

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting
February 1, 2021**

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

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

Present

Rick Shruhan
Peter Bakula
Anne Quinn
Don McAllister
Morgan Yeo
Fran Gallugi
Stephanie Najjar
Tom Pappas

Absent

Stephanie Dallaire
Kate O'Brien

Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting

Trustee Quinn noted an error in the previous month's meetings minutes. There is a typo on page 3, a correction will be made stating Trustee Fran Gallugi was nominated as the Secretary of the Board of Trustees, not the Treasurer.

A **MOTION** was made by Fran Gallugi to approve the minutes of the meeting held on January 11, 2021 with the appropriate corrections. The motion was seconded by Stephanie Najjar.

A vote was taken.

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

Receipt of Communications

President Pappas reported there were no communications received,

**Director's Report to the Board of Library Trustees
February 2021**

Staffing

Director Merlin reported that staff remain 85% in the buildings, and 15% working from home. The new Senior Local History & Public Services Librarian was posted this past Friday, and will

remain open until filled. Two of the three custodians are out on leave for the time being, so please keep the remaining custodian in your thoughts during this snowy season.

Budget

The current budget is included for your review.

MBLC Certification

Director Merlin thanked the Mayor and City Council for their support for the library, their belief in the importance of what we do for the Peabody community, and their understanding of the importance of consistent state certification. At this past Thursday's City Council Meeting, the Finance Committee and entire Council both voted unanimously to add \$139,000 to our FY21 budget, which adjusts our overall budget decrease to -9.43%, moving us into the category of municipalities and libraries that do not have to attend the MBLC Certification Hearing.

Director Merlin reported they are now in a pool of 9 other libraries with cuts between 5% and 10% that will be presented to the MBLC at this Thursday's meeting, and whose waivers will be voted on as a group. Being moved into this group gives us a much better chance of receiving a waiver for FY21, and I believe waivers for these libraries will be voted on at the March MBLC meeting. Director Merlin will request Trustees approval of State Aid funds allocations once they are guaranteed to receive these funds, including a proposal to re-start the Audubon preservation project.

Director Merlin reports she has received the transfer of funds documents from the City Finance Department, and forwarded them to the MBLC as proof of our funding increase. These funds from the City have been divided between \$74,000 for staffing and \$65,000 for books & materials. The staffing funds will hopefully be spent to fill the currently vacant Senior Children's Librarian position, and to hire part-time aides once reopening is imminent. The books & materials funds will be spent on Chromebooks for patrons to check out for school, job search, and other at-home needs, ebooks, Children's materials, and beginning to add new titles to the Branches (which have not been purchased for since they closed).

The FY22 budget process begins soon, for the fiscal year beginning July 1. Director Merlin's assumption (admittedly very optimistic!) is that they'll be able to return to (mostly) normal operations by then, which will obviously require more part-time staff. The normal MBLC certification requirements are also in effect, requiring the annual 2.5% budget increase and the required number of open hours at the Main Library, which we are not able to offer with the current staffing levels, so hopefully we will be able to come to agreement with the City that brings us back to our normal funding levels and operations.

State Stimulus Funds

Director Merlin reports that in addition to these funds from the City, we also received \$75,000 in state stimulus funds to be used for "operating expenses". This phrase is indeed as vague and therefore freeing as it sounds! We plan on splitting the funds between true operating expenses (i.e. supplements for the budget line items that are getting close to being spent, like Outside Services and Technical Services, since they received cuts this year), outside online

programming, and adding services and technology that are both useful and important during the pandemic and will prove useful and important once things go back to “normal”.

Director Merlin states that she plans to spend part of these state funds for the initial setup and first year’s license of the MeeScan Self-checkout service, which works with Evergreen to allow patrons to check out materials at their own convenience. With the help of Senior Technology Librarian Yunan Guo, we hope to add this service that allows patrons to check out their materials at a free-standing kiosk, in total privacy and safety. The service also allows patrons to download the MeeScan app onto their mobile devices, and to check out items while in each location using their own phone. We believe that this is an incredibly valuable service to add right now, given that many patrons may not feel comfortable coming into contact with others when we do re-open, and it also allows the enhanced privacy that many patrons already request frequently.

Director Merlin explained that this will also give library staff, once outreach is possible, the ability to take our collections into the community and bring checkout abilities to markets, schools, parks, and other non-library settings. Additionally, MeeScan will also allow our staff to spend more time with patrons who need help with computers, research, reading recommendations, and more, without feeling the need to limit their interactions with patrons based on wait times. The setup fees, including purchasing kiosks, iPads, receipt printers, and specialty furniture, as well as the first year’s license fee, will be paid with these State funds, and I believe the yearly license will easily be afforded in future budgets.

Director Merlin requests that the Trustees tonight approve the adoption of the MeeScan self-checkout system. This system is widely used in the OCLN library network, and NOBLE has added it as one of its vendors, giving us an additional 10% discount. Director Merlin truly believes that adding this system will allow us to best serve our patrons in a safe and private manner, both within our walls and out in the community, and will allow our staff to focus on helping patrons in the most focused and detailed manner possible.

Reopening

Director Merlin reports that they remain in a holding pattern for now, based on our staffing levels and current COVID case rates in the area. She is working with the Facilities department to order plexiglass barriers for use around the Public Services desks for when we do reopen (there is a lag in ordering times). Reopening plans at the Main Library include moving contactless pickup from the Children's Room entry to the Courtyard Lobby, limiting the number of computers that are in use at any one time, and allowing browsing in limited areas. Reopening the Branches will also involve plexiglass, but will also be easier due to smaller and wide-open spaces that are more easily monitored. MeeScan self-checkout will be available at all three locations.

Director Merlin reports they are basing a reopening plan on our current level of staffing, and the hopeful hiring of two part-time aides later this Spring (based on the additional funds that were added to our FY21 budget last week). Even with two aides, and with this still-diminished level of staffing, our reopening schedules and hours at all three locations will be very limited. Once Assistant Director Hayden and Director Merlin are able to come up with a timeline for

hiring PT aides in order to reopen, they will then be able to finalize a reopening plan based on staffing availability.

Services

We continue 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

Director Merlin reported that at the January Library Foundation Meeting, they discussed adding a Mail-a-Book and Book Delivery services for elderly and homebound patrons. Before she left, previous librarian Kelley Unger developed this program, but it never got off the ground- we hope to introduce this program in the next few months, as many people are not able to take advantage of curbside pickup, and others are not aware of the program or need help choosing titles. Director Merlin stated they will begin by partnering with the Peabody Housing Authority, and she will reach out to Citizens Inn to work with the residents of their transition housing. They hope to also add in Brooksby Village and other Senior residencies. The policies for this program were voted on in 2019, but will need to be updated for this new program, so expect more information on this soon.

Programs

Director Merlin reported that in a partnership with the Peabody Health Department and PATV, we will be hosting an online event entitled “Learn About the COVID 19 Vaccine and How to Get Vaccinated” on Wednesday, February 24th, at 5:30pm via Zoom. This program will provide residents with reliable information about the vaccines, distribution plan, and to answer questions. Panelists will include Mayor Bettencourt, Sharon Cameron and Chassea Robinson, R.N, from the Peabody Health Department, Dr. Alain Chaoui, M.D, City Physician for the City of Peabody, President of Family Medicine North and Past President of Massachusetts Medical Society, and Dr. Laura Holland, M.D., Co-CMO and Medical Director for North Shore Community Health. This program was coordinated by Senior West Branch Librarian Kristi Bryant, and it will be recorded and broadcast at a later time by PATV. We encourage everyone- no matter their age or location- to attend this event to learn about the vaccination process.

Assistant Director Hayden will launch the “Sign George Peabody’s Birthday Card” initiative on Thursday, inviting patrons to learn about George Peabody, his role in the City and Library, and to leave their name as a Happy Birthday message. Patrons will also have the opportunity to sign up for our e-newsletter. We will post his “card” with first names on our website on his big day. More information can be found (on Thursday) at www.peabodylibrary.org/george

Building & Grounds

Director Merlin reports that Peabody Main Streets approached me with an idea and request for Valentine's Day. They would like to "hang wooden hearts on the front gates of the library - the idea of it is complicated to explain but in a nutshell, customers would go over to Create and Escape, purchase a wooden heart and write or paint something uplifting on it and then hang it on Library gates with a tie wrap. The concept supports some kindness, support for downtown, support for our community and something positive." Director Merlin thinks that this is a lovely way to spread some joy this season, and suggest that the Trustees approve this request.

And finally, because it's not a true Director's Report without mentioning the elevator, it became stuck in mid-January due to a blocked valve, which was quickly and easily fixed.

-end of report-

Trustee Najjar inquired about the cost of the MeeScan self-checkout system. Director Merlin responded that she is in the process of getting a quote. She estimated a one-time fee of \$11,000 for the physical equipment including the 5 total kiosks (3 for the main library and 1 at each branch location), 5 iPads, specialty furniture/tables, and specialty receipt printers. There is also an \$4,000 annual fee, which includes a 10% discount. Director Merlin reported the total cost will be around \$15,000, that she will report exact numbers soon, and that the funds needed are available.

Trustee Quinn inquired about the necessity of MeeScan self-checkout system. She asked if it is a nice thing to have but not a necessity, and if it will cause a distance or technological break between patrons and the staff. Director Merlin responded that they have the necessary funds required and those funds need to be used by end of the fiscal year. She explained that it is more than nice thing to have, it is something that other libraries already have, and something patrons have requested for their and safety and comfortability. It will allow the library to meet patrons where there are and give people the option to either use the self-checkout system or to interact with the staff.

Trustee Bakula inquired about the MeeScan licensing fee. Director Merlin explained that fee is the cost of the programming technology and includes troubleshooting, and all the necessary updating or upgrading.

Trustee Najjar inquired about the hiring of aides, and asked Director Merlin if she was reaching out to the aides who were previously laid-off. Director Merlin stated that as she understands the aide position do not have to hire back in terms of seniority according to the union attorney. Director Merlin stated that the positions will be different and require more expertise in using technology and that the aides will be bouncing between branch locations.

Trustee Najjar also inquired about the virtual birthday card for George Peabody, and if Assistant Director Hayden would be sharing the materials with the Trustees. Director Merlin reported that she will be sharing the materials soon.

President Pappas asked if there is any way they could market MeeScan technology, specifically if there is a way to advertise it in the mail. He reported that the library has had cutting edge technology with creativity lab and wants to do a better job marketing the technology services as not only beneficial during the pandemic but also in general.

Trustee Najjar reported that there should be a plan in place for future budget communication with City Council to ensure an efficient and smooth process requesting the necessary funding.

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

A vote was taken.

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

Reports of the Committees

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

AUDUBON PRINTS: Committee Chair Anne Quinn 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 not present.

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 Stephanie Dallaire was not present.

LIAISON TO THE PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY FOUNDATION: Liaison Stephanie Najjar provided the board with an update that she had met with the foundation on January 13th. She reported there is nothing to report as fundraising goes, and they will be having an events meeting on April 7th, and a second normal meeting on April 14th. Trustee Najjar stated at the January 13th meeting they discussed the ability to have an event next October, a mail-a-book program, and a new series of programs highlighting local artists and performers for online events.

A **MOTION** was made by Anne Quinn to accept the Committee reports as presented. The motion was seconded Stephanie Najjar.

A vote was taken.

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

Unfinished Business

Nothing to report.

New Business

A **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to approve of the adoption of the MeeScan self-checkout system. The motion was seconded by Morgan Yeo.

A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Rick Shruhan, Peter Bakula,
Don McAllister, Morgan Yeo, Fran Gallugi,
Stephanie Najjar, and Tom Pappas.

Any Opposed: No.
Any Abstaining: Anne Quinn.

The motion was approved with a majority in favor.

A **MOTION** was made by Stephanie Najjar to approve of the Valentine's Day hanging hearts program. The motion was seconded by Anne Quinn.

A vote was taken.

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

Trustee Quinn began a conversation about the efficiency of reading the Director's Report prior to the meeting as well as listening to Director Merlin read the report during the meeting. Director Merlin and the Trustees discussed that sending the Director's Report is a byproduct of facilitating virtual meetings due to the pandemic as well as a courtesy that has been requested in the past. Director Merlin reading the report is also legal necessity per the Open Meeting Law.

President Pappas reported that he spoke with the City Clerk who asked the Trustees to fill out and register their CPF-M 102 forms if they have not already.

President Pappas reminded the Board that the next Trustees meeting would be held on March 1st, 2021 at 7pm.

Director Merlin reported that she is unable to make the March meeting, therefore Assistant Director Hayden will be attending and presenting the Director's report.

Trustee Bakula asked if there are any plans for tax forms to be made available for patrons. Director Merlin reported that they just received the federal 1040 booklets and state forms which will be available through curbside pickup during operating hours at the Main library.

As there was no additional business to come before the Board, a **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Stephanie Najjar. 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 7:58 pm.

Submitted by,

Catherine McGrath
Secretary