

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON
Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency (First Meeting)
Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 8:30am
Central Library, 700 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116
MINUTES

The Annual Meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (“BPL”) held on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 8:30 a.m. at the Central Library in the Rabb Hall.

All present at the meeting included: Interim Chair Evelyn Arana Ortiz and Trustees: Navjeet Bal, Joe Berman, Jim Canales, Cheryl Cronin, John Hailer, Jeff Hawkins, Jose C. Masso III, Porsha Olayiwola, Representative Chynah Tyler, Christian Westra, and Lynn Perry Wooten. Senator Mike Rush was absent. Also present: former Chair, Priscilla H. Douglas, Boston Public Library President David Leonard, Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, BPL staff, and members of the public.

Interim Chair Evelyn Arana Ortiz presided, and called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. She read the EDI reaffirmation statement. A roll call was taken and determined there was a quorum. (Navjeet Bal arrived after roll call was formally taken). Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded and to sign up for Public Comment by 9:00 a.m.

The first matter of business was approval of the meeting minutes from March 26, 2024. No edits or comments were made, and the meeting minutes were approved.

Ms. Arana Ortiz gave the Board of Trustees updates. She noted that Priscilla Douglas’s term ended in May and would be succeeded by Jonathan Lavine. She also noted that Rep Chynah Tyler would remain as a holdover until Mayor Wu appointed a new trustee in the coming months. She invited both women to offer remarks.

Representative Tyler thanked all members of the Board that she served with her over the last five years. Rep Tyler thanked Mayor Walsh for her appointment to the Board. She commended the leadership of David Leonard, Priscilla Douglas, and Evelyn Arana Ortiz whom she learned so much from. She applauded the BPL staff for their work. She noted that her tenure coming to an end was “bittersweet.”

Ms. Priscilla Douglas also thanked each Trustee, past and present, for their commitment to the Board. She reflected on some key accomplishments during her tenure of seven years on the Board and noted some projects in the future. She thanked the staff, affiliates, and Mayor Wu. She promised to continue her support of the establishment.

The Board members took a few minutes to offer some kind words of reflection and wished them both well wishes in the future.

Mr. David Leonard was asked to give his President’s Report. He explained that a highlight of the last 12 months, from a budget impact standpoint, was the addition of fourteen new staff members. This enabled the BPL to return to Saturday hours at the branches. He added that at the core of our work is economic empowerment and social service are core components to what we do. We documented 229 interactions with our unhoused patrons to date in FY24 by our Community Support team, led by our social worker and augmented by a few social work interns. The Community Learning team connected people to services they needed; literacy and ESOL being the most in demand of our services across the BPL system. Mr. Leonard highlighted several other initiatives including Future readers club, Browse Borrow Board and the summer learning program.

Mr. Leonard explained that the next few years will tie into the theme of “revolutionary” to prelude the country’s 250th anniversary. This will include a multi-year calendar of events celebrating programs and speakers, music, art, and the historical commemoration.

Michael Colford introduced the first of two new managers, Katherine Mitchell, Visitor Experience Coordinator. She reports to Anna Fahey-Flynn, Central Library Manager. This position is responsible for physical access to spaces, working on wayfinding, ensuring the building is accessible as well as working with the tour guides.

Beth Prindle introduced Emily Bibb, Curator of Prints. She started in January 2024 in the Arts Department. There are over one hundred thirty thousand items in that collection, and they are delighted to bring her expertise to the team.

Mr. Leonard explained the loading dock repair was located over the mechanical room. Therefore, the heating/cooling systems would be shut down for two weeks and expect to be online as the first week of June. It was a critical matter that needed repair.

Next, Emily Bowe, LMEC, gave highlights of their latest exhibition. “Heaven and Earth; the Blue Maps of China. They showcase maps from the early 19th century. The LMEC was trialing having a lobby display.

Mr. Leonard introduced the four presenters of the Collection Development Policy: Beth Prindle, Chief of Research & Special Collections, Melissa Andrews, Chief of Collection Development, Michael Brown, Workforce Development Reference Librarian, and Celeste Bocchicchio-Chaudhri, Roslindale Children’s Librarian.

The group explained that this policy is replacing one that is a decade old. They are bringing it in line with the new mission with a focus on EDI to provide guidance for staff who make purchases. They reviewed the various types of collection: circulating, research, and special collections. The developed criteria that will ensure purchases align with mission, content quality, and special attention to accessibility of longevity we choose. The updated policy represents the staff and makes sure it represents the right to read without judgement or endorsement of the library

The final version of the Collection Development Policy was a product of ten rounds of review and involved over 100 stakeholders in staff and community.

Mr. Berman added that the Special Collections Committee had a robust conversation and unanimously endorsed this document .

Ms. Arana Ortiz made a motion that was duly made, seconded, and approved.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve to accept the BPL Collection Development Policy as presented.”

The Strategic Plan consultant representatives, Patricia Nobre of Gensler and Margaret Sullivan of Margaret Sullivan Studios gave updates on the strategic plan process. They started this process in January 2024, listening to multiple voices and stakeholders. They have held a few all-day workshops with Leadership and over twenty staff volunteers. They met with the mayor’s office to ensure the plan will be in alignment with the Mayor Wu’s goals, met with various community stakeholders, the Strategic Plan Trustees Committee, and held meetings with the affiliates.

They reviewed the six emerging roles: Cultural Storyteller, Life-long Learning Partner, Welcoming Destination, Community Connector/Outreach, Growth Catalyst, and Social Advocacy.

Mr. Leonard explained not to look at this as a draft plan but rather as a roadmap. Mr. Westra added that common themes are emerging and reminded them that this was just an update to where they were in the process.

The Board asked several questions and had a robust conversation regarding the data so far. They were encouraged to see the progress in the coming months.

Ms. Arana Ortiz gave the Finance and Audit Committee report. She explained that NEPC’s recommendation was to move \$3.5million to global equity investing. The Committee interviewed three managers and selected Generation Global Equity.

Emily Tokarczyk reviewed Mayor Wu’s Recommended Operation and Capital budget for FY25. She said the budget was announced in April and awaited City Council approval. Overall, it reflected a strong budget for the

BPL of \$49,048,314. She reviewed the proposed investment initiatives and noted that the mayor’s capital budget reflected a strong commitment to the BPL over FY25-FY29.

With no questions, a motion was duly made, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve to accept Mayor Michelle Wu’s FY25 Recommended Operating and Capital Budget.”

Next, Ms. Arana Ortiz reviewed the four annual votes. She explained that the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund Committee supports the Roxbury branch’s supplemental programming.

They voted on the four annual votes as a slate. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston authorize the President, or designee, on behalf of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston, to enter into a contract or contracts for various goods or services relating to the Boston Public Library Critical Repair Budget for the period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025 provided that each contract entered into pursuant to this authorization shall have been estimated to be less than one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00). In no event will the contracts cumulatively exceed three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00).”

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston enter into a non-advertised contract, as authorized under G.L., c.30-B, Section 7(a), referred to as a “Procurement of Library Books,” between the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (a Corporation under Chapter 114 of the Acts of 1878), and the vendors listed therein (including any subsidiaries or agents), for the acquisitions of books and for certain other library bibliographical acquisitions materials, in an amount not to exceed the amount appropriated in the Library Department budget for books and other related bibliographical acquisitions materials, during the period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025.”

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the estimated expenditure from the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund in an amount not to exceed One Hundred Six Thousand Four Hundred Seventy-Two Dollars and Zero Cents (\$106,472.00) to support the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Fund Programmatic Plan for FY25 as recommended by the Fellowes Athenaeum Trust Advisory Committee and to be presented at an upcoming meeting.”

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston delegate approval of any contract deemed to be of a critical nature by the President of the Library during the period between May 2024 and September 2024 to the Finance and Audit Committee.”

Next, the Board discussed the 2024-2025 Trustees schedule. With no questions, or comments, a motion was duly made, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve.

VOTED: “that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the proposed schedule of Trustees meetings for 2024-2025 as noted below, such meetings to be full meeting of the board or alternately of the executive committee, on occasion.”

- Tuesday, September 24, 2024, 8:30-10:30 am, Central Library
- Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 3:00-5:00pm, Mattapan Branch
- Tuesday, January 28th, 2025, 8:30-10:30 am, Central Library
- Tuesday, March 18, 2025, 3:00-5:00 pm, Honan-Allston Branch

- **Tuesday, May 20, 2025, 8:30-10:30 am, Annual Meeting*, Central Library**
- **Tuesday, June 3, 2025, 8:30-10:00am, (via Zoom) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ONLY**
**All Meetings dates/times/location are subject to change; see BPL website for details*

Ms. Arana Ortiz invited the public to offer comments. The Clerk noted there were two written comments submitted to the Trustees in advance from James Hill and Kelly Layton.

Ann Langone, BPL employee, was heartened to hear the BPL's DEI statement read, and could not agree more. She explained there was a proposal on the table for those that do not celebrate non-traditional holidays. She also explained that the second proposal on the table was for differential pay for a second language.

Allison Hahn, Vice President of PSA, noted that they heard the comments from Ann Langone, and added she feels we are not doing enough to maintain key staff members. We are losing staff, noting the departure of the social worker for better support and better pay. She was disappointed to learn that the BPL was denied their request for a 2nd social worker. She emphasized they are understaffed as a library. She stated they cannot do outreach if chained to a desk.

Amy Layton, BPL staff member, expressed she has many concerns for how money is spent. It is not on necessary repairs and staff. No stipend for PSA colleagues for language differential.

Puck Malamud, BPL staff member, noted staff morale is at a low, understaffing due to low wages. Puck explained they lost another cataloging candidate. Need wage increases to reflect Boston's cost of living and having hard time maintaining good people.

Elissa Cadilic, President of AFSCME, stated that she was standing before the Board to talk about equity, staff development, and talk about inclusiveness. She expressed disappointment in only introducing managers at high-level and not including all areas and levels, i.e. IT staff, drivers, and custodians. She continued that there were nine vacancies in facilities alone. One was a brand-new position for traveling custodian. Buildings are not to the standard; without proper support- it is appalling. She echoed comments made about unions and non-traditional holidays, She stated knowing Boston Public Schools have recognition for holidays.

With no further business, Ms. Arana Ortiz adjourned the first meeting at 10:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Carver, Clerk of the Board