

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting  
September 14, 2020**

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The September 14, 2020 Trustees Meeting was called to order by President Najjar at 7:00pm. This meeting was held via Zoom virtual webinar and was broadcasted live on PATV's television station and on Facebook. Meeting minutes taken by Madelyn Firth.

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

Stephanie Najjar, present  
Richard Shruhan, present  
Peter Bakula, present  
Kate O'Brien, present  
Anne Quinn, present  
Don McAllister, present  
Wes Merrill, present  
Stephanie Dallaire, absent  
Morgan Yeo, present  
Frances Gallugi, absent  
Tom Pappas, present

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

A **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to accept the minutes of the meeting held on August 3, 2020. The motion was accepted by Wes Merrill, and seconded by Tom Pappas. A vote was taken. All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved. Corrections to the minutes will be made as appropriate.

**Library Director's Report for September 2020**

**Staffing**

Library staff are now working 4 of 5 weekdays in the building, and a fifth day remotely. After Labor Day, Saturday hours were increased to a full 9am-5pm, with Curbside Pickup available from 10am-4pm (the same as Monday-Thursday hours).

Unelia Videira has resigned from her position of Sunday Reference Librarian, after 18 years with the library. We will miss her dedication to the library, and wish her the best of luck and hope that we are able to welcome her and her family back to the library as soon as it's safe to open to the public. Unelia has been such an integral part of this library, and Director Merlin is

personally so sorry that we're not able to open on Sundays due to our budgetary constraints, so that she may continue to share her expertise and kindness with our Sunday patrons.

Erik Bauer has resigned from his position as Archivist, effective 9/24. He and his family are relocating, and Director Merlin wishes them the best of luck. Erik has worked tirelessly to protect and share our historical collections with the public, and Director Merlin is grateful for all of the work that he's done in digitizing the collection so that it is accessible to all, especially during this time of virtual and online access. Director Merlin wishes him well in his future as an archivist and librarian, and hope that he can continue to share his enthusiasm for history and archives with the public.

With our extensive archives and historical collections, it is necessary to have an Archivist on staff. Our collections need tending, and our remaining staff does not have this technical knowledge or experience. This position is funded in the FY21 budget, so Director Merlin will request to fill this position, and plan on adjusting the job description to reflect our need for both archives expertise and public services support.

With these resignations, and two other staff members who are not currently able to work in the buildings, we now have a staff of 19 people responsible for keeping three locations up and running, providing curbside services, and providing phone and online services.

### **Reopening**

We regularly receive inquiries from patrons regarding when we will be able to reopen the buildings to the public. What follows is a summary of our current situation and near-future plans:

- The Main Library is staffed for phone, email, and online help from 9am-5pm on Mondays-Thursdays and Saturdays, with curbside services available from 10am-4pm. The Branches are staffed by remaining Branch staff on Mondays-Thursdays for retrieving holds, checking in returned materials, and reshelving materials.
- Due to the FY21 staffing reductions, we are unable to open on Fridays or Sundays.
- In conjunction with City Hall, we will make a decision at the end of the month (based on the success of the Schools reopening) regarding opening the Main Library for appointment-based computer use. Assistant Director Hayden and Director Merlin are finalizing our Computer Use plan, and will send it to you for approval by the end of next week.
- We hope to add evening hours if and when we add Public Computer use, but this will be difficult to staff due to the numbers of staff that are needed for curbside services, phone/online services, basic branch operations, and the addition of Public Computer use.  
When we open for computer use, staff will return to the buildings full time.
- Curbside, phone, and virtual/online services will continue indefinitely at the Main Library.

- Browsing at the Main Library is not included in our current plans at the moment, as a national study looking into the presence of the virus on library materials has found that the virus is detectable on common library materials (plastic book jackets and DVD cases) for up to 6 days when stacked (or on shelves). Due to the size and layout of the Main Library, it would be very difficult to ensure that any materials touched by patrons are safely quarantined, and any surfaces touched by patrons were immediately cleaned and sanitized.

More information on the REALM study can be found here:

<https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/COVID-19-research-project.html>

- In addition to safety concerns, we do not have sufficient staffing levels to maintain curbside services, online and phone services, public computer supervision, evening hours, and the addition of extra cleaning and patron supervision that would be necessary to keep everyone safe during browsing.
- Because curbside Pickup operates out of the Children’s Room, and because browsing would add to the burden on our remaining staff, Director Merlin feels that we would only be able to successfully and safely offer one of these services to the public with our current staffing levels. Curbside services currently serve an average of 50 patrons per day, and she feels this is the best and safest way to serve our patrons at this time, and the best use of our staff’s efforts and resources, given the availability of online and virtual services to help with virtual browsing.
- Due to the FY21 staffing reductions, we are unable to add curbside services, computer use, or browsing at the Branches for the foreseeable future.

## Services

- **Curbside Pickup** of books, DVDs, audiobooks, and other materials placed on hold from all three Branches serves an average of 50 patrons per day in the Main Library parking lot.
- **Curbside Printing** allows patrons to email us documents, which we print for free (up to 10 pages), and make available for pickup during our curbside hours.
- **Curbside Museum Passes** are available for online reservations and curbside pickup.
- **Curbside 3D Printing** began last week, allowing patrons to email us files, which Creativity Lab Librarian Mike Ahearn prints and makes available for curbside pickup. He has also begun virtual programming in which patrons learn to create a project that he then prints for them.
- **Library Takeout** allows patrons to choose from a “menu” of genre, age, and material categories that are then chosen by staff and made available for curbside pickup. More information is available here: <https://www.peabodylibrary.org/takeout/>

## Coming Soon

**Library of Things-** Senior Adult Services & Public Programming Librarian Gabriela Toth has added many new items for patrons to check out, from projectors to games to gardening tools,

and they will be available via a new website page over the next few weeks. Seven additional Wi-Fi Hotspots will also be available for check out, for a total of 10.

**Grab and Go Crafts for All Ages-** Beginning at the end of September, takeout themed craft kits will be available each Saturday morning for all ages, for pickup at the Main Library (first come first serve, as supplies last).

**One-on-One Zoom “Browsing” for Parents and Educators-** To help parents and educators who need to see interest and reading levels of books, patrons may request books for a certain age and/or about a certain topic, and will meet with Children's and Teen staff via Zoom to virtually “browse” a curated selection of books that will then be available for curbside pickup.

### **Programming**

The Peabody Institute Library Foundation will sponsor a virtual concert with Aine Minogue, and a four-part virtual lecture series with Professor Theo Theoharis about American Dramas. The dates have yet to be confirmed, but these programs will take place via Zoom later this fall, and the books for Professor Theoharis’s lectures will be available via curbside pickup. Also in the works are meditation, yoga, and other wellness programs for adults.

The Peabody Institute Library was awarded a grant from the MBLC to assist us in offering virtual programming for our community. In this first phase of the programming, we are using the funds to offer programming that informs residents about the history of voting, including the suffrage movement which is celebrating its 100-year anniversary this year. On Wednesday, September 16th the library is offering a lunchtime program with Wentworth Institute of Technology Professor Allison Lange entitled “Picturing Political Power: Images in the Women’s Suffrage Movement.” This free program will explain the importance of photographs and other types of images in gaining support for women to be granted voting rights in the U.S. We welcome you to join us at 1:00 pm this Wednesday via Zoom.

On September 22nd, National Voter Registration Day, we will be offering virtual programming (and other resources) to help educate local voters on the upcoming election. We will be encouraging people in our community to cast a ballot in the upcoming election. Information about absentee/mail-in ballots, registering to vote, changes in local in-person voting and more will be covered.

Later in the fall we plan to offer other events about searching for work to help support people who have recently lost jobs. In addition, we hope to offer information to assist local small businesses, as well as highlight other important resources to help our community survive this difficult time in our country.

### **Building & Grounds**

The Main Library elevator is awaiting repairs by City Elevator so that it may pass its annual re-inspection by mid-October.

Over Labor Day Weekend, a dead battery in an Instant Alarm fire alarm system caused the tripping of Main Library fire alarms, and the Fire Department was called three times before it was discovered that the faulty battery was the cause of the alarms. Thank you to custodian Domingos Vieira for spending his Sunday morning dealing with this issue.

## **Budget**

Director Merlin attached the current budget for Library Trustees review. There is nothing of concern, but please note that NOBLE technology and support fees are front-loaded and the majority are paid at the beginning of the fiscal year from the Software/IT Services line item.

President Najjar and Director Merlin will be requesting a meeting with the Mayor regarding our current funding situation, and our place in the City's budget as a whole. Director Merlin is also working on the State Financial Reporting process, which includes applying for the State Certification Waiver. Budget documentation from the City and letters from the City and Library (President Najjar and Library Director Merlin) regarding the budget process are due to the MBLC in mid-October.

The MBLC will vote on libraries requesting waivers in February of 2021. At this time, if we are denied a waiver (likely, given our 17% cuts in compared to the city-wide cuts of just under 3%), we will then, with the City, appeal that decision, to be voted on at the final April 2021 MBLC meeting. The MBLC takes into account any funds added to our budget prior to the April 2021 vote.

In April of 2021, if the MBLC does not grant us a waiver, Peabody residents and library card holders will lose access to Inter-Library Loans from the other NOBLE libraries, as well as Commonwealth Catalog state-wide materials. They will also not be able to use their cards at neighboring NOBLE libraries to check out materials. We will also not receive the annual \$67,000 in State Aid funding that funds programming, supplements materials, technology, and building budgets, and funds Audubon print conservation.

## **Policy**

As with every other NOBLE library, we have not been charging overdue fines since we reopened in July. Director Merlin is requesting that we officially extend the moratorium on overdue fines until January 1, 2021. She feels that overdue fines, *especially* in a time of a pandemic and economic downturn, create more barriers to patrons using our services when they need us the most. Additionally, patrons are not able to physically pay fines in the library—they may pay by credit card which adds an additional processing fee. When we do re-open, paying fines with cash will add safety issues regarding the touching of money and passing money back and forth between staff and patrons.

Our overdue fines, in addition to fees for lost and damaged books (which we will continue assessing), and printing/copying fees, go into a City Revolving Fund, and that money is seen in our annual Books & Material Budget. Director Merlin has long believed in the importance of eliminating all overdue fines permanently and had hoped to propose this upon being named

Director, but now worry that our Books & Materials budget would suffer in the long run, especially now that it is greatly reduced and we are not bringing in any printing or copying funds. A moratorium is a compromise that removes usage barriers for our patrons in the immediate future, while hopefully not putting our funding for books, material, and online databases and resources at greater risk. According to Director Merlin's calculations, the Library brought in approximately \$4,000 in overdue fines last year, not including lost/damaged items and printing/copying fees.

Therefore, Director Merlin is requesting that the Board discuss and vote on an overdue fines moratorium on Peabody items to last until January 1, 2021.

### **Audubons**

The Peabody Institute Library Foundation met virtually last week, and voted to suspend their financial support of Audubon print conservation until a time when the Library is appropriately funded by the City. Former Library Director Martha Holden stated that the City is under legal obligation to preserve the prints, and that the Library took on this responsibility in the early 1990s, when funding was robust. Without Foundation funding, the Library would be responsible for 100% of the restoration costs.

There is currently \$11,000 allocated from existing State Aid funds for restoration, and approximately \$17,000 in the Sawitsky trust. After paying \$7,500 from each account for the batch of prints that were returned in July, there would be \$3,500 left in allocated State Aid, and \$9,500 in the Sawitsky Trust. Director Merlin does not feel that it is a prudent use of our limited funds to send any prints for restoration at this time, as those remaining State Aid funds will not be replenished this year as we anticipate losing State Certification, and the Sawitsky Trust may also be needed for supplements to our materials budget, as it may be used for Literature and Art. Director Merlin is requesting that the Board discuss this year's planned conservation of Audubon Prints, as it was proposed at the August 2020 meeting that each funding source (Foundation, Sawitsky Trust, State Aid) contribute \$2,000 each towards a small batch of prints this year.

A **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to accept the Library Director's Report as presented. The Motion was approved by Don McAllister and was seconded by Tom Pappas. A vote was taken. All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

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### **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 to report in addition to the report provided by the Library Director.

**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 Kate O'Brien stated there was nothing to report in addition to the report provided by the Library Director.

**LIAISON TO THE FRIENDS OF THE PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY:** Committee Chair Morgan Yeo stated there was nothing to report in addition to the report provided by the Library Director.

**LIAISON TO THE PEABODY HISTORICAL SOCIETY:** Liaison Thomas Pappas stated there was nothing to report in addition to the report provided by the Library Director.

**LIAISON TO THE PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY FOUNDATION:** Liaison Anne Quinn stated there was nothing to report in addition to the report provided by the Library Director.

A **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to accept the Reports of the Committees. The Motion was approved by Don McAllister and was seconded by Tom Pappas. A vote was taken. All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Unfinished Business**

A **MOTION** was made by Richard Shruhan that the Peabody Institute Library puts on the hold the restoration of further Audubon prints until further notice and vote by the library trustees due budget cuts per the COVID pandemic. The Motion was seconded by Tom Pappas. A vote was taken. All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

A **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to extend the moratorium of overdue fines until January 2021. The Motion was accepted by Anne Quinn and was seconded by Morgan Yeo. A vote was taken. All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **New Business**

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be October 5, 2020 at 7:00pm.

As there was no additional business to come before the Board, a **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Stephanie Najjar. The motion was approved by Don McAllister and unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00pm.

Submitted by,

Madelyn Firth  
Secretary