

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting  
October 7, 2019**

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The meeting was called to order by President Stephanie Najjar at 7:00pm. President Najjar noted the meeting was being recorded by Recording Secretary Allison Lytle.

As there was a quorum present, the roll call was taken:

**Present**

Anne Quinn  
Stephanie Najjar  
Dianne Caputo  
Wes Merrill  
Jean Ahearn  
Thomas Pappas  
Richard Shruhan  
Don McAllister  
Frances Bisazza-Gallugi

**Absent**

Sandra Fecteau  
Kate O'Brien

President Stephanie Najjar introduced Interim Library Director Cate Merlin to the Board. President Najjar reported that former Library Director Melissa Robinson's last day was Friday, October 4<sup>th</sup> and they would discuss her departure and the hiring process for a new Library Director later in the meeting.

**Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting**

A **MOTION** was made by Richard Shruhan to approve the minutes of the meeting held on September 9, 2019 as presented. The motion was seconded by Don McAllister. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Receipt of Communications**

President Najjar stated there was no communication on which to report.

**Director's Report**

Interim Library Director Cate Merlin presented the following report and provided the Trustees in attendance with written copies for their information.

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## **Staffing**

As the Board knows, Former Library Director Melissa Robinson's last day at the library was last Friday, October 4th. After discussing it with Mayor Bettencourt and Trustee President Stephanie Najjar, Former Director Robinson completed the paperwork to appoint me as Interim Library Director. Senior Children's Librarian Alysa Hayden will serve as Interim Assistant Director. Both of these interim positions will last until a permanent Library Director is hired.

MBLC has been informed of the Director's resignation and Acting Director appointment.

Director of Human Resources, Beth Brennan O'Donnell, will work with Trustee Najjar on the search process for the permanent Library Director.

Interim Assistant Directory Hayden and I will be focusing on providing a working environment that centers around stability and maintaining morale during this interim period. The staff of the Peabody Institute Library has remained positive and flexible through the past few years of upheaval and uncertainty, and we feel that ensuring that staff feel appreciated and supported is of the utmost importance at this time. We will also focus on improving upon our core services, to increase both new and old staff familiarity and comfort with how we best serve the public, which will aid in ensuring that patrons do not experience any interruption or decrease in services as new staff grow into their roles.

Part of encouraging staff morale and improving core services is focusing on the Peabody Institute Library as one large institution that is fortunate enough to have three different locations, instead of three separate locations that happen to fall under the same institution name. We hope to encourage patrons to step outside of their comfortable local branch to visit each and every Peabody Institute Library location, in order to access an especially well curated Romance collection, attend a Creativity Lab makerspace program, or borrow a different batch of seeds from the PeaPod seed library. The Peabody Institute Library's strength is its staff enthusiasm, and we hope to support staff at each location in what they do best, and to share with staff and patrons what other locations do particularly well. We hope that focusing on the Peabody Institute Library as "One Library" will get patrons excited about what they can discover and access at all three of our locations, which makes the Peabody Institute Library unique in its breadth and offerings.

In Senior Librarian staffing news, Gabriella Toth started at the library as the Senior Adult Services and Public Programming Librarian on Monday, September 23rd. Gabriella brings experience in adult services, community outreach, public programming, database creation and collection development with her. Her training is going well and she has quickly assumed responsibility for adult programming, collection development, and training staff on databases.

All six Senior Librarian positions are now filled. In addition to Gabriella Toth, longtime Senior Technology Librarian Yunan Guo, Senior Teen Librarian Joanna Corea, and Senior Children's Librarian and Interim Assistant Director Al Hayden lead Main Library staff, and Senior South Branch Librarian Jillian Parsons and Senior West Branch Librarian Kristi Bryant lead branch staff. Public Services Librarian Sharon Janus leads the Public Services department under the guidance of

administration, and Creativity Lab Programming Librarian Mike Ahearn leads the Creativity Lab under the guidance of Senior Adult Services and Public Programming Librarian Gabriella Toth, as well as administration.

Former library aide Amy Titus accepted the position of Children's/Teen Library Assistant. Her first day in this new position is today, October 7th. Amy has been an asset to the Teen Department as an aide and brings a great enthusiasm for programming to the Children's and Teen Departments.

The library aide position that Amy is vacating will be posted this week.

Four library pages resigned over the past month due to college or school commitments. We have begun the process of filling these positions.

### **Building & Grounds**

After receiving several reports of mice in the Main Library building, the Director of Facilities sent an exterminator over to inspect the building. He has made two trips to the library and set bait traps. The Health Department is sending over an inspector to assist library custodians with finding any gaps in the building's foundation that could be letting the mice in.

While the elevator continues to work well, the lights inside the car have begun periodically blinking. City Elevator determined that the light source needs to be replaced and has prepared a price quote for the work.

### **Budget**

An updated budget is available for your review and questions if any.

State financial reporting was submitted to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners last week.

### **Programs and Activities**

With all Senior Librarian positions now filled, fall programming is underway. Adult programming at the Main Library this fall will include both the fall concert series and the discussion of *East of Eden* with professor Theo Theoharis that was postponed from the summer.

Peabody Access Television is in the process of redoing the library's website, which has not been redesigned in over ten years. Peabody TV will design and create the basic website and then library department heads will manage page updates. The plan is for the new website to go live the first week in November at the same time that the library switches the software that is used to manage its events calendar, museum pass program and public meeting room bookings. Both the new website and the new calendar software should present a more modern, streamlined digital experience for patrons. They will also better represent and reflect the work the library does in the community.

Due to recent behavioral and safety concerns in the Creativity Lab, library administration made the decision to change the scheduling and age requirements for open lab programs in the lab. There will now be specific labs for teens and families that provide access to most lab tools. A few

of the lab's tools will be available only during adult open labs, which will be restricted to patrons over the age of 18. Teen Department staff will also now assist with Creativity Lab staffing during open labs for teens. I will be working with Policy Chairperson Jean Ahearn to edit the Creativity Lab policies to reflect these changes and will present the policy changes at the next Board meeting.

In order to reduce the impact for teen patrons of these changes in Creativity Lab access, Senior Teen Librarian Joanna Corea has written a grant to the Peabody Cultural Council to fund a small 3D printer, a desktop vinyl cutter and some beginner sewing machines. If the request is funded, this equipment will be available to teens in the Teen Room two additional afternoons a week when Teen Department staff is available to oversee and assist teens with use.

### **Audubon Loan**

The Carolina Parakeet Audubon print owned by the library was returned by USArt delivery on September 23rd. The print returned in the same excellent shape it was loaned out in and as approved, was framed by the Peabody Essex Museum. Representatives from Princeton University, the Peabody Essex Museum and the Crystal Bridges Museum all expressed their gratitude to the library and the Board of Trustees for the print loan for the Nation's Nature exhibit.

### **Misc.**

Earlier this year, the City Council approved \$28,000 in capital funding to replace the library's van, which is over 18 years old. Library administration is working with the Department of Public Services to purchase a new van. This purchase should be completed within a month or so.

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Trustee Richard Shruhan requested to review the quote for the lights for the elevator before they moved forward with their replacement. Trustee Shruhan explained the lights were LED lights so it should not be that costly to replace. Interim Director Merlin stated she would provide the quote to Trustee Shruhan as soon as possible.

In response to a question from the Board, Interim Director Merlin explained they had changed the name of the position previously held by Kelley Unger upon her departure as she had a unique skill set which could not be duplicated. When Ms. Unger left, the Library took that opportunity to change the position slightly and changed the title of the position to reflect what the position encompassed.

Interim Director Merlin explained that staff members were now creating their own graphics and sharing graphics and digital content through Canvas when appropriate. Interim Director Merlin explained Canvas was an online free software which the staff was comfortable with and they could utilize to make anything they needed at that time.

In response to a question from the Board, Interim Director Merlin stated they qualified for state certification by \$80, following the budget cuts that year. Interim Director Merlin stated that it was possible they might actually see an increase in state aid due to an increase in the number of unique items checked out of the Library by out-of-state residents. Last year they had around 30 items checked out by out of state residents and this year it increased to over 200. The state reimbursed the Library for that number so they could see an increase in aid for that reason.

President Najjar inquired as to how Peabody TV (PATV) became involved in the redesign of the Library website. Interim Director Merlin stated that previous Library Director Melissa Robinson had made a connection when she participated in the Peabody Cultural Collaborative with a member of Peabody TV. Courtney Kent worked on the website for the Peabody Cultural Collaborative and discovered she had an aptitude for design. Ms. Kent then offered to work on the redesign of the Library website for them. The new website was designed using Wordpress which would also serve as the website platform. Interim Director Merlin designed a new logo and color scheme pulling in grey along with burgundy and sage. Interim Director Merlin stated the goal was to keep an historical feel but also make it more modern with the logo and font and to streamline the website to make it more user-friendly and intuitive. Interim Director Merlin stated they had been working on it for about a month now and they were very happy with the direction in which it was moving. Every Senior Librarian would now have the ability to update the website when necessary because they would all have access and the capability, which would make things much easier for the Library. They planned to relaunch the website to coincide with the migration to the new booking website the Library would be using going forward. Interim Director Merlin stated there would be a learning curve for both staff and patrons but the new booking website would be much easier for all user groups and looked nice and modern. Interim Director Merlin stated that the website was not discoverable upon searches but she did have a link she could send the Trustees so they could look at the work in progress. The Trustees requested Interim Director Merlin send them the link.

In response to a question from the Board, Interim Director Merlin stated that PATV was initially doing the work pro bono but as it had taken much more time and effort than originally anticipated, the Library agreed to pay \$3,000 for the redesign. Interim Director Merlin stated this was still a significant cost-savings as any website design firms would be much more expensive and the Library would incur additional costs for updates, redesign and hosting. Interim Director Merlin stated the Library would pay for the redesign from the technology budget.

Trustee Pappas inquired as to whether or not the Library maintained a list of what they wanted to accomplish in the near future. Interim Director Merlin explained that every staff member and every department had their own list and action items for the upcoming year but they did not have one comprehensive list. Interim Director Merlin stated that she would like to add a virtual tour of the Library to the website at some point to increase the ease of access for the patrons. Interim Director Merlin stated she was also passionate about the one library concept; she wanted to do a better job of promoting the library as three locations of one library, not three separate libraries. Interim Director Merlin stated on the new website there was one adult services page rather than a separate page for each library and she hoped that would be a way of encouraging patrons to visit other branches rather than their "local" branch.

President Najjar requested Interim Director Merlin put together an org chart. Interim Director Merlin stated she would do so as soon as possible.

The Board discussed the issue of the teens and the disruptions at the Creativity Lab. Interim Director Merlin explained that a lot of the issues were just teens being teens and they did not

see any malice; however, they could be disruptive at times and needed to be asked to leave the Lab. Interim Director Merlin explained that for that reason, they also added a senior librarian downstairs when there was a teen open lab, and would be looking into making changes to the Creativity Lab hours.

In response to a question from the Board, Interim Director Merlin stated they did not contact parents regarding disruptive behavior at that time due to privacy concerns as well as their desire to keep relationships in tact with the teens who often had no other place to go after school. Interim Director Merlin stated they could discuss contacting the parents in the future if the Board requested or if the situation warranted that action.

Trustee Dianne Caputo inquired as to whether or not they could utilize the assistance of the Peabody Auxiliary Officer who had an office in the Library for help if necessary. Interim Director Merlin stated that due to the officer's hours, he was often not present during after-school times. Interim Director Merlin stated they did utilize the officer to help with the homeless population as he was very familiar with the population.

Trustee Don McAllister inquired as to how the staff were coping with the significant turnover of senior staff over the last few years, in particular with the departure of Martha Holden, Gerri Guyote and Melissa Robinson. Interim Director Merlin stated that she was pleasantly surprised at how good the morale at the Library continued to be. Interim Director Merlin stated that the attitude of the staff was what could they do to help. Interim Director Merlin stated she felt very lucky because the staff had been very supportive and the truth was everyone was doing more than what they got paid for and more than what was in their job description. Interim Director Merlin stated the staff members were ready for the challenge. Interim Director Merlin stated the staff had smiles on their faces for the patrons and that was the most important thing.

President Najjar reported she had already written a letter to the staff on behalf of the Board thanking them for their dedication. President Najjar stated she wanted them to know that they were all in it together and that the Board had complete confidence in Interim Director Merlin.

A **MOTION** was made by Don McAllister to accept the Director's Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Jean Ahearn. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Reports of the Committees**

**BUILDINGS & GROUNDS:** Committee Chair Wes Merrill stated there was nothing to report in addition to the report provided by the Library Director.

**AUDUBON PRINTS:** Committee Chair Richard Shruhan stated there was nothing new on which to report.

**PERSONNEL:** Committee Chair Don McAllister stated there was nothing to report in addition to the report provided by the Library Director.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES:** Committee Chair Jean Ahearn stated there was nothing new on which to report.

**LIAISON TO THE FRIENDS OF THE PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY:** Liaison Dianne Caputo reported the last meeting of the Friends was held on October 3<sup>rd</sup> and provided the following update –

- The current balance was \$9,335.
- The proceeds from the sale of the whoopee pies at the International Festival totaled \$278.
- The Friends had received a total of \$90 from Amazon Smile.
- They decided to order a donation box that they would place somewhere on the floor of the Library that people could add donations to if desired. The display would also have a place for them to add posters where they could advertise upcoming events, etc.

**LIAISON TO THE PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY FOUNDATION:** Liaison Anne Quinn reported the Foundation had not met since June but had their next meeting scheduled for October 23<sup>rd</sup> and it would be their annual meeting.

Trustee Quinn reported Starry Starry Night would be held on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The event was scheduled for 6pm-9pm and tickets were \$25 at the door. Any Trustees that still had donations were asked to bring those donations to Interim Library Director Merlin. Trustee Quinn stated they expected to have a good turnout for the event, particularly because it was an election year.

**LIAISON TO THE PEABODY HISTORICAL SOCIETY:** Liaison Thomas Pappas reported the next event of the Historical Society was a lecture entitled “We Do Testefy”: Felton Family & Salem With Trials. The lecture was presented by Kelly Daniell, Historian and Curator and would be held on October 9<sup>th</sup> at 1pm at the Felton-Smith Historic Site.

A **MOTION** was made by Frances Bisazza-Gallugi to accept the Committee reports as presented. The motion was seconded Wes Merrill. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Unfinished Business**

President Najjar stated the Board had no unfinished business on which to report.

### **New Business**

President Najjar reported that former Library Trustee and Foundation Director Maria Dakos passed away last month. President Najjar stated she would send a sympathy card to her husband on behalf of the Board.

President Najjar stated she would like the Board to acknowledge former Library Director Melissa Robinson’s time of service at the Library with a token of their appreciation. President Najjar stated they would purchase a gift for Ms. Robinson out of the line item in their budget

which was set aside for such items. The Board discussed what would be an appropriate gift for Ms. Robinson. President Najjar stated she would extend the invitation to Ms. Robinson to attend their December dinner meeting and they could present her with the gift at that time. If she was unable to attend, President Najjar stated they would look into an alternate time.

President Najjar stated she approved the job positing for the Library Director position that day and expected the posting would go live by the next day. President Najjar stated she hadn't met with Human Resources Director Beth O'Donnell yet but her understanding was the posting would be up for approximately one month. President Najjar stated she would meet with Ms. O'Donnell and would report back on the process and status of the position at the next meeting of the Board.

Trustee Thomas Pappas reported he visited Walls of Décor in Peabody on behalf of the Board seeking a donation for Starry Starry Night. Trustee Pappas reported he was told they would not be donating that year even though they had in the past. Trustee Pappas reported that they told him that the Library had made a significant purchase that year and then returned the entire purchase. Walls of Décor was unhappy with the transaction and decided against donating to the fundraising event for that reason. Trustee Pappas stated they asked him to report that issue to the Board.

The Board discussed the issue and looked to get more information as to exactly what happened. Interim Director Merlin stated she suspected the issue arose from a purchase made when they were re-painting the teen room. Interim Director Merlin explained that her understanding was the custodian bought supplies that turned out to be the wrong supplies then returned them. Trustee Pappas stated he had the receipt for the transaction in question. Interim Director Merlin stated she would look into the issue further and would speak with them and would report back to the Board.

As there was no additional business to come before the Board, a **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Richard Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Jean Ahearn. A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

Submitted by,

Allison M. Lytle  
Recording Secretary