

# **TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON**

## **Meeting of the Trustees Strategic Planning Committee Thursday, March 28, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. Central Library, Commonwealth Salon MINUTES**

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Strategic Planning Committee (“Committee”) was held at the Central Library, 700 Boylston Street, Boston MA 02116 in the Commonwealth Salon on March 28, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. and the meeting was streamed via Zoom for the public.

Members who were present at the meeting, included Committee Chair, Christian Westra, Committee Vice Chair, Jose C. Masso III, and Committee Members: Joe Berman, Heidi Brooks, Cheryl Cronin, Rahn Dorsey, Paula Sakey, Jonathon Soroff, and President David Leonard. Karilyn Crockett was absent.

Also, present were Chair of the Board, Priscilla Douglas, Vice Chair Evelyn Arana Ortiz joined via Zoom, Clerk of the Board, Pamela Carver, BPL staff, and members of the public. Members of the Gensler team and Margaret Sullivan Studios were also present.

Mr. Christian Westra called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. He read the Trustees EDI statement. The Clerk took a roll call and determined there was a quorum. Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded and to sign up for Public Comment.

The first matter of business was the approval of meeting minutes of April 3, 2023. With no comments or edits, the meeting minutes were approved.

The Gensler team were introduced. They began the meeting with the Committee members and Gensler/Margaret Sullivan Studios (“MSS”) giving brief introductions and noting what they think is a great strength of the BPL. The answers varied from the collections, literacy in all its forms, the physical spaces, its impact on people, and the staff among other things.

Erin Corcoran of Gensler reviewed the process and the roadmap on where they were currently with meetings. She noted they are in the first stage of visioning, discovery, and initial conversations with stakeholder groups. They completed several workshops with staff and extended leadership at the BPL. The next phase, which continues in the summer, would start to nail down the plan with the various stakeholder groups. In the fall, the scope would be narrowed down into implementation conversations.

Margaret Sullivan of MSS explained the workshops that were planned. They will meet with the extended leadership team to introduce the process and deepen the vision. They will meet with the staff working group to learn how to engage in one-on-one conversations with community members. Then they will meet in a third workshop whose focus will be evolving the mission and alignment with a combined staff/leadership group. They will work to develop areas of focus and begin discussions around implementation. By workshop four, they begin the rollout and how to champion the strategic plan with deeper dives into the communication plan.

Ms. Corcoran explained that the Committee’s workshop will mirror the themes at the staff/leadership workshops with the additional piece of adding their findings from those previous workshops into the conversations.

Ms. Sullivan explained their team’s methodology was to align library aspirations with community aspirations and shared objectives. To create a compelling and essential role and purpose for the library, determining the mission in alignment with the city’s goals and center communities in every decision. Making sure that we are creating a sustainable and diversified funding model for long-term sustainability. This will result in a flexible strategic framework, strengthen strategic partnerships because no one can do it alone. It encourages staff to embrace a growth mindset, and lastly to reorient the organization for collective impact approach to assessments and measurements. Not just with working together, but metrics to measure success within the larger educational, social, and economic goals.

Ms. Sullivan explained they will introduce trends seen among other peer institutions in the industry. The goal is to

provide a guiding document that will shape the work of the library over the next three to ten years with the intent of becoming the leading 21<sup>st</sup> century public library. It will also allow the library to stay focused on goals rather than trying to do too much.

Ms. Patricia Nobre of Gensler noted that the experience of the strategic planning process can feel apprehensive and uncertain at first and will vary based upon perspectives and communication effectiveness. This can lead to resistance. She explained the first phase will include research, development patterns and insights. The second will help develop the concept with better clarity and focus on prioritizing. The last phase will be designing the plan for implementation. The committee discussed the importance of the plan and asked several questions on some of the key pieces that were explained.

Gensler representatives explained what the plan will be vs. what it is not. That included a long-term direction and priorities and not a business, operational, or detailed project plan.

It is a tool for decision-making and resource allocation and not a tool for day-to-day operations and budgets. It is future focused and not static or inflexible, short term or tactical. It can take up to three years to develop a great foundation to build from. The committee discussed the plan structure around vision, mission, and values. They gave relevant examples such as Artificial intelligence, climate change, and book banning/challenges.

The Gensler reviewed a few case studies from other libraries including San Francisco and Marin Country Free Library.

Next, they explained the three exercises that they would be having the committee engage in. They would also follow up the meeting with an online survey to allow each participant to add additional thoughts or questions.

The first exercise broke the group into 4 groups to brainstorm on various purpose cards on what a library could be. The meeting took an intermission during the breakout sessions for thirty minutes and reviewed their results when they reconvened as a group.

The next exercise included identifying community partners to support the strategic planning efforts. They talked through identifying other groups that we are connected to. They discussed this for approximately fifteen minutes. They decided to follow up on a few questions that they didn't get to during the meeting. They would open a Google document for the committee members to answer prior to meeting again.

The Committee agreed to meet in late April/early May where they could commit a few minutes to reviewing the BPL framework on funding, the city's priorities, and the breakdown of the BPL staff.

Mr. Westra noted there was no new business or public comment. The meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Pamela R. Carver, Clerk of the Board*