

**PEABODY INSTITUTE LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of Meeting
February 7th, 2022**

The meeting was called to order on Zoom by President Thomas Pappas at 7:02pm, with Director Merlin having started the webinar at 7:01pm and quorum having been reached at 6:58pm. The meeting was held simultaneously on Zoom and in-person and broadcast live on PATV's television station. President Pappas cited open meeting laws. Viewers were allowed to pose questions or comments to the chair in real-time.

The roll call was taken:

Present

Peter Bakula
Stephanie Dallaire
Frances Gallugi
Don McAllister
Stephanie Najjar
Kate O'Brien
Thomas Pappas
Anne Quinn
Richard Shruhan
Jennifer Smith
Ruth Titelbaum
Katrina Vassallo

Absent

Approval & discussion of the minutes from the previous meeting

President Pappas noted that at the last meeting the Board proposed changes to subcommittees. Trustee Vassallo is now responsible for Policies and Procedures. This is an amendment to the previous meeting's minutes.

There was a **MOTION** to approve the minutes of January's meeting by Trustee Quinn. The motion was seconded by Trustee Smith.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was unanimously passed.

There was a **MOTION** to approve the minutes of January's meeting as amended by Trustee Shruhan. The motion was seconded by Trustee Smith.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was unanimously passed.

Receipt of Communications

None.

Director's Report to the Board of Library Trustees

Staffing

Staff attendance levels have returned to normal after the Holidays and illnesses. The Library remains fully staffed, except for the still-vacant Full Time Custodian position that was vacated last April, and posted internally in September. Sean Meagher, the remaining full-time custodian, has been going above and beyond, and part-time evening custodian Dave Farley has also helped immensely. Custodians from the City Facilities Department have helped with coverage, cleaning, and snow removal, but the situation is getting untenable for all involved, and Director Merlin hopes to hear more soon regarding filling this position.

Programs & Initiatives

Adult and Teen in-person programming has resumed, and staff hope to resume in-person Children's programming in March. The Children's Department currently hosts three online storytimes every week.

The weekly walk-in vaccine & booster clinic, in partnership with the Peabody Department of Health and Mass General Brigham, has been held three times, and has served between 50 and 100 people each time. Setup is minimal on our part, and it is truly a gratifying experience to welcome new people into the library as they keep themselves and their families healthy. Library staff have set up displays, brochures, and craft kits in the waiting area, and staff are seeing new faces every week.

The LSTA grant application process for "Our Garden" continues, with the draft application due later this month, and the final application due in April.

The West Branch is again hosting free AARP tax help and preparation volunteers through April 11th. A limited number of appointments are still available, and can be made by calling the West Branch directly.

On Friday, February 18th, the Main Library will host Peabody Veterans Memorial High School's winter Art Show & Coffee House, showcasing the work of Fall Semester Peabody High art students and music students. The event will be catered by the Peabody High Culinary Department students. This after-house event will feature acoustic music performances in the Sutton Room, and works of multimedia art displayed in the 2nd floor Tech Lab and 1st floor Main Reading Room. Director Merlin is mailing and emailing invitations this week, and hopes

that all Trustees can attend, as the event will combine George Peabody's 227th birthday with this event, in honor of his commitment to education. Director Merlin would like to discuss later in tonight's meeting how the Trustees can be present to welcome the community.

The annual Spring Concert Services, sponsored by the Library Foundation and McCarthy Family Foundation, will begin this coming Monday, February 14th, with harpist Aine Minogue, followed by the New England Chamber Players on Monday, February 28th. All concerts will be in person in the Sutton Room and simultaneously broadcast live (platform is still to be finalized).

The PeaPod, the annual free seed library, will return for its 4th growing season in early March, with flower, vegetable, and herb seeds available to patrons at all 3 locations.

Budget

Director Merlin has included the monthly budget for your review. Nothing is of concern at this time.

Louis Karger, whose family generously funds the annual Karger Endowment for art and poetry books in honor of his late father Theodore Karger, contacted me regarding setting up a new trust in honor of his mother, Beatrice Karger, to fund nonfiction titles for the West Branch Library. Director Merlin is working with him and the City to set up this trust, and is incredibly grateful for his family's continued support of and dedication to the Library.

Policy

Director Merlin has received a Request for Reconsideration form regarding the children's book *Amazing Women of the Middle East* by Wafa' Tarnowska, which is owned by the West Branch Library, five other NOBLE libraries (that have also received Requests for Reconsideration from the same patron who is not a Peabody resident), and over 50 libraries in Massachusetts. The Library is following the current protocol and procedures, which calls for the original selector and other staff who are familiar with the collection to review the title in regards to our Collection policies, and provide the patron with a response by March 1

Director Merlin has included the full Appendix C: Procedures for Requests for Reconsideration, and request a ratification vote tonight changing that title from Appendix C: Procedures for Patron Complaints, as she feels that the previous title does not accurately describe what the procedures are for, and implies more general complaints like building issues, etc.

While this ongoing Request for Reconsideration will be conducted under current policy, Director Merlin proposes the following change going forward as to who conducts the Preliminary Review, after consulting with Policy & Procedures Trustee Vassallo (current language struck out and proposed new language highlighted in yellow):

“2. Preliminary Review. ~~As soon as a complaint has been filed, the objections should be reviewed by the person(s) that selected the item or is responsible for that part of the collection.~~

As soon as a complaint is filed, the objections should be reviewed by a committee of professional staff appointed by the Director. The item should be read, viewed or listened to in its entirety by the ~~selector~~ committee, the original reasons for purchase should be evaluated, and objections should be considered in terms of the Library's materials selection policy, the principles of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, and the opinions of the various reviewing sources used in materials selection.”

This changes who reviews and provides the Director with suggested action from the selector (person who chose to add said title to the collection) to a committee of unbiased professional staff. Director Merlin believes that this helps both the patron and the staff, as the review and suggestions will be made by objective group consensus.

Local History & Audubons

The Library was closed on Friday 2/4 due to the ice storm, so Director Merlin is rescheduling the pickup for later this month.

Senior Local History Catherine Badal and Director Merlin are working with the City Purchasing Department to determine a list of companies to schedule consultations with regarding new Sutton Room curtains. They are also waiting for quotes for custom wood display cases for the 3 Libraries, City Hall, and the Senior Center to house Local History collections.

Building & Grounds

Director Merlin is waiting for quotes and feedback regarding upgraded lighting at all 3 locations, and she will be reaching out to the Peabody Historical Commission as the light posts in the Main Library courtyard will need to be approved due to their age, and the historical significance of the building.

This past Wednesday, there was a major blockage in the main sewage line in Main Street. The Main Library's sewage line was directly behind this blockage, so there was a sizable backup of sewage into the basement. The City worked to clear the main blockage, all items in the storage area were thrown away, and a professional cleaning company cleaned and sanitized the basement on Thursday.

The West Branch Library's roof still leaks frequently and needs to be replaced. Director Merlin is beginning the process of requesting a capital improvement to replace the entire roof.

Discussion and Questions for the Director

Director Merlin stated that she later wanted to discuss the Trustees' relationship with the community. Feedback issues on Zoom were noted.

Trustee Shruhan asked about changing policy after requests are received and whether this new procedure is viable. Director Merlin replied in the negative, stating that staff familiar with the different branches of policy and procedure are already working on the Request for Reconsideration in progress. Director Merlin went on to say that the selector is never left to defend their work.

The Board discussed the issues with the sewage line from the previous week. Trustee Najjar asked about the extent of the damage and whether any materials or supplies were discarded. Director Merlin replied that items discarded would have been disposed of regardless and that nothing of value was lost. She is planning a cleanup day in the spring with custodian Sean Meagher. Trustee Quinn asked if any odor was present. Director Merlin confirmed that yes, the library basement was pungent. The morning after the sewage line break, the custodians shut all bulkhead doors because the smell was spreading. On Thursday, February 3rd, the library opened late at five o'clock for the safety and comfort of staff and patrons. While the courtyard was open for holds, the Children's Room and the first floor retained odor. Staff were relegated to the second and third floors or the branches. Plumbing and cleaning professionals restored the space.

President Pappas thanked Director Merlin for handling the sewage issue, as it is not typical library duty, and mentioned that such circumstances were a departure from elevator maintenance. Director Merlin reported that the elevator at the Main Library is functioning well.

Trustee Titelbaum asked whether the shelving in the basement can be recycled. Director Merlin replied that she did not know; she would have offered the shelving to other libraries if it had not been damaged in the sewage break. Later this spring, the Director plans to offer undamaged shelving to other libraries; the shelves comprise a large amount of steel and recycling is a practical idea.

Trustee Quinn asked if the Board would send a thank-you to Mr. Karger for setting up the trust in memory of his mother. Director Merlin replied yes and that she would write it up on behalf of herself and the Board. The Board will sign the card at a subsequent meeting. Mr. Karger and his brother have expanded the Trust's influence. Whereas it was previously for fine arts and poetry, it is now open to journalism and current events and the trust from Mr.

Karger's mother is for nonfiction at the West Branch. Mr. Carter expects to spend the funds every year and subsequently replenish them.

There was a **MOTION** to receive the report by Trustee Dallaire. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was unanimously passed.

Reports of the Committees and Sub-committees

Executive Committee:

Nothing to report.

Audubon:

Nothing to report.

Building and Grounds:

Nothing to report.

Personnel:

Nothing to report.

Trustee McAllister is absent for this meeting.

Policy and Procedures:

Nothing to report.

Liaison to the Peabody Historical Society:

Trustee Quinn reported that Local History Librarian Catherine Badal is coming to the Peabody Historical Society on Wednesday, February 2nd to meet with the administrative volunteers. Librarian Badal will receive a tour of the historical properties and background on the Society's projects and then join the Society for tea. Librarian Badal will give the Society a tour of the Sutton Room. Trustee Quinn has facilitated the above.

Liaison to the Peabody Institute Foundation:

Nothing to report.

Trustee Najjar stated that a meeting was supposed to have occurred tonight, but was canceled. Trustee Quinn mentioned the wreath for George Peabody's birthday.

There was a **MOTION** to accept the subcommittee reports by Trustee Quinn. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.

All in Favor: Yes Any opposed: No

The motion was unanimously passed.

Trustee Quinn asked about the library custodian. Director Merlin fielded the question by reporting that the Library custodian is working overtime weekly. Full-time custodians work four days a week and half a day Fridays or alternate Saturdays. On Fridays when Sean is not in, there is no custodian in the building. Director Merlin and Assistant Director Alysa Hayden open and close the building. The school custodian, George Pike, has been working at the school and at the library every other Saturday. Custodian Dave Farley closes the library at night. If there is no custodian, Director Merlin and other senior staff take turns closing. School custodians are cleaning the branches. Inclement weather complicates custodial work; for example, at the last snow storm, Sean worked nine hours alone, with some help from Facilities.

President Pappas asked if the Board could be of any help. Director Merlin stated that Human Resources is working on the hire, but is very slow. She has spoken with the Mayor as well.

President Pappas asked Trustee Najjar about the George Peabody medals. Trustee Najjar reported that she will have pictures of the medals at the next meeting. There has been much discussion with the high school and the vendors. Crown Trophy in Peabody does not have the capability to create the envisioned medals, but Josten, a company who also makes class rings, does. Trustee Najjar has communicated with Josten about not only the image of the medals, but their construction: instead of a pin, she suggests a ribbon. She has been in contact with someone at the high school who has found pictures of coins with George Peabody's face, which Trustee Najjar favors for the new medals. The new medals may not be smithed in time for this graduation year; Trustee Najjar reported that she does not know what the turnaround is for the medals' manufacture. President Pappas asked if George Peabody had had a metal preference, to which Trustee Najjar replied that she considered a gold-tone bronze to be appropriate both historically and for the present day. Trustee Najjar then explained that we would receive a number of medals at once; that Josten would not create a die and make the medals as needed. Such production details will be made clear in the pricing structure.

Trustee Quinn shared that, in her historical project, which is centered on data from Peabody women who served in the military during the wars, she encountered a report that one woman had received the George Peabody medal and listed it on her military forms.

President Pappas asked if we would repeat last year's medal design and Trustee Najjar stated that the medals may not be ready in time, in which case they will use what they have to be timely for commencement.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

Director Merlin stated that the policy changes are the new business.

There was a **MOTION** for the change to the policy language by Trustee Vassallo. The motion was seconded by Trustee Najjar.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No.

The motion was unanimously passed.

There was a **MOTION** to accept the new language of Policies and Procedures for requests and considerations by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee Shruhan.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was unanimously passed.

Director Merlin stated that the biannual arts showcase slated for February 18th coincides with George Peabody's birthday celebration. She wanted to discuss the event itself and expressed hope that the Trustees could attend.

Director Merlin explained that February 18th is George Peabody's birthday. The Library traditionally holds a breakfast in his honor on the second floor with a cake and a wreath. There have been discussions of how to add emphasis to this event, as George Peabody's legacy and endowments are the reason the Library exists and thrives. Director Merlin stated that Trustees can represent the Library. Local politicians and prominent community figures attend as well to see the students' work. Director Merlin asked for guidance on the cake and wreath.

President Pappas asked about nametags, to which Director Merlin replied that she would print new ones.

Trustee Najjar stated that the cake and wreath are handled through the Foundation, since the Library does not have that specific capacity. She mentioned D'Orsi's bakery as an option for the cake.

Trustee Quinn stated that President Pappas should make a brief speech about the nature of the event, since Trustee McAllister historically tells George Peabody's story.

Director Merlin will reach out to high school fine arts teachers to see if any of them plan to make speeches. She will send out an email tomorrow with the official invitation attached, kindly requesting that Trustees RSVP. This event will present an opportunity to welcome people to the library.

Trustee Dallaire is in Atlanta in school and unable to attend. She suggested cupcakes instead of one large cake to be more sanitary and stated that Stop and Shop has such capability.

Trustee Shruhan shared a thought about new lighting. If the Library uses enough LED lights, they are eligible for a credit. Director Merlin stated that any fixtures added or changed on the outside of the Library must be approved by a historical commission. President Pappas stated that 2700 Kelvin is good for light pollution and appears more natural. He referenced period lighting and historical accuracy.

There was a MOTION to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Najjar. The motion was seconded by Trustee Shruhan.

All in Favor: Yes Any Opposed: No

The motion was unanimously passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57pm.

Submitted by,
Sarah Boçi
Recording Secretary