

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Special Meeting of April 19, 2019

Present: Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing, Ms. Hess, Ms. Moss, Ms. Reall, Ms. Sheirer, and Ms. Wight. **Also Present:** Senator Jo Comerford.

Just prior to the start of the meeting, Senator Comerford was given a tour of the library by Ms. Downing, Ms. Moss and Mr. Carrier. They visited the circulation desk, the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum (CCPLM), the Hampshire Room for Local History, the Children's Department and "Teen" Room, and the interlibrary loan and storage area in the basement.

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 PM in the Library Director's office.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

State Support for Library Funding

Ms. Downing thanked Senator Comerford for taking the time in her busy schedule to visit the library and talk to the Trustees about support for Forbes and library funding.

Ms. Hess identified herself as the board's legislative liaison and thanked Senator Comerford for the actions she has already taken since taking office in January, including attending library legislative day and the library legislative breakfast. Ms. Hess said that on the state and city level, the library budget is such a small amount benefiting such a large constituency. She said that everyone is welcome at the library and it has become an important community center. She is concerned about the budget for the Massachusetts Library System (MLS) which funds such important services as interlibrary loan and its delivery service.

Ms. Downing said she was also most concerned with the MLS line item in the budget. The other line item of concern is the State Aid to Public Libraries, of which Forbes gets 80% and Lily Library 20%. State Aid to Public Libraries reached a high in 2009 before the recession when it took a hit, and has not been keeping pace with inflation since then. It is tied to the state certification program which allows Forbes to participate in interlibrary loan and the LSTA grant program.

Senator Comerford said that public libraries are an original radical concept in that they provide a free service to everyone. Her mother was a librarian and Senator Comerford is now a member of the library legislative caucus. She suggested reaching out to Eric Lesser, who is also a library champion in this area.

Mr. Carrier said that many years ago he spoke with Stan Rosenberg about the possibility of sometime in the future moving the CCPLM into the old court house downtown where Coolidge practiced as an attorney. He saw recently in the newspaper that there is a possibility of the state taking ownership of the court house and asked if this is an appropriate time for the Trustees to consider this possibility. Senator Comerford said that the Hampshire Council of Governors (HCG) is in a perilous financial situation and she is part of a delegation looking at the situation. If HCG is dissolved by the legislature, the court house will be returned to the state as an asset. If the Trustees are interested in pursuing this option, they should let her know and she will

convey their interest to the appropriate parties. Ms. Comerford said it would be interesting to have the CCPLM in a working court house where it might get more foot traffic and draw more visitors. Mr. Carrier asked Ms. Downing to put this on the agenda for the Trustees' meeting on April 25. Senator Comerford said the building is in need of significant renovation. She said the Trustees should let her know if they are interested in looking at it.

Ms. Hess asked Senator Comerford about the status of the Fair Share Amendment which proposes creating an additional tax of four percentage points on the portion of a person's annual income that is above \$1 million. Senator Comerford is a co-sponsor of the bill and said that the process to approve it could take up to five years. She said there are more immediate needs which are being addressed through short term revenue bills, which she is working on with members of the house.

Ms. Hess asked Senator Comerford how the Trustees can help her legislative agenda. Senator Comerford said that librarians are very good at advocacy with good organizational skills and clear "asks." She said they should continue to make their voices heard and when the house budgeting process starts next week, they should call the chair of the House Ways & Means Committee, the Governor, and the Senate President to ask them to support more library funding. She said it is important to be able to demonstrate demand from constituents.

Senator Comerford thanked the Trustees for their work and left the meeting at 1:04 PM.

At 1:05 PM, Ms. Reall moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Hess seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 PM.