

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting  
October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

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The meeting was called to order by President Thomas Pappas at 7:01pm. This meeting was held simultaneously on Zoom and in-person and broadcasted live on PATV's television station. President Pappas noted the meeting was being recorded.

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

**Present**

Rick Shruhan  
Stephanie Dallaire (online)  
Peter Bakula  
Fran Gallugi  
Anne Quinn  
Don McAllister  
Stephanie Najjar  
Tom Pappas

**Absent**

Kate O'Brien  
Morgan Yeo

Library Director Merlin noted a new speaker with six omnidirectional microphones and started the Zoom webinar.

President Pappas cited open meeting laws. Meetings will be televised with Peabody TV and Zoom. Viewers may pose questions or comments to the Chair.

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

Minutes from the previous meeting were not available.

**Receipt of Communications**

President Pappas reported there were no communications received.

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

### **Staffing**

On September 20th, staff gathered for a successful all-staff meeting, the first in nearly two years. With so many new staff members beginning over the summer, it was wonderful to see all new and old faces, share information with all staff at once, and have a chance to answer questions. After 18 months of a pandemic, the laying off of so many part-time staff, the return of some of them, and the hiring of brand-new staff, these quarterly meetings are incredibly important for morale and continuity. In order to keep this momentum going, Director Merlin is requesting tonight that the Trustees approve a 12pm late opening for all 3 locations on Monday, December 8th, for our next all-staff meeting.

The Library continues to be fully staffed, and the position of Senior Custodian has been posted by the City. Interviews will begin soon.

Librarian Sharon Janus continues work towards her required Bachelor's Degree, and Senior Librarians Joanna Corea, Kristi Bryant, and Amy Titus continue work towards their required Master's of Library Science degrees. Tonight, Director Merlin is requesting the pre-approval of tuition reimbursement for their Fall semester classes, as is required by their contract.

### **Programs & Initiatives**

Programming has continued in the Main Library's outdoor courtyard, and will begin inside all 3 locations this month. In accordance with the City's COVID safety protocols, masks are required of all patrons (as they are in all Library spaces), and room/event capacities have decreased in order to allow for 3 feet of distance between all attendees.

Meeting rooms and spaces are now able to be reserved by outside groups, and all outside groups must agree to and follow City's COVID protocols. Director Merlin will make decisions every month as to the programming outlook for the following month, based on COVID case trends and local and state guidance. All adult programs are being simultaneously offered as "hybrid" programs (in person and over Zoom)- this was originally begun due to COVID, but will continue for all events going forward, as it greatly increases access for patrons, whether they choose not to attend in person, are not able to attend in person, or live in other areas but wish to participate in our programs.

Upcoming programs of note include:

- The Fall Concert Series
- The return of Professor Theo Theoharis' lecture series, focusing on Black American Literature & Poetry

- Regularly scheduled adult Yoga and Meditation
- The South Branch Art Show, inviting local artists to display their works at the South branch Library
- Children's programs that span all 3 locations, like the upcoming Trick or Treating on October 28th featuring candy and books for kids in costume
- 5 weekly Children's storytime and programs, including weekly Children's Yoga, a weekly craft program, and a weekly online storytime
- Appointments for one-on-one Tech Help
- Appointments for Local History & Genealogy research in the Sutton Room
- The return of Conversation Circle language groups
- The upcoming reopening of the Creativity Lab on November 1st

Peabody Access TV has relocated to 81 Main Street, and Director Merlin met recently with their staff to coordinate the broadcasting of our events, both live and from digital recordings. Director Merlin also hopes to begin a monthly Library show on PATV to share our new collections, services, and programs with the public who rely on PATV to learn about Peabody happenings.

Senior Local History Librarian Catherine Badal has been working for months to organize and re-catalog, when necessary, the entire Local History collection that is housed in the Sutton Room. Because the Sutton Room itself also needs attention, she has also spent months reorganizing the room itself, which has involved basic cleaning, repairing of book storage boxes, moving shelving and fixtures, and focusing on the room itself as a historical item, not just as the home of the Local History collection.

At Senior Librarian Badal's request, the November 1st Trustees meeting will take place in the Sutton Room itself, so that she may show you her progress, the most interesting items that she has discovered, and so that she may request the approval of Brattle Books Trust funds (that are to be used for Local History and Sutton Room reasons only) to be spent on upgraded storage and UV protection in the Sutton Room, necessary repairs to shelves and other fixtures, display cases to showcase our Local History, Audubon, and George Peabody collections in the 3 Library locations and in other City departments, and to ensure that the Sutton Room continues to be a reading and research room that is worth of the collection and the community. The Sutton Room will open for programming by the end of October.

And finally, if any Trustees are planning on attending the Topsfield Fair this coming Friday 10/8 and Saturday 10/9, Foundation and Staff members will be hosting a non-profit table, spreading the word about the Library, signing people up for newly designed Library cards, and selling Library merchandise as a Foundation fundraiser! Director Merlin has provided samples of the merchandise; a tote bag, 2 pens, and a sticker or magnet are \$10 for the lot,

with all funds going directly to the Foundation and then towards programs and initiatives. These items will be available for purchase at all 3 Library locations beginning next week. The new Library card design will be phased in beginning next week.

### **Budget**

Director Merlin has provided the current budget; nothing is of concern. Director Merlin completed and submitted the FY21 Financial Reporting to the MBLC, and as planned, the FY22 budget is enough to guarantee full certification for this year.

Because the FY22 budget has already been finalized, Director Merlin is not able to add the Trustees Line Item back into this year's budget without taking funds from another Library line item, all of which have been carefully accounted for already. This line item was removed from the FY21 budget in order to conserve funds (as was the funding for all part-time Pages), and was not added back into the FY22 budget for the same reason, but Director Merlin is confident that the Library is on solid budgetary footing going forward, so this line item (and Page salaries) will be added to her budget proposal in the Spring.

### **Policy**

This year, both the Christmas and New Years holidays fall on a Saturday. Sundays are staffed by a rotating schedule of Aides, and in the interest of fairness to all Aides who are *and* are not scheduled to work on that date, and to preemptively do away with time-off requests from those who would understandably like to be with family and friends on those days, Director Merlin is requesting that the Trustees designate Sunday, December 26, 2021 and Sunday, January 2nd, 2022, as Trustees Holidays.

The Library purchased 20 Chromebook laptops with State Earmark funds this spring, with 15 to be circulated as normal materials, and 5 to be reserved for in-library use. Director Merlin requests the discussion and approval of the policies and lending agreement for the Chromebooks this evening.

Director Merlin has updated the Materials Circulation Policy to reflect the new overdue-fine-free status and to delete obsolete material types, updated the Museum Pass Policy to reflect the new fine-free status, and updated the No Smoking Policy to include the prohibition of the use of marijuana on Library property. Director Merlin requests a discussion and approval of these policy updates this evening.

### **Audubons**

Director Merlin has contacted Studio TKM Associates to restart the Audubon print conservation project. The City's insurance carrier has changed since the last time we sent prints out for conservation, so she is waiting for the insurance policy to be updated before

moving forward with this process.

### **Building & Grounds**

Work began today on replacing the elevator's oil and valve, and will continue for the remainder of the week.

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### **Discussion and Questions for Director**

Trustee Quinn raised the question of whether such degrees are job requirements and Library Director Merlin clarified that job descriptions require applicants to be active students working towards their degrees as long as they complete them within two years of hire. The Library requires proof of active enrollment.

President Pappas asked about the retention of library employees that the City and Foundation send to school. Library Director Merlin reported that retention is 100%, or very close, especially with the Master of Library Science degree. Tuition reimbursement is a great benefit. It is a show of good faith on the Library's part and allows staff to be more dedicated.

President Pappas expresses approval of the new library card design and format.

Trustee Gallugi asked where fines come from if the Library doesn't charge overdue fees. Library Director Merlin answered that the Library collects overdue fees for other libraries in the NOBLE network. The Library does not block patrons with overdue fees from other libraries from borrowing from the library. Director Merlin added that patrons can pay for fines with credit cards.

Trustee McAllister requested to revisit material statistics after ninety (90) days to see if eliminating fines has increased or decreased lost or overdue materials. Trustee Shruhan added that he would like to see if fine elimination increases circulation. Trustee Yeo stated that fees embarrass patrons and discourage them from returning to the library. Library Director Merlin stated that, because of the ongoing pandemic, circulation is still affected and it would be best to compare circulation and patronage data to 2019 rather than 2020. NOBLE suspended card blockage during the height of the pandemic, but is reinstating blockage for any item more than 42 days overdue. Patrons will be notified that they are not being charged, but to please return the item. Trustee Yeo expressed dislike for charging patrons during troubling times. President Pappas asserted that it costs more to manage a system with the fines and fees and that continuing to collect monies from patrons is illogical.

Trustee Najjar asked if the city covers the cost of adding insurance coverage for the Audubons when out of the building, Library Director Merlin answered yes.

Trustee Quinn asked if the collection has been appraised lately; Library Director Merlin answered no, that the quote that is in the works is based on the current insured amount, but does not know how current that amount is and will look into it.

Trustee McAllister asked about the status of the restoration. Library Director Merlin reported that we have less than 200 prints left to be restored, so she estimates 60% progress. Some in the batch require more work than others; hopefully costs will go down every year.

Trustee McAllister stated his support of anything that makes the Sutton Room accessible, as it is considered the best library room in Essex County.

Trustee McAllister stated that he wants to meet with Librarian Badal about her work.

President Pappas noted commentary about leftover bio oil in the elevator workings. Trustee Shruhan states the desire to guarantee that sludge will be cleaned completely, as the elevator valve is the center of the problem.

Trustee McAllister noted that cleaning out bio oil and replacing it with another kind of oil could pose a problem if the viscosities differ. Trustee Shruhan stated that the valve would have to be perfectly clean before oil was changed. President Pappas asked if this would be the case and Director Merlin stated she would confirm with City Elevator. Trustee Shruhan asked for a one-year warranty and President Pappas stated that a warranty should be longer, but Trustee Shruhan confirmed that warranty standard is one year. Trustee McAllister stated that warranties should be part of the maintenance agreement, as the elevator's defunct status has become a hindrance to Library function and accessibility. President Pappas asked to see the damage to the current valve. Trustee Shruhan explained levelling valves to be an electronic part of the main valve that allows the elevator to align itself with the floors at which it opens.

President Pappas asked Director Merlin about the cost, to which she replied that the cost is not coming from the Library budget, and the Library is not receiving the bills. She did not receive the quote. Director Merlin also noted that technicians have arrived at the library to work on the elevator without notice and do not answer questions. Trustee Najjar noted that concern.

Trustee Bakula inquired about the library's piano. Director Merlin answered that the piano remains at the West Branch and is of low priority. Restoration, assessment, and immediate

maintenance of the piano would require its own fundraiser. Trustee Quinn stated that we would need an expert estimate for the piano to gauge its worth.

There was a **Motion** to move forward by President Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustees McAllister and Najjar.

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

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### **Reports of the Committees**

**Audubon:** Trustee Quinn stated there was nothing more to report but did want project status. Director Merlin shared that we had been invited to watch prints being conserved, but could not happen due to COVID-19. Librarian Badal is interested in going; perhaps in the spring there can be an event for staff to see conservation in action.

**Liaison to the Friends of the Peabody Library:**                      Nothing to report.

**Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society:**                      Nothing to report.

**Liaison to the Peabody Institute Library Foundation:**                      Nothing to report.

There was a **Motion** to receive the committee reports by President Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustee McAllister.

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

### **Unfinished Business**

A discussion of elevator repairs; specifically, ongoing elevator maintenance and repair facilitation between the City and repair technicians; use of bio-oil having been proved ineffective; defunct elevator negatively affecting library accessibility.

### **New Business**

Trustee Najjar has communicated with the Peabody high school; specifically, the medal ceremony occurring in the Sutton Room for commencement in June 2022. The head of the Music department at the high school wants to upgrade the George Peabody medals. The Rappaport family has expressed a desire to purchase the medals as a gift. Trustee Najjar wants to prepare now and look at options for medal upgrades that reflect George Peabody and his legacy. President Pappas asked if this work could be done by subcommittee. Trustee Najjar stated that this is a one-time effort and therefore a side project rather than subcommittee work. President Pappas asked Trustee Najjar to keep track of the project. Trustee McAllister expressed the need to do due diligence for George Peabody.

There was a **Motion** to designate Sunday December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and Sunday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 as Trustee holidays by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Yeo.

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

There was a **MOTION** to delay Library opening on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 for All-Staff meeting by Trustee McAllister. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.

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

There was a **MOTION** to pre-approve tuition and reimbursement for the fall semester classes as is required by the contract by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee McAllister.

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

There was a **MOTION** to approve the Chromebook policy by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee Gallugi. Director Merlin provided background on the amount of laptops (20 total), with 15 for outside use and 5 for library use. Library and trustees will not be liable for any damages and laptops will be hard-reset with every return. Staff will be available to support patrons with Google software and programming and printed directions will be provided. Patrons aged 13 and older may use laptops.

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

There was a **MOTION** to approve the updated material circulation policy to reflect new overdue fine-free status by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee Gallugi.

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

There was a **MOTION** to accept no smoking policy by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee Gallugi.

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

There was a **MOTION** to pass updating procedures regarding passes by President Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustee Gallugi.

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

Trustee Quinn inquired about museum passes and whether one pass covers four people. Director Merlin confirmed that, yes, one pass covers two adults and two children. There are no more \$5 per day charges for overdue passes. Emailed passes do not have to be returned. Patrons may borrow passes if they have no outstanding balance over \$10 or \$50. Trustee Quinn asked if passes may be picked up at the library only, and Director Merlin answered that procedure depends on the institution. For example, the Stone Zoo pass is a plastic hanging pass for a vehicle that must be acquired in person, but that more and more places are using email passes.

There was a **MOTION** to accept a no-smoking policy by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee Gallugi.

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

President Pappas asked Director Merlin for a metrics report containing data regarding how many patrons we sign up at the Topsfield Fair, how many books/materials are lost, and whether circulation increases or decreases. President Pappas asked Director Merlin if the library reports on metrics. Director Merlin replied that Assistant Director Alysa Hayden compiled a report with metrics in line with President Pappas' inquiry and that those statistics are easy to get on NOBLE, but current affairs have skewed this data and we should wait before garnering a new report.

No resolution reached.

There were no matters suggested to the Trustees about the agenda.

There were no matters suggested in writing.

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The next meeting will be on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 7pm on location at the Main Library. As there was no additional business to come before the board, a **MOTION** to adjourn was made by President Pappas. The motion was seconded by Trustees Shruhan and McAllister. 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