	Declined.
Play Reading Book Club	Declined.
Community Guide to Using AI	Approved.

Applications from applicants who did not attend the mandatory information session were declined in accordance with Committee policy. The Committee also reviewed additional new and returning applications, approving Michelle Coleman's Chakras and Chair Yoga, Matt Read's Roxbury Makes Comics, Leslie English's Sewing 101, and branch staff proposals, while declining several others based on application completeness, program scope, or duplication of existing offerings.

Following review of all applications, the Committee determined that recommended awards exceeded the FY26 allocation. Members agreed that staff would prepare revised funding recommendations. The Chair proposed an equitable reduction methodology, which was circulated to the Committee for final action by email.

Ms. Arana asked for any new business for which there was none. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

Post Meeting notes:

On September 12, 2025, the Committee voted by email to adopt the Chair's recommendation to reduce approved awards equitably. Most approved awards were reduced by 20%, while selected concert programs and applicants receiving substantial outside funding were reduced by 50%. The final approved FY26 Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund awards totaled \$110,801.50, leaving an unallocated balance of \$3,531.50.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela R. Carver