

PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of Meeting
November 15th, 2021

The meeting was called to order by President Thomas Pappas at 7:02 pm, with quorum having been reached at 6:58 pm and extra time requested at 6:57 pm. The meeting was held simultaneously on Zoom and in-person and broadcasted live on PATV's television station. President Pappas cited open meeting laws. Viewers were allowed to pose questions or comments to the chair.

The roll call was taken:

Present

Rick Shruhan
Peter Bakula
Anne Quinn
Don McAllister
Stephanie Najjar
Thomas Pappas

Absent

Stephanie Dallaire
Fran Gallugi
Morgan Yeo
Kate O'Brien

Trustee Richard Shruhan shared that he had finished his Master's Degree in Management.

Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting

A **MOTION** was made by President Pappas to approve the minutes of the meeting held on October 4th, 2021. The motion was seconded by Trustees Najjar and Shruhan.

Discussion: Trustee Quinn noted mistakes in September minutes, including, but not limited to, the typo of "directory" instead of "director". Since the minutes are a record of the discussions at the meeting, it is crucial to be as accurate as possible so future readers can trust the data. Trustee Shruhan stated that, legally, if the typo does not affect the content or the intent, the minutes are legally sound. When President Pappas asked to move forward, Trustee Quinn expressed the need for those who make the Motions to be named in the minutes. Trustee Shruhan suggested that Trustee Quinn give Recording Secretary Sarah Boçi her notes ahead of time and make a motion to accept the minutes as amended with corrections. When President Pappas disagreed and said that mistakes should be corrected beforehand so the vote is clear, Trustee Quinn expressed concern for the mistakes that were

greater than typing errors. Trustee McAllister pointed out that the autocorrect feature in Microsoft sometimes replaces words even if they are correct. Director Merlin offered to work with Recording Secretary Boçi to improve the minutes. Trustee Najjar suggested that trustees read the minutes ahead of time and then email Director Merlin and Secretary Boçi to correct errors by the time the next meeting is held.

Discussion on October Minutes

Trustee Quinn stated that she did not understand some of the content in the October minutes. Director Merlin stated that Secretary Boçi is new to the position. It was decided that Trustee Quinn would work with Director Merlin and Director Merlin would then work with Secretary Boçi. President Pappas requested to delay approving the September and October minutes until next month.

Receipt of Communications

President Pappas reported there were no communications received.

Director's Report to the Board of Library Trustees

Staffing

Long time Aide Jeremy Mele accepted a full-time position at the Abbott Library in Marblehead, and resigned last month. His position was filled by Lauren Tryder. The Facilities Department and HR will hopefully move forward soon with interviews to fill the vacant Custodian position. The Library is thankful for the help from Facilities Department school custodians who have filled in extra shifts and clean the Branches on a regular schedule.

All 3 Library locations will close at 5pm on Wednesday 11/24, and remain closed on Thursday 11/25 and Friday 11/26. They will all reopen for normal hours on Saturday 11/27 at 9am.

Programs & Initiatives

New Start November, featuring the official announcement of the elimination of overdue fines and the one-time full amnesty of existing fees and fines, began on November 1st. The patron response has been remarkably positive, and the Mayor was also thrilled and shared the information via his Facebook and Twitter accounts. Director Merlin spoke with a reporter from the Salem News Peabody Magazine this afternoon, and he will be publishing a story about New Start November in the upcoming issue, and hopes that he can also publish a story in the daily paper soon as well.

In-person English Conversation Circles and Creativity Lab Open Labs have resumed. The Sutton Room is now available for appointment-based research, and open hours will begin in January. Children's programming has been moved inside to the 2nd Floor Tech Lab, where there is greater airflow and space for social distancing. Masks are still required for all patrons and staff at all times.

Senior Librarians Gabriela Toth and Catharine Badal will submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Cultural Council tomorrow to request funding that will, "be used for a Community Read project, in which patrons of all ages, ethnicities, and genders can come together to discuss and interact with books and media that illustrate themes of migration, community, home, and history." The year-long initiative will center around the memoir *We Share the Same Sky: A Memoir of Memory & Migration* by Rachael Cerrotti, which tells the story of, "the gripping and deeply moving debut account of her late Jewish grandmother's experience growing up in Nazi-occupied territory during WWII" (from the starred Publisher's Weekly review).

The South Branch Library is holding a coloring contest for children ages 12 and under from now until December 9th. An art exhibit by local artist Sheila Farren Billings will be displayed until December 27th.

Partnerships

Senior Teen Librarian Joanna Corea visited the Higgins Middle School last month, where she checked out 172 books to students, and created 93 new library cards.

The Library will participate in Peabody City Hall and Peabody Main Street's Holiday Stroll on Saturday, November 27th, featuring a blow-up snowman "selfie" station in the Courtyard, and storytimes with Mr. and Mrs. Claus in the Teen Room.

In January, the Library will host the Peabody Veterans Memorial High's Winter Art Show for all first semester art students. Works of art will be displayed in the Sutton Room, Tech Lab hallway, and Main Reading room for an "opening night" reception on Friday, January 14th, and will be catered by Peabody High's culinary arts department students. The art will remain on display in the Sutton Room and Tech Lab for one week, and will bring students and parents into the Main Library to view their work in this beautiful and historical setting. This will be a twice-yearly tradition going forward, with the Spring semester's reception taking place in early May.

Technology

NOBLE has received grant funds from the Essex County Community Foundation to upgrade the internet speeds of its libraries in Gateway cities (Peabody, Salem, Lynn) to 1GB, and this

upgrade will take place next week, with no charge to the Library. This only applies to the Main Library, due to downtown Peabody's demographics.

Envisionware Mobile Print Service was installed last Friday. Anyone with Internet access can send their documents and images to the library's printers from anywhere via an app or website, whether at home or in the library, from their computers or phones, then come to the library to release their print jobs. A print job stays in the queue for 24 hours, after which the system removes it. More information and instructions will be provided in the buildings and on the website soon.

20 Chromebooks purchased with this past spring's State earmark funds (10 for in-library use for 3 hours, 10 for outside circulation for 2 weeks) will begin circulating this week. As with all materials, no overdue fines will be charged, but Chromebooks will be marked as "lost" and fully billed after they are 2 weeks overdue.

Photo and document scanning is now available at the South Branch, and will be available at the West Branch beginning next week.

Budget

Director Merlin included the budget through the end of October. Nothing is of concern or of note. The Library's MBLC Certification will be voted on (as part of a large group) at the December 2nd meeting of the Board of Library Commissioners, and Director Merlin will update the Board as soon as the vote takes place.

Audubons

At the October meeting, Director Merlin mentioned that the City's insurance policy needed to be updated to cover the Audubon prints during conservation off Library property. The City ended up needing to purchase an entirely separate Fine Arts policy to cover the Audubons, as well as the large portrait of George Peabody in the Lobby, and the four Gruppe paintings in the Main Reading Room. Director Merlin has received the application from the insurance company and will submit the Library's application (information about our premises and security systems) and Studio TKM's application (same information) this week. The City will be paying for this policy, given that it always has in the past.

City Auditor Mary Martin and Director Merlin have worked together on this, and Director Merlin greatly appreciate Ms. Martin's expertise. They also discussed the need for a full appraisal of all of the Library's art, artifacts, and archival collections, and both agree that this is necessary, as former Director Martha Holden does not believe that this has occurred since at least the 1980s, and no documents seem to be remain other than the values on the

previous Fine Arts policy. Director Merlin will keep the Board updated as this, and the insurance policy, move forward.

Per the insurance agent who has access to the previous Fine Arts policy, the 432 Audubons are each currently valued at \$3,448 each, for a total insurable value of \$1,489,653. As of today, the Library, with the incredibly generous support of the Sawitsky Trust, Foundation, and State Aid funds, has conserved 311 of 432 prints (72%). With an approximate cost of \$1,000-\$1,500 per print (based on condition), at least \$300,000 has been put towards this project, with an estimated \$120,000 in costs remaining. The Audubons are conserved in the order of their plate numbers, not based on level of damage, so these costs are approximate and based on previous costs.

Building & Grounds

The elevator is operable! The valve and oil have been replaced, and staff and patrons alike are relieved and reassured.

During the last major storm, the flat roofs of both the Main Library and West Branch leaked due to wind pushing water up and under flashing and roof tiles. The Facilities Department sent roofers to examine both roofs, and flashing has been repaired. The West Branch roof unfortunately leaks frequently, so it will likely need to be fully replaced in the near future via a City capital request.

DeMatos Landscaping performed their fall cleanup of all 3 properties today.

Policy

Senior Local History Catherine Badal has revised the usage policy for Sutton Room research, and requests Trustee approval of these changes this evening.

Sutton Room

Senior Local History Library Catherine Badal has prepared a presentation for the Board, culminating in a request for the approval that funds from the Brattle Books Trust be spent toward the upkeep of the the Sutton Room, as well as new display and research furniture to enable the Library's Local History collections to be correctly preserved and shared with the community.

As a reminder, the Brattle Books Trust was created in 2018 with the proceeds from the sale of antique books from the Sutton Room collection. The initial balance of the Trust was \$125,000, and the current balance of the Trust (including interest) is \$135,158.02. Below is the original motion and information:

“February 5th, 2018

Motion was made by Richard Shruhan to accept the bid offered by Brattle Books and G.S. McManus in the amount of \$125,000 and place these funds in a restricted account to be used for acquisitions, preservation or restoration projects associated with the Sutton Room and Local History Department.

Motion was seconded by Don McAllister and put to a vote. In favor: 9. Opposed: 0.”

Senior Librarian Badal is excited to share her work and plans for the Sutton Room and the Local History collection with the Trustees this evening.

Discussion and Questions for Director

In further discussion of the Library’s fine free policy, Trustee Shruhan asked if the Trustees would readdress the effect of the no-fee initiative in ninety days. Director Merlin replied in the affirmative but noted that significant effects would not be evident until more time had passed, so investigation would begin in earnest in the spring. Outreach for this initiative is challenging because patrons and citizens who know about such things are already enrolled on Library email lists.

Trustee McAllister noted that most of NOBLE and many library consortia have implemented a similar effort but would like to know about differences the no-fee policy is making. Director Merlin stated that only five libraries within the NOBLE network charge fines and that fine revenue has been going down as more libraries become fine-free. President Pappas recalled a discussion from a previous meeting about the cost of administering fines being higher than forgiving them.

During a discussion of printers and devices, Trustee McAllister stated that it is better for the Library to have its own printers rather than sharing with the City. Director Merlin agreed, since the Library can then choose processes that work best for library purposes. Part of the contract with NOBLE means that the Library has a designated technician to service its technology. Printers pose a challenge since there is a need to connect with EnvisionWare, which regulates patron computer time and logins. The Library owns the copiers at the branches, the copier on the second floor at the Main Library, and is under a service contract for all devices. The brand new device on the first floor of the Main Library is under lease. At one time, there was a monthly fee that was variable, but Assistant Director Hayden negotiated a new contract and now the fee is fixed every month. Trustee McAllister asked if the company responsible for our devices also services elevators.

President Pappas asked why the Main Library, but not the branches, was getting 1 Gig upgrade internet through NOBLE. Director Merlin answered that NOBLE is responsible for

Library internet. They will eventually expand the update to all the branches, but for grant purposes they are focusing on the Main Library for the present, since the grant in question was given to designated Gateway cities and neighborhoods only.

Regarding the new mobile print option, Trustee Shruhan asked if when patrons print from home or outside, if they need to use their library card to log in when they arrive. Director Merlin replied that mobile printing is not tied to the library card at all. Patrons can use an app or a website and enter their name and email address. Patrons can then choose which location to send their file to, and within 24 hours they must go to said location to print. Once the patron is at the location, the procedure to print is the same as if they had printed from a Library computer. In response to Trustee Shruhan's question regarding limits to the number of printing pages, Director Merlin confirmed that there is no limit.

Trustee Quinn inquired as to the cost of printing. Director Merlin answered that printing costs \$0.15 per page for black and white, and \$0.35 per page for color. The Library will soon accept credit and debit payments.

Trustee Quinn expressed disbelief that patrons would not have printers in their homes. Director Merlin explained that many people do not invest in printers anymore. Currently, there is an email account to which patrons may email documents that are manually printed by staff.

In answer to President Pappas's question about the printers being rentals, Director Merlin stated that the Library owns them. President Pappas then asked whether the Library could join with the City for cost-saving printer purchases or rentals. Director Merlin stated that Library copiers and printers are serviced through another company with which Assistant Director Hayden negotiated better contracts.

President Pappas recalled a discussion about sharing the City's resources for printers and asked if the printers could be shared throughout the City under a blanket cost. Director Merlin stated that that would not save a substantial amount of money; Library printers are purchased through NOBLE at a discount.

Regarding the Topsfield Fair outreach event, Trustee Quinn noted confusion between Peabody Institute Library and Danvers Peabody Institute Library. Director Merlin asserted that the best way is to stress the name Peabody; as the Danvers Library has two cities in its name.

President Pappas thanked Director Merlin for her efforts in publicity.

President Pappas stated that he watches all the motions carried out over email and requested a recap. Trustee Najjar asked if the Foundation voted on the application of the grant, to which President Pappas clarified that the Trustees do not ratify Foundation

motions. President Pappas then requested a recap on such motions at the next meeting. Direct Merlin noted that two such motions were Main Street's request for the large inflatable snowman during the Holiday Stroll, and an extended vacation for a Librarian. Trustee Najjar noted that the one-time replacement fee motion was a last-minute email vote.

Trustee Shruhan expressed concern for a Trustee who was voting over email with an email address that was not their name. Other Trustees clarified that the email belonged to Trustee Gallugi. Trustee Shruhan asserted that not being clear about identity nullifies the vote.

In further discussion of roof leaks, Director Merlin noted that the most recent leaks were from the Nor'Easter. The damage at the Main Library occurred just outside the elevator on the 3rd floor; some tiles collapsed and water leaked through the ceiling. Roofing specialists reported that rubber membranes were leaking, but that it was not a chronic issue. Trustee Shruhan noted that roofing adhesives age and wind can affect water damage. Director Merlin stated that the roof at the West Branch has reached a point of needing replacement rather than repair. President Pappas asked who was responsible for funding repairs at the West Branch and Director Merlin answered that it was a City capital request. Said request begins to be prepared in January and is negotiated in the spring. Director Merlin went on to say that ceiling conditions do not inspire patrons' confidence. When Trustee Shruhan expressed concern about taxpayers' expense, Director Merlin replied that the city can use its own technicians for repairs rather than hiring independent contractors.

President Pappas asked why repairs were not already underway. Director Merlin acknowledged the necessity and stated that the Library is beginning to be able to proceed with projects started or proposed in the fall of 2019.

Trustee Shruhan stated that if funds are available before the start of the fiscal year on July 1st then perhaps projects can be started before then.

Trustee Quinn asked to address the elevator; President Pappas granted her two minutes' discussion. Trustee Quinn proceeded to ask if the elevator is now a City expense. Director Merlin replied that relying on the City for elevator repairs is more efficient than operating independently with outside contractors. While the Library had its own facilities staff at one point, the department was dissolved when the manager was forced out due to negligence. Director Merlin noted increased effectiveness in City facilities' management of building and grounds maintenance and repairs. Matters are settled more quickly and there is no significant change to the budget. Trustee Shruhan noted that the City saves money by using its own technicians rather than hiring independent contractors.

- Extended vacation for Librarian

There was a **Motion** to accept and ratify all online votes by Trustee Shruhan as they were unanimously yes. The motion was seconded by Trustee McAllister. There was no discussion. All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No The motion was unanimously passed.

New Business

New electees were introduced and welcomed:

- Jennifer Smith
- Katrina Vassallo
- Ruth Titelbaum (absent, will attend next meeting)

Sutton Room Policy

Librarian Badal has been with the Peabody Institute Library for six months and has a background in cultural heritage librarianship which she defines as “an intersection of library archives and museums and bringing them together for preservation and accessibility to the public.” She aims to provide a welcoming environment that encourages patrons to visit and use the Sutton Room to research and take pride in the city of Peabody, in the spirit of George Peabody. She is working to ensure that materials are preserved and accessible to the public.

In the first six months some of the issues have been unintentional but inevitable neglect from lack of a full-time caretaker who sees the room holistically and is able to look after it full-time. Some issues arise from lack of digital asset management as well as a lack of a preservation plan. Librarian Badal has been working on the physical findability of the room. The locked glass cabinets have new wood so they are level. She has rearranged books so that all of the books published before 1905 are in the glass shelves for safekeeping. She will move on to focusing on digital asset management, digitization and making such resources available and cohesive for patrons.

Librarian Badal has noticed that because there hasn't been a full-time caretaker looking after a cohesive plan, the natural agents of decay in books have been exacerbated by such things as exposure to light and dust accumulation. Librarian Badal aims to create a preservation plan and invest to ensure that we have these precious materials for longer.

Librarian Badal discussed proposed spending on items for continued preservation, and brought examples for the Trustees to examine. The first example is environmental controls. The Library has a UV filter and a film that blocks some of the radiation of natural light, but does not completely block light, which causes damage. Librarian Badal presented a black box with a striking fade pattern indicative of light damage. As well as fading, the heat from light damages materials inside boxes and paper behind book spines. Attending proper light

blocking window dressings is a priority. Librarian Badal will investigate estimates for a minimum as well as something that will be more aesthetically pleasing. Director Merlin will acquire a price range and seek the opinion of the Trustees.

The next effort is repairing several broken book shelves because the Sutton room contains historic wood. Wood decays, but modern constructions will prove sturdier. The wood must be refinished. Such constructions are bigger-ticket items but will ensure the longevity of the wood. Some refinishing efforts will prevent off-gassing that accelerates the deterioration of the books.

Librarian Badal then wants to look into assessing the HVAC system, possibly to repair and replace, so that the Sutton room can be maintained at 70 degrees Fahrenheit and 50% relative humidity. These costs can be addressed with preservation grants.

Purchases important to increasing patron engagement include, but are not limited to:

- Furniture
 - Tables that are stable for sensitive art materials
 - A librarian's desk
 - A holds shelf
 - Fixtures to make the Sutton room function as a reading room.
- Art hanging system
 - A way of incorporating local history in order to show our collections and increase engagement
- Display cases for local history materials that are secure and museum-quality.
 - The Main Library as well as the Branches, the Torigian Senior Center, and City Hall will have such fixtures. Mayor Bettencourt has expressed enthusiasm about this.

Librarian Badal noted that the Sutton Room must be adaptable if the Library is to utilize it for programming.

Trustee Najjar asked if the Audubon collections would be displayed. Director Merlin replied that the Library would not display Audubon prints, but would display historical books, letters, documents, and some of the interesting artifacts from the vault downstairs. There would be further discussion about what materials are appropriate to place where.

President Pappas posed a question about bookshelves. If books are stored on old wooden shelves, is there any chemical interaction between the wood and the books? If so, is wood the best storage material? Librarian Badal replied that there is a chemical interaction, and so she now has chemically inert polyester sheets which block some of the chemicals.

Periodically unlocking cabinets for air flow is also helpful.

President Pappas posed a question about security around historically precious materials being placed in various locations around the city. Director Merlin replied that the most precious and delicate artifacts would not leave the library; rather, objects that are deemed thematic to their display location will be shared. All displays will be under glass and close to service desks so that librarians may supervise patrons' engagement.

Trustee Quinn asked about the sustainability of opening the Sutton Room to the public in terms of preservation of the materials therein. Director Merlin recalled the theft of Audubon prints when a previous director entrusted a dishonest patron with a key to the collection. Since Librarian Badal sets up appointments with patrons, she can better monitor the room and its materials. No one will be alone in the Sutton Room without Librarian Badal; she has stated that she is very protective and while the room will be open, it will be restricted.

Trustee Quinn asked about the spine labels that looked like white boxes in the cabinets; Librarian Badal replied that the boxes are for disintegrating materials.

Trustee McAllister said that he is thrilled that someone is looking after and reviving the Sutton Room. He praised Librarian Badal's work.

Director Merlin addressed display cases in the Sutton Room by saying that a heavy-duty display case in the room would prove cumbersome and prevent it from being a multi-use space. There is a display case on the first floor of the Main Library and there would be one in each branch, one in the Torigian Senior Center, and one at City Hall as permanent fixtures. Trustee McAllister agreed and suggested that Sutton room displays be on wheels or casters.

Trustee Bakula suggested "items of the month" that have historical significance to the time of year to engage patrons.

President Pappas asserted that the Sutton room is the "best-kept secret in the city of Peabody."

At the suggestion of Darryl McCarthy of the Mayor's Office, the School Department now holds monthly leadership meetings in the Sutton Room. Very few in the department had been to the room and Director Merlin was happy to share the space with school administrators.

Trustee Quinn asked if any materials were included in online research databases. Librarian Badal answered in the negative, but expressed a desire that the materials be online. Director Merlin stated that there had been discussions about finding an intern to help

Librarian Badal with cataloging. When Trustee Quinn stated that that would need a grant, Librarian Badal responded that the effort was a work in progress.

President Pappas asked if the high school offered a history of Peabody class, to which Trustee Najjar replied that, yes, there is a History of Essex County class at the high school.

Director Merlin addressed Librarian Badal's new Sutton Room use policy. Librarian Badal has used the same principles but made the policy more welcoming. There are still rules and restrictions for the room's use, but patrons are welcome to use it. Director Merlin suggested that the Trustees read Librarian Badal's new policy and funding proposals so that she can move forward.

President Pappas asked if approval was necessary for Librarian Badal's research. Director Merlin replied that yes, since Librarian Badal's efforts fall under the limits of the trust funds.

Trustee Najjar asked if a vote would take place that night, but Director Merlin noted that the time was already 8:33pm and they would have a discussion.

There was a **MOTION** to have Librarian Badal investigate the options for furniture, window treatments, HVAC repairs, shelf repair, wood refinishing, preservation, art hanging materials for the Sutton room by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustees McAllister and Shruhan.

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

There was a **MOTION** to examine the Sutton Room usage policy by President Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustee McAllister.

Trustee Quinn expressed concern for language dictating material handling—specifically, white gloves. Librarian Badal explained that clean, dry hands are acceptable for handling old books since the fabric of white gloves can snag fibers in old books and further damage them. Vinyl gloves are used for handling photographs.

Trustee Najjar asked if it was acceptable to have drinks in the Sutton Room. Librarian Badal stated that she would investigate a coat rack and a cubby so people can have their belongings with them, but at a safe distance from antiquated materials. During meetings, lidded drinks are acceptable, but there is to be no food in the Sutton Room. Trustee Quinn asked if food would be acceptable in the Sutton Room if there were no materials on display. Director Merlin replied that for receptions, food would be held outside the Sutton room.

There was a **Motion** by Trustee Najjar to ensure that the use policy focused on research rather than social gatherings. The motion was seconded by Trustee McAllister. There was no discussion.

All in Favor: Yes

Any Opposed: No

The motion was unanimously passed.

Resolution

President Pappas proposed a meeting resolution and Trustee Najjar reminded him of the December dinner. A number of Trustees had contacted President Pappas about whether to have the annual dinner; he asserted that the pandemic was still happening and that some Trustees, and Director Merlin, are still very cautious. President Pappas then asked who would be interested in having the annual dinner and if the Trustees would accept not having it.

Dinner "vote"

Yes

- Trustee Bakula

No

- Trustee Shruhan
- Trustee McAllister
- Director Merlin

Trustee Najjar expressed flexibility on the matter and an understanding of both sides. Director Merlin suggested bringing outside food to the Tech Lab, or even holding a celebration at the end of the fiscal year.

The next meeting will be on December 6th at 7pm on location at the Main Library. There will be no meeting on January 3rd, 2022 as it coincides with the inauguration. Director Merlin suggested posting a meeting schedule on the Library's website at www.peabodylibrary.org. President Pappas requested that the meeting schedule be brought to the board for approval.

As there was no additional business to come before the board, a **Motion** to adjourn was made by President Pappas. The motion was moved by Trustee McAllister and seconded by Trustee Shruhan.

A vote was taken.

All in Favor: Yes

Any Opposed: No.

The motion was unanimously passed.

The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by,

Sarah Boçi
Recording Secretary