

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting
March 1st , 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

Absent

Rick Shruhan

Stephanie Dallaire

Peter Bakula
Kate O'Brien
Anne Quinn
Don McAllister
Morgan Yeo
Fran Gallugi
Tom Pappas

Stephanie Najjar

Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting

A **MOTION** was made by Fran Gallugi to approve the minutes of the meeting held on February 1st, 2021. The motion was seconded by Anne Quinn.

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
March 2021**

Staffing

Staff remain 85% in the buildings, and 15% working from home. Director Merlin stated they are beginning Zoom interviews for the new Senior Local History & Public Services Librarian this week.

As Director Merlin notified the Trustees last month, a staff member tested positive for COVID-19 after experiencing symptoms. The Peabody Health Department identified three other Library staff as possible close contacts, and all three of them began standard City isolation protocols. None of these three staff members experienced any symptoms, all tested negative, and have returned to work. The ill staff member has also returned to work after observing the City's quarantine protocols. The Library closed for one day, and all three locations were deep cleaned by our custodial staff. Patrons were notified of the suspension of services for one day and the precautions that were taken because of exposure, and were all very understanding.

It was a scary few days for everyone as our staff have been fortunate enough to avoid any illness

for 11 months, but Director Merlin is incredibly proud and thankful to state that our safety policies, masking and distancing protocols, and staff diligence did their jobs to stop any spread of the disease. Director Merlin extended her thanks to the Peabody Health Department & Human Resources Department for their guidance and help, the ill staff member for their immediate reporting of symptoms, the potentially exposed staff for their understanding and calm, and the library staff as a whole for their trust in the protocols that keep all of us safe.

Budget

The current budget is included for your review, including the adjustments made at the February City Council meeting. Assistant Director Hayden and Director Merlin are allocating the additional materials funds to library collections that were underfunded this year, as well as adding additional funds to our e-book collection.

Budget proposals are due to the Finance Department on March 19th. The Mayor has requested

that departments ask for level funding for FY22, which would optimistically mean no budget or staffing reductions for the library, but would also mean that we would need to apply for another MBLC Certification Waiver for FY22. Our current and still-diminished staffing levels will not allow

us to return to our normal hours of operation at any of our 3 locations, so Director Merlin hopes to bring this up with President Pappas and the Mayor soon.

MBLC Certification

The MBLC will vote on the approval of our FY21 waiver this Thursday, and Director Merlin stated she has no reason to believe our waiver won't be granted. As soon as she is notified of our State Aid award, Director Merlin will ask the Trustees for the approval of funds allocations.

Director Merlin stated that because we will (likely) receive State Aid funds, she will also suggest at our next meeting that we re-start Audubon Print preservation, and will discuss this with the Foundation at their April meeting as well, as they fund a portion of this project each year.

State Stimulus Funds

Director Merlin submitted the proposal for the usage of our State Stimulus funds, and the proposal was approved by the State. These funds will be spent on technology and equipment

to allow us to open safely and decrease physical touchpoints, as well as some operational expenses:

- MeeScan self-checkout equipment, license, furniture
- Chromebooks & GoogleOS licenses for patron use
- New Jamex self-serve payment system for the Main Library copier and printer that accepts cash, credit card, and mobile pay options (the old one has been out of commission for 2 years now, and necessitated cash payments being made directly to staff before we closed)
- March-June NOBLE network technology & access fees
- Collections for the South Branch Library and West Branch Library (materials funds were focused on Main Library and online collections when the budget was cut and the Branches did not reopen for curbside services)

As a reminder, these funds do not factor into our City budget, and therefore do not factor into the MBLC Certification requirements.

Reopening

Director Merlin stated that tonight, she is presenting the Library Reopening Plan, which was developed by Assistant Director Hayden and herself, with input from Trustee Policy Liaison Kate O'Brien. She is also proposing an official Face Covering Policy. She has emailed the Trustees both drafts, and would like to go through them both now. Director Merlin is requesting tonight the discussion and approval of both of these policies so that planning and preparation may continue. President Pappas and Director Merlin will be meeting with the Mayor this coming Thursday afternoon, and deciding upon a tentative timeline. None of our staff have been vaccinated yet.

Director Merlin stated that with the current staffing levels (and assuming that the one day/week working-from-home ends), given the staff that will now be necessary to staff two public service desks at the Main Library, the new Welcome Desk, increased cleaning, and the existing services,

we would be able to re-open the Main Library at our current hours (Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, 10am-4pm). In order to open the South and West Branches for limited days/hours, and to expand Main Library hours to include Mondays and/or evenings, part-time aides will need to be hired using the additional staffing funds that were transferred into the budget, and President Pappas and Director Merlin will be discussing this with the Mayor on Thursday, as well.

Senior Technology Library Yunan Guo has been working on readying the MeeScan self-checkout

system and other technology changes necessary to open safely. Director Merlin has begun to order plexiglass, hand sanitizer dispensers, and other equipment necessary to open safely.

Services

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

Programs

Last week, Senior West Branch Librarian Kristi Bryant hosted an online Vaccine Information program with the Peabody Health Department, Mayor, and various local health officials. The program was very well attended (over 100 people attended via Zoom or watched on Facebook via PATV), and much important information about the safety of vaccines was shared with the public. Director Merlin stated that she will be adding the slides from Sharon Cameron's presentation to our website this week.

Director Merlin shared that George Peabody's Birthday Card celebration was viewed online via our website or social media over 1,800 times, with over 200 people engaging online and over 50 people signing the card itself. These numbers are far higher than our usual online engagement and reach, and show that sharing our history and legacy with the community is successful in catching people's attention. Director Merlin extended her thanks to Assistant Director Hayden for spearheading, designing, and publicizing this initiative, and we hope that 2022's Birthday Celebration will be a combination of online and in-person festivities.

The Library's annual PeaPod Seed Exchange will return in March, in a slightly different form. During pickup hours, patrons may come to a table outside the Children's Room entryway and take home the exact types and numbers of seeds that they would like for their garden. The PeaPod will return on March 23rd.

Director Merlin stated she will continue to work on expanding our book delivery service, and will have more information at our April meeting.

Building & Grounds

Two Main Library courtyard light globes were damaged due to falling ice, and we are working with the Facilities Department to locate replacements.

Director Merlin has been working with Head of City Facilities Jim Hafey to determine the best way to go about installing plexiglass to protect staff and patrons once we reopen, and how to best work with our layouts at all three buildings. Supplies necessary to reopen (plexiglass, hand sanitizer dispensers, social distancing stickers, etc) will be paid for using the City's CARES Act funds.

-end of report-

President Pappas inquired about the cost of the plexiglass. Director Merlin responded that the cost is reimbursable by the CARES act for all COVID-related expenses including the plexiglass, hand sanitizer dispensers, and sanitizing wipes. The 12 six by six-foot plexiglass needed is expensive, but is being ordered on a discount. Director Merlin expects approximately a \$4,000–\$5,000 total. She also explained that the City of Peabody has been replenishing the library’s supply of wipes and masks.

President Pappas inquired about the stimulus mentioned, asking if it is the same money as the grant previously talked. Director Merlin responded that is the same grant money Mayor Bettencourt announced at a past meeting, which is now more officially being referred to as the State Stimulus Funds.

Trustee Quinn inquired about the budget for next year, and if the work done to avoid a hearing this year would be sufficient going forward. Director Merlin explained that they are required to average the budget of the last 3 years plus 2.5%. Every year many libraries need to apply for waiver and because of cuts it is a cycle and many libraries do need to reapply each year. Trustee Quinn asked if they are going to face the same kind of angst. Director Merlin responded that it will be easier, but they will unfortunately be stuck in the cycle.

Trustee McAllister inquired about the COVID-related expenses being reimbursed by state, and if Director Merlin anticipates and delays in reimbursement. Director Merlin Responded that the expenses are charged to a City of Peabody account which is funded.

Trustee Quinn inquired about the new welcome desk. Director Merlin responded that because that is part of the reopening plan, they will discuss it later in the meeting.

President Pappas inquired about the budget, asking how soon is the beginning or the time to begin making people informed. Director Merlin responded she got a letter from the city, a spreadsheet for the budget, that is mission specific. It needs to be sent to City Hall by the 19th, and that she is meeting with Mayor Bettencourt soon about staffing. She stated that she would be more informed after she knows the how to address the limited staffing concern. She also stated that the budget process starts today.

A **MOTION** was made by Don McAllister to accept the Director’s Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Anne Quinn.

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 stated that Director Merlin would share more under the new business portion of the meeting.

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 was not present.

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

A vote was taken.

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

Unfinished Business

Nothing to report.

New Business

Director Merlin presented the Reopening Plan:

Trustee Quinn inquired about the cleaning protocols, specifically about who is going to clean. Director Merlin responded that the staff would clean the computers after patron use, and that supplies will be available for patrons to use if they would like to give the space an extra wipe down before they use it.

Trustee Bakula inquired about how many self-checkout stations there will be. Director Merlin responded that there will be 1 at the South Branch, 1 at the West Branch, 1 in the Children's room at the Main Branch, 1 in the main area at the Min Branch, and 1 in the courtyard lobby at the Main Branch. In total there will be 3 at the Main and 1 at each branch location. The courtyard lobby self-checkout system, in the future, can be portable and able to be taken out in the community and at schools for outreach.

Trustee McAllister inquired about the computer's hour limit, specifically how it will be monitored. Director Merlin stated that the staff will have to have situational awareness, and be more keenly aware of who is everywhere at all times.

Trustee Quinn inquired if all the cleaning would be dangerous to the electronics. Director Merlin responded that spraying and wipes has been used and there no adverse effects, and that she does not anticipate any problems.

Trustee Quinn asked for clarification about the quarantine protocol. Director Merlin explained that quarantine was for materials.

Trustee Quinn inquired about browsing, asking if for example materials a patron was browsing through 2nd floor are subject to quarantine protocols. Director Merlin explain that they can only ask people to follow the rules signs and place their items in the bins everywhere. The books in the bins will go on cart and quarantine for a week. Director Merlin stated the quarantine of materials will be irritating, but it is standard and necessary.

President Pappas asked about cleaning of door handles, doorknobs, and locations of hand sanitizer stations. Director Merlin responded that there will hand sanitizer at each station and stations will be dispersed everywhere, high touch services are cleaned frequently by the custodians currently, they will prop doors open as much as they can, and only 1 party will be allowed in the elevator at a time and they will be encourage to use hand sanitizer before pressing the buttons.

Trustee McAllister inquired about staffing in the Children's room. Director Merlin responded that there will be 2 staff members and hopes that everyone will follow the rules. She stated that kids are not best at putting books back on shelf, so she does not anticipate issues following rules of putting materials into bins after use instead of away on the shelf. Director Merlin stated that this far into the pandemic people are used to these kinds of rules. She also stated that staff is handling the books people as little as possible, but still are touching things.

President Pappas asked what two staff members means. Director Merlin stated that even before the pandemic, there were two staff members at each desk. That will continue, and there needs to be two people at the desk or one person at the desk and one wandering at all times. This does not apply to welcome desk at Main Branch.

President Pappas inquired if there are magnetic strips on the books. Director Merlin responded that some do.

Trustee Quinn inquired about what is meant by patron privacy, and if that refers to their private or personal information. Director Merlin clarified that this refers to the materials patrons check out. For example, if a child needs a book about their body, or a patron who wants a book about divorce. Director Merlin stated the library does not keeps track or comment on what people check out, and that information is kept as anonymous as possible.

The Trustees commended Director Merlin about the fantastic job she did creating this plan, provided their support and extended their gratitude. Director Merlin explained that this is best plan to ensure accessibility and no log jams.

Director Merlin stated the absolute earliest to open is mid-April, and that is still pushing it. Staff has not been vaccinated, although they cannot wait until everyone is she would like to wait until more are. Director Merlin stated that things subject to change with new variants and there will be a tentative opening date after her upcoming meeting with Mayor Bettencourt.

President Pappas inquired about how the staff is feeling about the upcoming opening. Director Merlin stated they have anxiety are a little apprehensive, but she made sure when creating the reopening plan to address their concerns and nerves. Trustee Pappas asked about how the Trustees could help with this. Director Merlin responded that she needs their support, and that they are taking this very seriously and have talked to staff about all aspects and will be having more conversations with them.

President Pappas asked if the Trustees will we need to vote to approve today. Director Merlin responded that she needs to make some updates, and then will look for approval going forward. She stated that she would like it to get approved before April meeting, and requested an email vote. President Pappas commended Director Merlin for her fantastic work.

Director Merlin presented the Face Covering Policy:

President Pappas asked if there were any corrections and if the Trustees and Director Merlin wanted to approve both of these things with pending amendments.

Trustee Quinn expressed concerns about those who cannot wear a face mask over and if mandated masks could be considered discriminating. Director Merlin stated that the policy is needed so they can cite and enforce it.

Trustee McAllister stated that all sorts of places have policies stating, “no shirts, no shoes, no service” and that masks could be considered an extension of that. There are also accommodations offered such as pickup.

President Pappas and the Trustees decided to vote to approve the Reopening Plan and Face Covering Policy by email.

President Pappas reminded the Board that the next Trustees meeting would be held on April 5th, 2021 at 7pm.

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 Anne Quinn.

A vote was taken.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 pm.

Submitted by,

Catherine McGrath
Secretary