

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting
December 7, 2020**

The meeting was called to order by President Stephanie Najjar at 7:00pm. This meeting was held via Zoom virtual webinar and was broadcasted live on PATV's television station and on Facebook. President Najjar noted the meeting was being recorded by Catherine McGrath.

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

Present

Peter Bakula
Don McAllister
Wesley Merrill
Stephanie Najjar
Kate O'Brien
Thomas Pappas
Anne Quinn
Richard Shruhan
Morgan Yeo

Absent

Stephanie Dallaire
Frances Gallugi

Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting

A **MOTION** was made by Thomas Pappas to approve the minutes of the meetings held on October 5, 2020 and November 2, 2020. 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 reported there were no communications received.

**Director's Report to the Board of Library Trustees
December 2020**

Staffing

Staff continue to work 85% in the building and 15% from home. Due to vacations and medical absences, they have been operating with little to no buffer at the Main Library or at the Branches. In order to offer consistent check-in and holds services at the Branches, and to ensure that Main Library operations don't suffer as the winter continues, Assistant Director Hayden and Director Merlin have decided that it's necessary to suspend curbside pickup services at the Main Library on Mondays, and to send Main Library staff to the Branches on

Mondays to perform a week's worth of tasks there on Mondays only. Because they don't have the appropriate staff to work at the Branches during the rest of the week, this means that checkins and holds will be delayed, but this new arrangement is the only way to ensure that staff are able to perform their duties at each location on a regular and consistent basis.

Because of continued limited staff, and upcoming holiday vacations, Director Merlin is requesting tonight that Trustees approve one additional Trustees Holiday on Saturday, December 26th. At present, there are 3 people scheduled to work that day, and as Director Merlin explained in regards to the Saturday after Thanksgiving, this is not an appropriate or safe number of staff to remain open.

Technical Services Librarian Gail Desmond retired as of December 1st, after 33 years at the Peabody Institute Library. Her dedication, knowledge, and kindness are already greatly missed. Director Merlin has received approval to post her position internally, and will do so this week.

Director Merlin has also received approval to post a new position of Senior Local History and Public Services Librarian, to combine the hours of the West Branch Children's Librarian and Archivist positions that were vacated in September, into a full-time position. When the Branches reopen, the library will obviously have to address Children's services at the West Branch, but Director Merlin feels that the creation of this new position will be incredibly useful, in that the library gains back another Senior Librarian position (two have been lost in the past few budget years), and the library gains a Senior Librarian who will be able to not only preserve the archives, but also share the library's historical treasures with the public through programming and workshops. This position needs to be approved by the Union and city attorney, and Director Merlin will post it as soon as she can, likely in early January. This is a Senior Librarian position that will work out of the Main Library, perform both public services and archives/local history duties, and requires an MLS and archives experience.

Services & Updates

Self-Serve Pickup- Beginning this week, Curbside Delivery has now transitioned to Self-Serve Pickup, in the Children's Room entryway, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 10am-4pm. The holds and appointment process are the same, but now instead of arriving, calling/texting staff, and waiting for us to come to their car, patrons will now park their vehicle put on a mask, and enter the Children's Room entry one at a time to retrieve their labeled bags. This will be an easier and faster process for patrons. Director Merlin consulted with the Director of the Peabody Health Department to ensure that our plan follows social distancing and health regulations. See the below graphic for the layout of the Entryway:

The following services will be retrieved through Self-Serve Pickup:

- Curbside Museum Passes
- Curbside 3D Printing
- Library Takeout
- Grab and Go Crafts for All Ages
- Expanded Library of Things

Curbside Printing will still require an ID/Library Card for pickup, given privacy concerns. Patrons will enter the Entryway, speak to staff through the intercom, then back up to the entryway door (6 ft from the staff door), and wait for staff to place their envelope on the table and go back inside the Children's Room before retrieving their documents.

Staff and patrons will not come into physical contact with each other, as the intercom will allow patrons and staff to speak, and staff will not open the door to place any items on the table without waiting for patrons to stand back in the entryway, at a socially distanced 6ft away.

Programming

Staff have been working very hard on “grab and go” craft kits for children, which are put together during Children’s Room staff during their curbside shifts, and made available to patrons on a first-come-first-served basis on Saturday mornings- and it has proven to be incredibly popular. Additionally, Senior Adult Services & Public Programming Librarian Gabriela Toth introduced the first adult and teen craft kit this past Saturday, which also “sold out”. Patrons love these activities that include all supplies and instructions, and the library plans to continue these every Saturday morning.

However, as reported in previous reports, the library is essentially unable to provide staff-led virtual programming at the moment because staff are needed for basic library functions. Directory Merlin hopes that filling positions will allow the library to add some virtual programming, but truly robust virtual programming and eventual in-person programming will not be able to grow until the library is fully staffed.

Grants

Assistant Director Hayden, Senior Teen Librarian Joanna Corea, and Director Merlin have begun the application process for an LSTA grant, which is a federally funded grant that is distributed and managed by the MBLC. This grant, which the library will call “Our Garden”, will provide up to \$10,000 to add more raised-bed gardens and outdoor learning stations to the Main Library Courtyard, and to bring in outside gardeners from local Brooksby Farm, Tillie’s Farm, Peabody Garden Club, etc., to teach children and adults the basics of gardening, food production, and composting. Our Garden will also highlight the diversity of Peabody by inviting residents to plant and raise vegetables and flowers from their native or ancestral homes, and the library will offer cooking classes from different cultures. This grant is for FY22 (awarded in June 2021), and the process begins in earnest in January.

Please note that if the library does not receive an MBLC waiver for certification, they will *not* be able to apply for this grant, and will have to withdraw our application (certification is a requirement for LSTA grant eligibility). If the library loses certification, they will not be able to apply for any MBLC grants until they are recertified- in a best case scenario, they would be able to apply again in December 2022, for grants that would be awarded in June 2023. LSTA grants have funded large projects such as the Creativity Lab and our English Language Learner Conversation Circles.

Building & Grounds

Martha Holden, Foundation President, approached Director Merlin with a request from a patron that she would appreciate a vote on this evening. The daughter of former West Branch staff member Annette Mandra would like to make a donation to the Foundation in honor of her mother, who is in poor health. Normally, the window sponsorship program is only at the Main Library, but Ms. Mandra’s daughter requested that this plaque be allowed at the West Branch, under a painting that Ms. Mandra created and donated to the library that hangs in the middle of the Branch. Director Merlin feels that allowing a plaque to be placed in Ms. Mandra’s honor at her beloved former workplace, and under her own art, is a reasonable and thoughtful request, and Director Merlin is incredibly thankful for and touched

by this donation.

Both of the West Branch Library's hot water pumps need to be replaced, and the City Facilities department has ordered the parts to be replaced in-house at a very reasonable price.

The glycol level in the Main Library's HVAC system were replenished, as this is apparently a normal process that is necessary every few years, according to the city facilities manager.

Director Merlin mentioned in the October report that all emergency lights at the Main Library either needed new batteries or to be replaced, and it was determined that replacing each unit is much less expensive than replacing the old batteries. The city electrician is replacing a few each week, and expects to be done by February.

Budget & State Certification

President Najjar, Assistant Director Hayden, and Director Merlin met with the Mayor this past Thursday. He is entirely committed to adding the necessary funds to the library budget by the end of January so that the library may avoid decertification. As a reminder (not that you need it), the library needs an additional \$226,207 to not be considered disproportionately cut by the MBLC. The Mayor has committed to doing what is necessary to secure these funds for the library, and they will be meeting with him over the next few weeks for more updates.

Plans to reopen depend entirely upon these funds being added and being approved for spending on staffing, because the library is not able to add any in-person services at any locations, or expand pickup at the Branches, without hiring part-time staff to replace those laid off in the Spring. The library appreciates the Mayor's dedication to helping them obtain a waiver for this year, and hopes that the FY22 budget cycle which begins in just a few months will prove to be more optimistic and healthy for the library, and city as a whole.

Audubons

Due to the pressing concerns of our staffing and budget situations, Director Merlin will revisit this in the Spring.

-end of report-

Trustee Quinn provided an update to the board that Annette Mandra had passed away in the time since her daughter requested the plaque. The board and Director Merlin extended their condolences. Director Merlin explained that plaques usually are placed at the main branch, therefore an extension of the window sponsorship program to the west branch library in memoriam of Annette Mandra requires board approval.

Trustee Quinn inquired about the trustee holiday, asking what it was. Director Merlin stated that it is a day the library is closed, and the scheduled staff receives holiday pay.

Trustee Shruhan noted that replacing the emergency lights, as opposed to replacing just the batteries was most cost-effective.

Trustee O'Brien inquired about the budget and asked if there was a specific date Mayor Bettencourt would be asking for a vote. President Najjar responded that she was not aware of a specific date but stated there was a committed made by Mayor Bettencourt by the deadline for recertification.

Trustee O'Brien inquired about the trustee holiday and asked if it would use a vacation day. Director Merlin reported that the trustee holiday would not use a vacation day.

Trustee Pappas inquired about any projects left by former archivist Erick Bauer. Director Merlin reported that most projects were wrapped up, and stated that he was working on digitization which a new archivist will continue because it is a never ending process, and she hopes this new position will allow for greater utilization of the local history the library has access to.

Trustee Merrill noted that replacing the water pump parts internally saved the city a great deal of money. Director Merlin thanked the custodial staff and DPS for their response. Trustee McAllister and Trustee Pappas extended their gratitude to the custodial staff and suggested sending a thank you card. President Najjar agreed and suggested sending a card once the project is finished.

A **MOTION** was made by Don McAllister to accept the Director's Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Thomas Pappas.

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 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 Don McAllister to accept the Committee reports as presented. The motion was seconded Morgan Yeo.

A vote was taken.

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

Unfinished Business

Trustee Quinn began a conversation about the budget.

New Business

Trustee O'Brien inquired about the trustee holiday on December 26th and asked if it could be given to all staff as gratitude for their hard work. Director Merlin responded that it would have to be approved by the union, however that adding an additional holiday January 2nd would be an easier way to ensure fairness, as both alternating Saturday groups would receive paid time off. Discussion ensued.

A **MOTION** was made by Don McAllister for the Board to approve the addition of two trustee holidays on December 12th, 2020 and January 2nd, 2020. The motion was seconded Morgan Yeo.

A vote was taken.

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

A **MOTION** was made by Don McAllister for the Board to approve the installment of a plaque at the West Branch library in memoriam of Annette Mandra in honor of her years of service. The motion was seconded Morgan Yeo.

A vote was taken.

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

President Najjar reminded the Board that the next Trustees meeting would be held on January 4th, 2021 at 7pm.

Director Merlin noted that the next meeting would be held virtually, as well as the meetings in the foreseeable future. Director Merlin also noted that more people have been getting involved due to meeting virtually, including the public and library staff. Director Merlin hopes to extend this increase in public participation and interest in the future and will discuss at the January meeting how meetings will be held going forward.

President Najjar reminded the board that at the January 4th meeting they will vote for nominations and hopes to have everyone in attendance.

As there was no additional business to come before the Board, a **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Anne Quinn. The motion was seconded by Don McAllister.

A vote was taken.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49pm.

Submitted by,

Catherine McGrath
Secretary