

PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

MINUTES OF MEETING  
**OCTOBER , 2020**

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The October 5, 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 from the recording as no secretary was present by Al Hayden.

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

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

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

The roll call and approval of the minutes did not get recorded, therefore a faithful account of these are not available. However, attendance was determined by those present in the meeting. From memory, the minutes were approved unanimously, but the motions are unable to be determined. Corrections to the minutes will be made as appropriate.

**The recording begins at the following point:**

Prior to the Director giving her report, Stephanie Najjar noted that Al Hayden had been the Assistant Director officially for a month. She congratulated her and inquired as to how the transition had been. Director Merlin replied that because Al had been in the position for nearly a year there was no transition necessary and it was good for everyone on staff to have the Assistant Director position settled and official.

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

**Staffing**

Staff continue to work 85% in-building at all three locations. After Assistant Director Al Hayden's promotion in mid-September, the position of Senior Children's Library was left vacant, and will not be filled until it that staff member is needed for the reopening of the Children's Department. Other staff, including Senior Teen Librarian Joanna Corea, and Assistant Director Hayden, are helping to

continue Children's services in the meantime.

President Najjar and Director Merlin met with the Mayor at the end of September, and after explaining our staffing needs and concerns, Director Merlin is confident that we will be able to fill the hours that were left open by the resignations of the West Branch Children's Librarian and Archivist last month. The library is finalizing job descriptions.

### **Reopening**

President Najjar and Director Merlin met with the Mayor and Head of HR in late September. He is aware of our current staffing limitations, and that we are unfortunately unable to expand any services, including Curbside Pickup, to either branch in the foreseeable future without hiring more staff. Because no funds are able to be added to the Library's budget now, we are therefore letting patrons know, as they ask, that Branch services are suspended until more staff is hopefully able to be hired. We have calculated that Curbside Services could be added to the branches if we were able to hire four part-time staff, for a total cost of approximately \$38,000 for the remainder of FY21.

The Mayor and City Hall hope to make future decisions regarding opening to the public in early November, and we will confer with the Mayor at that time to make a decision regarding opening the Main Library for appointment-based computer use. No computer services will be possible at the branches. Browsing will come after computer use, but it is not in our short-term plans, all depending on the state of the pandemic in our area, and the safety of staff and patrons.

### **Services**

- Curbside Pickup
- Curbside Printing
- Curbside Museum Passes
- Curbside 3D Printing
- Library Takeout
- Grab and Go Crafts for All Ages, began this past weekend

Coming Soon:

- Expanded Library of Things
- One-on-One Zoom "Browsing" for Parents and Educators

### **Programming**

The Library Foundation is sponsoring two exciting virtual programs this fall- Professor Theo Theoharis' popular lecture series (beginning 10/24) on American Dramas, and a virtual concert from Aine Minogue, date TBD. Both programs will take place via Zoom.

Staff are working on adding more virtual programming in addition to Guided Meditation, Conversation Circles, book groups, and writing clubs, but our staffing levels, current services, and staff absences due to illnesses and vacations/personal days, are all making it difficult to plan, market, implement, and lead such programming. Additionally, without the programming funding from our yearly State Aid grant, our ability to hire outside performers for programming has

decreased to approximately ½ of what it has been in the past. The rest of our programming funds are generously provided by the Friends of the Library, but we anticipate decreased fundraising and therefore decreased funding due to the pandemic. as well.

### **Building & Grounds**

City Elevator is coming this week to finish final repairs before our re-inspection next week.

Nearly all emergency lights at the Main Library need to have their batteries changed, and we are currently determining if it's more cost-effective to change the batteries or simply put in new units.

### **Budget**

Director Merlin attached the current budget for the Board's review. Nothing is the cause of any concern, but a reminder that, as she mentioned last month, most of the Software/IT line items are spent at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Historically, the library has received approximately \$67,000 each in year in State Aid through MBLC certification, which was spent on programming, supplemental books and materials, building projects, and the conservation of the Audubon Prints. As of now, the library has approximately \$38,000 remaining, with no funds remaining that are earmarked for Audubon prints or programming, due to our normal spending last year. Director Merlin does not want to re-allocate any funds, because she anticipates needing more funds for books and materials due to the library's budget cuts (nearly 13% cut from that line item), and the library needs to have a reserve fund available for building and utilities issues.

The annual \$67,000 in state aid is incredibly important to library operations, and Director Merlin is determined to make this remaining money last as long as possible, but the lack of funds this year will severely impact programming, further books and materials, and, as was discussed last month, the library is unable to conserve any Audubon prints. There is no City line item in our budget for programming or Audubon print restoration.

Director Merlin included the current state of our State Aid funds and the allocations of the current money remaining below. A reminder that these funds will continue to diminish and then disappear unless we remain certified, or become certified again in the future.

Books	11,693
Utilities	13,036
Budget Supplement	4,800
Program Supplement	0
Audubons	0
Building Projects	7,434
Staff Development	883
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,846</b>

Some good news, though, is that during our meeting with the Mayor in late September, he made it clear that he does *not* want the library to become deserted this spring. He inquired as to the funds that would be needed to get us within the MBLC waiver “safety zone” (less than 5% greater than the city’s total cuts), which is approximately \$167,000. He stated he hopes that, at the end of this year or beginning of 2021, the City has a more stable financial state, and that the funds may be available to add to our budget line, helping to achieve the waiver status with the MBLC. President Najjar and Director Merlin are hopeful that we may still be able to get a waiver from the MBLC, but this won’t be decided upon or made final until months from now.

Director Merlin included the following forms that she, and the City, need to submit in order to apply for the certification waiver, and will begin work on those this coming week:

- **Petition for Waiver** (due with normal financial reporting on 10/16)
- **Waiver Budget Worksheet** (due on 11/6, filled out by City, due along with our official budget from the city, and two separate letters from a municipal official and myself/Stephanie, regarding the budget process)
- **Request for Hearing** (to submit after initial MBLC vote against waiver, in Feb 2021, this document also includes the important State Certification deadlines for your reference)

### **Audubons**

Before he left, former Archivist Erik Bauer found many documents pertaining to the City and Library’s legal responsibilities toward the Audubon Prints. Most of the documents, from 1989, pertain to the manner in which the Peabody Essex Museum was directed to maintain and then transfer the prints back to the Library, with little being said about who is actually responsible for the future conservation of the prints. Director Merlin has reached out to the City Solicitor for help in translating these documents, and in the hopes that we can determine who is in fact legally responsible for their upkeep, and in what timeframe or other limitations. She has also included the documents for the Board’s perusal.

-end of report-

Wes Merrill inquired about the elevator. Director Merlin reported that she has been in touch with Director of City Facilities Jim Hefe who has been in contact with the elevator inspection company. He has been promised “a good inspection.”

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 Wes Merrill. 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 was absent and therefore not able to provide a report.

**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 reported that he had spoken with President of the Historical Society Dick St. Pierre, who mentioned that there may be some changes to the presidency at the Historical Society. He also mentioned historical facts of the Topsfield Fair that was sent around via email to the trustees.

**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 Tom Pappas and was seconded by Don McAllister. A vote was taken. All in Favor: Yes. Any Opposed: No. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Unfinished Business**

President Najjar noted that the Audubon Prints discussion will be tabled until the legal responsibilities are determined further by City Hall.

### **New Business**

The passing of former Peabody Librarian, Kathy Walsh was noted by President Najjar. She requested that a card be sent on behalf of the Board of Trustees to the surviving family. It was noted that the Board of Trustees funding was cut which renders the Board unable to make a donation to the Walsh family's preferred charity, but Trustees are welcome to make a personal donation if they so choose.

The Trustees requested some basic information about the library's budget cuts and factual information in a simplified format from Director Merlin. President Najjar encouraged the Trustees to begin talking with people about the library's situation including the two issues of the upcoming possibility of losing State Certification and the limitation of services because of staffing shortages. The next Board of Trustees meeting will be November 2, 2020 at 7:00pm.

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Alysa Hayden  
Library Assistant Director