

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON
Meeting of the Trustees as a Corporation and Administrative Agency
Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.
Honan-Allston Branch Library, 300 N Harvard Street, Allston, MA 02134
MINUTES

The Meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston (“BPL”) held on Tuesday, February 4, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. at the Honan-Allston Branch Library in the Rita DiGresse Community Room.

All present at the meeting included: Chair, Dr. Ray Liu, Vice Chair Evelyn Arana Ortiz (Remote) and Trustees: Joe Berman, Cheryl Cronin, John Hailer, Jeff Hawkins, Julie Kim (Remote), Senator Mike Rush, Christian Westra, and Lynn Perry Wooten. Trustees Jim Canales, Navjeet Bal, Jonathan Lavine, Jose C. Masso III, and Porsha Olayiwola were absent.

Also present were BPL President David Leonard, Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver, BPL staff, and members of the public.

Dr. Ray Liu, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. and provided brief introductory remarks. He acknowledged the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) welcome statement. The Clerk conducted a roll call, confirming a quorum, some trustees participated remotely (noted). Everyone was reminded that the meeting was being recorded, and they were provided with instructions on how to sign up for public comment. The Clerk reminded all that the meeting had a hard stop of 5:00 p.m. due to schedule conflicts.

Dr. Liu thanked the Friends of the Honan-Allston Branch for providing pizza, snacks, and beverages for the meeting.

The first matter of business was the approval of the meeting minutes from December 13, 2024. No comments or edits were made, and the board voted to approve them.

Dr. Liu invited David Leonard to give his President’s Report. President David Leonard thanked the host of the meeting, Branch Librarian Carin O’Connor. He thanked the Honan-Allston staff and the Friends of the Branch for their hospitality and ongoing support.

The Branch Librarian, Carin O’Connor along with Vice President of the Friends of the Honan-Allston Library, Sarah Markell, offered greetings from the branch. Ms. O’Connor highlighted some facts about the branch and some of the various programs they offered as well as reviewing their circulation numbers. She introduced her staff and introduced Ms. Markell.

Ms. Markell also introduced her board members. The Friends sponsor various adult programs, the book club, and Sip and Stitch. They support the library through various grants, donations, and membership dues. They aim to support the library in any way they can.

Mr. Leonard introduced Kyrah Altman, the new Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Manager, who will focus on supporting staff and fostering cultural transformation within the library system.

President Leonard provided a brief update on the implementation of the BPL Strategic Plan, emphasizing the next 3-6 months of work, including turning initiatives into actionable plans and increasing staff and donor engagement.

Mr. Leonard reviewed the operational and capital updates. He shared that BPL currently has 495 employees, with vacancies in the 40-50 range. He discussed ongoing mechanical issues with older library buildings and provided a brief overview of the Capital Projects List. He also highlighted the coalition's push for increased state funding for libraries, noting that the upcoming budget season would be a crucial time for advocating.

The next topic on the agenda was the Finance and Audit Report. Ms. Evelyn Arana Ortiz, along with Ms. Emily Tokarczyk (Chief Financial Officer) presented two contracts for approval:

The first was the library's Microsoft 365 renewal. It was for the services of all BPL computers. A motion was duly made and voted unanimously to approve.

VOTED: "that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve Microsoft 365 Renewal in the amount of Two Hundred Sixty-Eight Four Hundred Sixty-Seven and Ninety Cents (\$268,467.90)."

The second was to approve the purchase of seven vehicles (including hybrid options) using unrestricted trustee funds.

VOTED: "that, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston approve the purchase of the fleet of vehicles from Colonial Ford, 11 Pilgrim Hill Road, Plymouth, MA 02360 in the amount of Three Hundred Eighteen Thousand Two Hundred Eighteen Dollars and Twenty Cents (\$318,218.20)."

Ms. Emily Tokarczyk provided a detailed breakdown of BPL's annual operating budget, which totals approximately \$62 million for FY25. She explained there were five sources that fund the library's annual operating budget: City, state funding (which includes interlibrary loan, Library for the Commonwealth, and our state aid) philanthropy through the fund and our other affiliates, the trust funds, and then earned revenue (which includes the private event program, royalties, leases). 80% of the funding comes from the city budget. Personnel costs represent the largest expenditure at 64%. The library also faces potential funding gaps related to strategic plan implementation. She discussed the FY26 budget submission, which reflects a 3.4% increase, primarily due to union contract salary increases. The budget office meeting is scheduled for the coming months, with the mayor's proposed budget to be released on April 9th, followed by City Council hearings.

Jeff Hawkins, Chair of the BPL Fund, briefly gave an update of the BPL Fund. He shared that the fund has raised over \$35 million in five years. The Fund's focus is aligned with the library's strategic plan, with specific emphasis on areas such as "Activating Democracy", "Unlocking Opportunity", and "Sharing Treasures."

He also introduced a new two-year, \$5 million fundraising initiative, "Bridge to McKim Renovation," aimed at engaging patrons and securing future funding.

Dr. Liu announced the sunset of two committees: the Strategic Planning Committee and the Community Engagement Committee. He thanked committee members for their hard work, particularly those trustees who had served on these committees, including Christian Westra, Jose C. Masso III, Joe Berman, and Cheryl Cronin, and Evelyn Arana Ortiz

Dr. Ray Liu called for New Business. Joe Berman announced the Literary Lights Gala on April 27th, the largest fundraiser organized by The Associates of the BPL and encouraged the Board to attend.

The Chair called for public comments. Several public comments were made, notably regarding the denial of sick leave for Eve Griffin, a long-time BPL employee battling metastatic breast cancer.

Eve Griffin (via a colleague) expressed her frustration with the denial of her request for additional paid sick time from the PSA sick bank, emphasizing the library's failure to support employees facing serious health challenges.

Allie Hahn, President of PSA, urged the trustees to use their authority to overturn the decision, stressing the importance of aligning the library's policies with its values of solidarity and compassion.

Other BPL employees who spoke included Amy Layton, Crystal Rogers, Bryce Healy, and Elissa Cadillic, all of whom voiced strong support for Eve and called on the Board to reverse the decision.

A fellow librarian from another metropolitan city named Carissa joined via Zoom. She shared her sentiments of support for the reversal of the decision to aid Eve Griffin.

Anthony Desiderio of the Allston Civic Association requested a discussion with the IT team to improve audio-visual equipment for hybrid meetings at the library with a collaborative partner who has secured funding for it.

The Clerk noted that several written comments were submitted in advance and shared with the Board and posted to the website.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Carver
Clerk of the Board

Boston Public Library Appropriate Use Policy

Purpose:

The Boston Public Library is proudly open to all; a space for everyone, shared and used by the community for many different reasons and in many ways. We believe in an inclusive community propelled by curiosity, connection, and the pursuit of knowledge.

The Library expects each of our facilities to be clean, comfortable, and safe places for community use. The Library is responsible for establishing rules of conduct to protect the rights and safety of Library patrons, staff, and volunteers, and for preserving and protecting the Library's property. The Library and Library staff do not tolerate hate speech directed at staff or anyone in Library spaces.

Policy:

To ensure our commitment to equity, inclusion, and access, the Appropriate Use Policy applies to all. It applies everywhere the Library provides service, including on Library property, in the community, through our website or social media, and by phone or email. Library staff will enforce this policy in a consistent manner.

While at the library, we expect that you:

- Be safe
- Respect other patrons and library staff
- Respect library materials and property
- Comply with requests from library staff
- Obey the law

All designated children's spaces are reserved for use by children under the age of 13, their caregivers, and those retrieving material from the collection.

All designated teen spaces are reserved for teens (13-18 and current high school students), and those retrieving material from the collection.

Violations of this policy and/or law may result in the restriction and/or termination of Library privileges, including access to Library buildings and the use of Library computers and other equipment.

If you have a question or concern about this policy or our Library spaces, please speak to a Library staff member or contact ask@bpl.org

The following actions are examples of conduct not allowed on Library property:

Unsafe or Disruptive to Library Use	<p>Examples (including but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities or behaviors that may result in injury or harm to yourself or others. • Excessive or unnecessary noise that disturbs others or impedes library service (please note, not all library spaces are quiet spaces). • Unwanted conversation or personal interaction with staff or others, including but not limited to: inappropriate personal comments, staring, sexual advances, or physical and/or verbal harassment. • Inadequate clothing for public space including no shoes and/or no shirt. • Neglecting to provide proper supervision of children, including leaving children alone or in the care of others who cannot provide adequate care. (please see the Safe Child Policy for further detail) • Bringing animals into the library, except for service animals as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All disruptive animals will be asked to leave the Library. • Littering. • Distributing literature, gathering signatures, soliciting donations, or conducting surveys inside a Library facility or on Library grounds. • Interfering with or blocking the free movement of staff or others. • Conducting unauthorized tours on Library property.
Inappropriate Use of Library Services or Property	<p>Examples (including but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering nonpublic/staff areas without permission. • Entering or remaining in the Library outside Library operating hours, or camping on Library grounds. • Moving Library furniture without prior staff approval. • Leaving personal items unattended. • Consuming food or beverages outside of designated areas. • Using restrooms for loitering or bathing, shampooing, and/or laundry. • Using skateboards, roller skates, bicycles, motorized or non-motorized scooters inside the Library or on Library grounds. Bicycles are not permitted inside the Library. • Bringing in any item or items that block access to or use of Library spaces or creates space and accessibility concerns. Staff may ask patrons to move or remove items. • Inappropriate use of Library property, including computer hardware and software, printers (see Library Policy, BPL Internet Access Policy), copiers, phones, and other equipment.
Noncompliance with Staff	<p>Examples (including but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failing to comply with a reasonable staff request to adjust behavior to comply with Library policy, including being asked to leave the library. • Failing to exit at closing or during an evacuation.
Illegal: Observable Behavior	<p>Examples (including but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in any activity in violation of applicable law. • Verbally or physically harassing other patrons, volunteers, or staff, including stalking, offensive touching, and obscene acts such as sex acts and indecent exposure.

Prohibited by Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threatening other patrons, volunteers, or staff - verbally, physically or in writing, including all forms of electronic media. • Carrying firearms and/or dangerous weapons of any type. • Selling, using, or possessing illegal drugs or selling cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana. • Use or consumption of alcohol, marijuana, or tobacco. Vaping and smoking are not permitted. • Gambling. • Assault, fighting, or challenging to fight. • Damaging or stealing personal or Library property, including computer hardware and software, printers, copiers, phones, and other equipment.
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To ensure the safety of all at the Library, bags and other personal items are subject to inspection by security and other authorized personnel. The Library reserves the right to limit the size and number of items brought into the Library to protect staff and patron safety and ensure accessibility.

Library staff, contractors, and/or law enforcement officers may intervene to stop prohibited activities and behaviors. Failure to comply with given instructions may result in 1) withdrawal of a person's permission to remain on Library property and/or 2) issuance of a Notice of Trespass from Library property and services for a period of one day to indefinitely, as provided in policies and procedures issued by the Trustees of the Boston Public Library. A criminal law violation may also result in arrest and/or prosecution.

Administrative Review and Appeal of Notices of Trespass

An individual who has received a Notice of Trespass may, within 30 days, request an administrative review of the trespass order. An administrative review must be made in writing and through the President's Office. Requests may be sent to (email address) OR mailed to 700 Boylston Street, c/o The President's Office, Boston, MA 02116.

Commented [AW1]: which email we're including is being finalized, this is the only TBD language of the policy

The Boston Public Library Board of Trustees has the authority under state law to establish reasonable rules regarding the Library and to exclude any person who willfully and persistently violates those rules. Enforcement of these rules will be conducted in a fair and reasonable manner. Library staff and/or security staff will intervene to stop prohibited activities and behaviors. Failure to comply with the Library's established rules, regulations, and policies could result in removal from the premises and expulsion from the Library for a period of one day to indefinitely, or in arrest or prosecution. Violations could also result in the restriction and/or termination of Library privileges, including the use of Library computers and other equipment.

Expulsions may be appealed in writing to the President's Office. Requests may be sent to (email address) OR mailed to 700 Boylston Street, c/o The President's Office, Boston, MA 02116.

Board of Trustees Briefing: BPL AI-Enhanced Digitization Initiative

For board meeting: March 18, 2025

Initiative Overview

The Boston Public Library is planning to launch an ambitious three-year AI-Enhanced Digitization Initiative, funded by OpenAI, to expand public access to some of our most historically valuable research materials. This strategic partnership will provide multi-year funding that will enable the mass digitization of hundreds of thousands of items from collections that have previously been inaccessible due to their scale or complexity, while reimagining our digitization workflow by exploring artificial intelligence capabilities to enhance metadata, improve text recognition, boost accessibility, and enable new forms of discovery. We anticipate the result will be a significant expansion of freely accessible digital resources and a sustainable model for future digitization efforts.

Strategic Alignment

This initiative advances priorities within BPL's Strategic Plan across the strategic roles of Life-Long Learning and Research Partner, Trusted Resource, and Community Engager:

- Preserve and share our heritage and history with innovative approaches
- Build a true "Library without Walls" by enhancing the digital experience
- Democratize access to research collections through digital channels
- Explore and evaluate emerging technologies and tools

Key Partnerships

This initiative is made possible through multiple strategic partnerships:

- **OpenAI:** Multi-year funding and technical resources to support large-scale digitization and the implementation of AI-enhanced processes. This funding is part of OpenAI's NextGenAI initiative, which is providing up to \$50M in grants to 15 leading research institutions, including Harvard, Howard, and MIT.
- **Harvard's Institutional Data Initiative:** Guidance on metadata extraction and AI methodologies with emphasis on research standards and institutional values.
- **Internet Archive:** Potential expansion of our scanning service partnership.

- **Digital Commonwealth:** Integration with our statewide services to extend benefits to partner institutions across Massachusetts

Ethical Framework

All implementations will be guided by core principles including:

- Transparency in AI use and methodology
- Commitment to veracity and trust in our collections
- Digital equity and inclusion in both process and outcomes
- Clear rights management with focus on public domain materials

Anticipated Benefits

For the Library:

- Sustainable model for digitizing complex, large-scale collections
- Development of staff expertise in emerging technologies
- Enhanced reputation as a leader in digital library innovation
- Increased use and relevance of research collections

For the public:

- Free, unrestricted access to millions of pages of historically significant materials
- Enhanced discovery capabilities that make complex collections more usable
- Support for new forms of research, education, and creative use
- Preservation of at-risk materials through digital access

For other research institutions:

- Practical models for responsible integration of AI in library workflows
- Advancement in field-wide understanding of AI applications in cultural heritage
- Expanded public digital infrastructure through multi-stakeholder partnerships
- Contribution to open source and free-to-use AI training models for libraries

New Chinatown Branch Library

49 Hudson Street



Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC), will construct the branch condo to core/shell condition and then the City will purchase the condo at cost from ACDC and perform the fit-out construction work

Purchase price not to exceed \$11,812,500

17,000 square foot branch condo across two floors with 110 units of affordable housing

ACDC plans to start construction spring/summer 2025, The condo should be ready for the City to start our fit out sometime in 2027