

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting  
January 11, 2021**

---

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  
Stephanie Dallaire  
Don McAllister  
Frances Gallugi  
Stephanie Najjar  
Kate O'Brien  
Thomas Pappas  
Anne Quinn  
Richard Shruhan  
Morgan Yeo

**Absent**

**Mayor Bettencourt Joined the Meeting**

Mayor Bettencourt wished the Trustees a Happy New Year and apologized for any stress and anxiety caused during 2020, regarding state recertification. He reiterated his commitment to not allowing the library to go without recertification. The mayor acknowledged the financial hardships faced by the entire community, and that there were budget cuts among all departments within the city. Because the library had many part-time employees, it took a great loss. The Mayor stated he is prepared to go to City Council and request the essential funds needed for recertification. He stated that City Council will discuss the request at the January 28th Meeting where he will advocate for the library, and he invited the board members to join and advocate on behalf of the library. He thanked Director Merlin and the Trustees for their support and patience.

**Mayor Bettencourt left the meeting, and the board proceeded with the election of officers for 2021.**

A **MOTION** to suspend the rules of the Board to elect the Officers of the PIL Board of Trustees for the term of January 2021 – December 2021 was made by Thomas Pappas. The motion was seconded by Stephanie Najjar.

A vote was taken.

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

President Najjar stated that while under the suspension of rules, the Board would proceed with the election of officers for 2021. President Najjar stated that Recording Secretary Catherine McGrath would run the elections.

Recording Secretary Catherine McGrath called for nominations of the President of the Board of Trustees. A **MOTION** to nominate Stephanie Najjar as President of the Board was made by Thomas Pappas. The motion was seconded by Don McAllister.

A vote was taken.

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

Trustee Najjar declined the nomination and recommended an additional nomination.

A **MOTION** to nominate Thomas Pappas as President of the Board was made by Stephanie Najjar. The motion was seconded by Fran Gallugi.

A vote was taken.

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

As there were no additional nominations, a **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to close the nominations for the President of the Board of Trustees. The motion was seconded by Fran Gallugi.

A vote was taken.

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

Recording Secretary McGrath called for a vote of the nomination. The nomination of Thomas Pappas as President of the Peabody Institute Library Board of Trustees for the January 2021 - December 2021 term was unanimously approved by the Trustees in attendance by a voice vote.

Recording Secretary Catherine McGrath called for nominations of the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees. A **MOTION** to nominate Don McAllister as Treasurer of the Board was made by Fran Gallugi. The motion was seconded by Stephanie Najjar.

A vote was taken.

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

As there were no additional nominations, a **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to close the nominations for the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees. The motion was seconded by Fran Gallugi.

A vote was taken.

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

Recording Secretary McGrath called for a vote of the nomination. The nomination of Don McAllister as Treasurer of the Peabody Institute Library Board of Trustees for the January 2021 - December 2021 term was unanimously approved by the Trustees in attendance by a voice vote.

Recording Secretary Catherine McGrath called for nominations of the Secretary of the Board of Trustees. A **MOTION** to nominate Fran Gallugi as Secretary of the Board was made by Stephanie Najjar. The motion was seconded by Richard Shruhan.

A vote was taken.

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

As there were no additional nominations, a **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to close the nominations for the Secretary of the Board of Trustees. The motion was seconded by Fran Gallugi.

A vote was taken.

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

Recording Secretary McGrath called for a vote of the nomination. The nomination of Fran Gallugi as Secretary of the Peabody Institute Library Board of Trustees for the January 2021 - December 2021 term was unanimously approved by the Trustees in attendance by a voice vote.

A **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to resume the normal rules of the Board. The motion was seconded Stephanie Dallaire.

A vote was taken.

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

Following the election of the new Officers for the Board, newly elected President Thomas Pappas assumed the Chair.

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

Trustee Quinn led a discussion regarding the previous meeting's minutes. She inquired about sending a card on behalf of Gail Desmond's retirement. She also inquired about the Chickering piano project left unfinished by the former archivist Erik Bauer. Director Merlin responded that the project will most likely pick back up once an archivist is on staff and more quickly once the library is open and appraisers can enter the library in-person as opposed to meeting virtually.

A **MOTION** was made by Anne Quinn to approve the minutes of the meetings held on December 7, 2020. The motion was seconded by Kate O'Brien.

A vote was taken.

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

### **Receipt of Communications**

Trustee Najjar reported there were no communications received, besides the resignation letter from Wesley Merrill.

---

## **Director's Report to the Board of Library Trustees**

## January 2021

### **Budget & Certification**

To add some good news to 2021, the Mayor has included in the agenda for this coming Thursday 1/14 City Council meeting, a request for an additional \$139,000 to be added to the FY21 budget. This has been divided into \$74,000 for staffing and \$65,000 for books and materials. Director Merlin reported that this is obviously very good news, and that she is so thankful to the Mayor for making this request. If this request is approved by the City Council, the total budget reduction for FY21 will now be under the overall 10% MBLC cutoff for a disproportionate cut, and we will be presented to the MBLC for the approval of a waiver with the other libraries who have not been disproportionately cut. The MBLC will vote on granting these waivers as one group at either the February or March MBLC meeting without a hearing or presentation necessary.

Director Merlin reported she is so thankful and relieved that the library can continue to be certified even during what we all know has been such a financially difficult time for our city. She will provide more updates as necessary, but for now, we may all breathe easy and look toward a future of what is projected to be nearly \$80,000 in State Aid funding this year (the state line item for State Aid increased nearly 20% this year), access to state and federal funding, and -most importantly- the seamless continuation of borrowing and lending privileges with every NOBLE and Massachusetts library.

Thank you to the Mayor for his support and tireless efforts to secure this necessary funding, and his commitment to the future of the Peabody Institute Library through this pandemic and beyond. This support from the Mayor and City Council shows how much the City of Peabody values the Library and our place in the community, and we will now be able to continue the services, programs, and events that connect and enhance the lives of Peabody residents of all ages, backgrounds, languages, and interests.

In a late addition to this report, Director Merlin received word today that we have been granted an additional \$75,000 in Local Economic Development Projects Earmarks for FY21 from the State Budget. Mayor Bettencourt and Representative Tom Walsh have worked hard on requesting this funding from the state, and she thrilled that we will be able to implement robust programming and services this spring! Director Merlin just learned of these funds this afternoon, and will be learning more about the process, stipulations, etc, this week, but wanted to let the board know about this other good news that she is still processing!

### **Staffing**

Staff continue to work 85% in-building and 15% at home. The current levels of services are sustainable with the current levels of staffing, and morale is high, as they are grateful to still be doing what we love, even during a pandemic.

As of December 28th, Pam Shachook is the new Technical Services Librarian, filling the position long held by Gail Desmond who retired earlier that month. Pam has been the West Branch Assistant Librarian for seven years, and has been a Library employee for over 16 years. Her knowledge, kindness, attention to detail, enthusiasm for all things cataloging, and dedication to

the Library are a gift to us all, and Director Merlin invited the board to please join her in congratulating Pam on her new position.

Director Merlin posted the West Branch Assistant Librarian position earlier today, and hope to post the new Senior Local History & Public Services Librarian position later this month. Senior West Branch Librarian Kristi Bryant, Senior Teen Librarian Joanna Corea, and Public Services Librarian Sharon Janus all successfully completed their Fall classes, and Director Merlin requested earlier in the Fall the pre-approval of their contractual tuition reimbursement. Tonight, Director Merlin is requesting the pre-approval of their tuition reimbursement for their upcoming Spring Semesters, at \$500 per person per semester.

### **Reopening**

Assistant Director Hayden and Director Merlin have planned many different scenarios for re-opening later this spring, from what options were available with the current level of staffing, to options with more robust staffing levels. Director Merlin hopes to meet with the Mayor and the Trustees President soon to determine how this funding will be allocated, and will create a more detailed plan based on how many staff we expect to have later this spring. Assistant Director Hayden and I will finalize our reopening plan as soon as we finalize our staffing levels, and bring it to the President and Board for feedback, discussion, and approval.

Director Merlin reported this admittedly puts any reopening plan in limbo until we have a full idea of the Spring staffing, but it is best to plan for the reopening of each location based on the actual available staff, rather than determining how to reopen each location without ensuring that we will have enough staff in place. Director Merlin stated with this supplemental staffing budget, we can move forward with determining how we are able to reopen to the public, and I know that all staff is looking forward to interacting with and helping patrons in person as soon as is safe.

### **Services**

Self-serve pickup in the Children's Room entryway has proven to be very popular with patrons, and has made their pickups easier and faster. Director Merlin reported they have received nothing but positive feedback, and are happy that we made the switch. The library continues to offer the following services:

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

### **Programming**

This evening, Senior Adult Services and Public Programming Librarian Gabriela Toth is hosting an

online concert with Aine Minogue via Zoom, sponsored by the Library Foundation. Director Merlin reported 100 patrons have signed up- the limit for a Zoom event- and we assume that the actual viewership will be much greater, based on household viewings. Director Merlin stated that they excited that so many patrons- more than usually attend these programs in person- have embraced online programs, and hope to expand programming and events like these as our staffing situation improves.

Senior West Branch Librarian Kristi Bryant and Senior Adult Services and Public Programming Librarian Gabriela Toth have launched their “New Year: New Business” series of online programs that feature local business people, and will teach patrons how to start their own businesses based on their skills and interests. These programs are funded by a grant from the MBLC and federal IMLS, for online programming during the pandemic.

### **George Peabody’s Birthday**

Director Merlin reported that as a way of adapting to our changing world, Assistant Director Hayden would like the Trustees to honor George Peabody in a different way this year- instead of the traditional birthday party and birthday cake that are not an ideal event to hold this year, we would like to invite the Trustees to participate in and help promote a new campaign inviting all community citizens to sign George Peabody’s birthday card. This will be a wide-ranging campaign, spearheaded by Assistant Director Hayden, on social media outlets, website and through printed flyers, with an easily accessible website form and for those without internet access, a card that can be mailed or returned in any of our book drops. This will be the start of a year-long campaign that the library will be launching to educate the community about its value to the community, and what better way to start than by honoring the legacy of George Peabody.

### **Collection**

Director Merlin reported they are in the beginning stages of reorganizing the Main Library adult nonfiction section to make it more accessible and easier for our patrons to find books. They will begin with our Biographies/Memoirs, organizing them alphabetically by subject. This process (changing from Library of Congress to BISAC classification) has already been done with much success and positive patron feedback at the South and West Branches, as well as the Children’s and Teen nonfiction collections at the Main Library. Because the library is not open to the public, this is the ideal time to begin this project, as the necessary moving and re-cataloging and labeling of books will cause minimal disruption to patron services. Once the Biographies/Memoirs are finished, they will evaluate whether it will be beneficial to reorganize our nonfiction further.

### **Grants**

Assistant Director Hayden, Senior Teen Librarian Joanna Corea, and Director Merlin continue work on the application for the LSTA grant that would fund gardening and outdoor learning programs in the Main Library courtyard. The final application is due in April, and we will begin reaching out to local groups and organizations to invite them to participate in this venture this month.

### **Building & Grounds**

Director Merlin reported she has no updates or concerns at the moment.

## **Budget**

The budget is attached for your review. As Director Merlin mentioned before, the IT/Tech Services budget is all front-loaded and largely spent at the beginning of the FY. The Outside Services budget is also at 82% due to all of the HVAC and Elevator issues, but there are library capital accounts that are available if needed for certain issues, and funds can be moved around between line items if necessary. Director Merlin stated her hope is that no new problems will arise, but if they do, we will be able to supplement this budget line from other under-spent areas (Supplies, etc). Please note that if the supplemental funding for FY21 is approved, \$65,000 will be added to the Books & Materials budget, so we are all looking forward to adding more materials and items to our collection, especially ebooks and online databases, this Spring. Director Merlin is thankful to the Mayor for understanding the need for not just staffing, but also for the books and materials that our patrons are still reserving and using at high levels during these difficult times.

## **Policy**

In the Fall, the Trustees approved a suspension of overdue fines through 12/31/20. Tonight, Director Merlin is requesting that that suspension be extended through the end of this fiscal year (6/30/21), to encourage patrons to return items without penalty during these difficult financial times, and to make transactions and borrowing easier on both staff and patrons, since fines paid online incur a fee and require a valid credit card. Overdue fines create a barrier to access, which is the absolute last thing a public library should stand for, especially during a worldwide crisis.

In a normal year, the money that is collected through overdue fines is deposited back into the Books & Materials budget, so these fines allow us to purchase a small amount of additional materials. The Books & Materials spending in FY20 was around \$200,000 (from our City budget line, Friends, Foundation, and Grant funding sources), even with being closed for 3 months, and our overdue fines collected in FY20 totaled around \$4,000, so overdue fines are around 2% of the total Books & Material spending. Patrons may pay fines from other libraries when visiting the PIL, and since Danvers and Beverly have recently gone fine-free, Director Merlin expects that the fines that are regularly collected will decrease based on this as well.

This year, of all years, Director Merlin feels that encouraging access to patrons is of the utmost importance, and that it is in our best interest to not penalize patrons during this time, and to welcome them to use our materials as much as they are able. Fines for damaged or lost items are still being incurred, and will not be suspended. Based on the budget for FY22, Director Merlin plans on approaching the Board later in the Spring to begin discussion of officially becoming an overdue-fine-free library beginning in FY22, once this crisis passes and life returns to (somewhat) normal. For now, Director Merlin is requesting that the Trustees vote to approve a suspension of overdue fines being charged on Peabody-owned items through the end of this FY (6/30/21).

## **-end of report-**

Trustee Quinn inquired about the \$75,000 grant from the state, asking Director Merlin if it was a surprise. Director Merlin replied that it was a surprise, and the next step is to come up with a project for these funds.

Trustee Najjar inquired about George Peabody's birthday, and the board decided to discuss the topic later under the "new business" portion of the meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to accept the Director's Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Morgan Yeo.

A vote was taken.

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

---

### **Reports of the Committees**

President Pappas stated that he wanted to review the Committees as they were currently constituted and make changes and adjustments as necessary.

**Buildings & Grounds:** Trustee Richard Shruhan would become the new Committee Chair.

**Audubon Prints:** Trustee Anne Quinn would become the new Committee Chair.

**Personnel:** Trustee Don McAllister would remain the Committee Chair.

**Policies & Procedures:** Trustee Kate O'Brien would remain the Committee Chair.

**Liaison to the Friends of the Peabody Institute Library:** Trustee Morgan Yeo would remain the Liaison to the Friends.

**Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society:** Trustee Stephanie Dallaire would become the new Liaison to the Historical Society.

**Liaison to The Peabody Institute Library Foundation:** Trustee Stephanie Najjar would become the new Liaison to the Friends.

A **MOTION** was made by Fran Gallugi to accept the new Committee assignments. The motion was seconded by Morgan Yeo.

A vote was taken.

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

The board unanimously agreed there was nothing to report within the Committee reports.

A **MOTION** was made by Thomas Pappas to accept the Committee reports as presented. The motion was seconded by Morgan Yeo.

A vote was taken.

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

### **Unfinished Business**

None

## **New Business**

### **George Peabody Birthday**

Trustee Najjar inquired about George Peabody's birthday. Assistant Director Al Hayden joined the call to explain further and answer any questions about the virtual birthday card. Assistant Director Hayden explained virtually signing a card would be a way to spread the word of all the amazing work done by George Peabody, and that the trustees could help by sharing and promoting it by word of mouth, email, and/or social media. She also explained she is working on the design and the trustees will vote to approve it. Discussion ensued. The board of trustees extended their excitement and brainstormed potential additional ways to get the community involved.

A **MOTION** was made by Richard Shruhan to approve of the suspension of overdue fines on Peabody owned items throughout the end of the fiscal year, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The motion was seconded by Fran Galuggi.

A vote was taken.

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

A **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to pre-approve the tuition reimbursement for Senior West Branch Librarian Kristi Bryant, Senior Teen Librarian Joanna Corea, and Public Services Librarian Sharon Janus for their upcoming Spring Semesters. The motion was seconded by Richard Shruhan.

A vote was taken.

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

Trustee Najjar thanked everyone for their support, and reported that going forward it will still be a rocky year budget-wise. She noted that everyone needs to be more involved and reach out to President Pappas and Director Merlin, as well as the community for any additional support. Additionally, Trustee Najjar noted there are now two open positions on the board, so this Summer/Spring people can pull papers to run, so the Trustees should encourage people in the community to fill the open spots.

Trustee Shruhan stated that normally in January the board would pick seats, but due to the virtual nature of meetings things may be different. Discussion about how to move forward ensued. Trustee Najjar stated she would look into what the numbers were from last year, and they would rearrange or switch where needed.

President Tom Pappas reminded the Board that the next Trustees meeting would be held on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 at 7pm.

Trustee McAllister wanted to take opportunity to thank Director Merlin during these difficult times, as well as extend his gratitude to Trustee Najjar for her service as President during the past year.

As there was no additional business to come before the Board, a **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Thomas Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustee Gallugi.

A vote was taken.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 pm.

Submitted by,

Catherine McGrath

Secretary