

**TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY**  
**Thursday, December 17, 2020**

**Present:** Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing, Ms. Hess, Ms. Moss, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, Ms. Sheirer, Ms. Wight. **Also Present:** JoEllen MacKenzie, representative of the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA). **Absent:** Ms. Buckhout.

Pursuant to Governor Baker's Emergency Order Modifying the State's Open Meeting Law issued March 12, 2020, this meeting was held using remote participation via Zoom teleconferencing.

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 PM.

**Bills & Warrants**

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to verbally approve the warrant dated December 17, 2020. Ms. Hess seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. Ms. Downing will wait until there are a few more months of warrants and then schedule a time for the trustees to come in and physically sign them.

**Public Comments**

There were were no public comments.

**Secretary's Report**

Ms. Hess moved that the Secretary's Report of November 19, 2020 be accepted and placed on file with a minor correction. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Treasurer's Report**

Ms. Downing presented the Treasurer's Report of November 30 prepared by Ms. Buckhout. The General Aid Fund had positive net activity for the month of \$4,997 and has a balance of \$50,957. The beginning balance of this fund was increased by \$4,888.91 for COVID expenditures that were reclassified to a new fund called COVID in FY20. COVID related expenditures of \$11,080 from previous months in this fiscal year have been reclassified to the COVID Fund increasing the fund balance. The Book & Media Fund closed with positive net activity of \$9,436 and has a balance of \$6,958. The COVID fund had positive net activity of \$16,639 due to a \$21,346 payment for reimbursed COVID expenditures from the City of Northampton. Expenditures from other funds were reclassified to the COVID fund. The Go Local (Outside Voices) Grant had positive net activity of \$7,500 for grant income from the City of Northampton and has a balance of \$7,500. The Halberstadt Technology Fund had no activity but had \$73 of prior period expenses reclassified to the COVID fund and now has a balance of \$6,835. The M. Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund had positive net activity of \$981 and has a balance of \$1,251. The Morin Fund had negative net activity of \$1,267 and \$5,437 of prior months expenditures have been reclassified to the COVID fund. The Moving Memories IMLS Grant had negative net activity of \$869 and has a deficit of \$2,592. The Programming Fund-Adult had negative net activity of \$550 and a balance of \$6,499. The Staff Development Fund had negative net activity of \$546 and has a balance of \$807. The balance in the endowment as of November 30 was \$5,786,186.

Ms. Downing said that the budget is in good shape with increased expenses in some areas and reduced expenses in others. Personnel is overspent while work-study is under-spent, and she will soon ask for a transfer from the work-

**Treasurer's Report** (continued)

study budget line item to the personnel budget. The money received from the city for COVID related expenses was very helpful and frees up funds for additional PPE and custodial supplies. Ms. Downing said that the audit is taking longer than anticipated and will not be done by January as originally intended, and may in fact be delayed until after tax season. While it is desirable to have the audit done in a timely manner, the delay has allowed for some reclassification of COVID-related expenses. Mr. Carrier said that the trustees should discuss moving the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund to the endowment with Bartholomew at the January trustees' meeting. He asked that Ms. Downing keep an eye on any new round of Payroll Projection Program (PPP) funds that become available, so that Forbes can apply early for whatever funds it is eligible for.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report of October 31, 2020 and place it on file. Ms. Hess seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.**

Ms. Downing distributed a list of undesignated gifts totaling \$3,426 to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund, \$200 to the Book & Media Fund, \$25 to the Lyman Special Collections Fund, and \$10 to the Watson Copier Fund. In addition, \$1,424 in designated gifts were received for the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund; \$3,000 for the Book & Media Fund, \$100 for the Outreach Fund, and \$100 for the purchase of large print books.

Ms. Downing said that now that the target for the Book & Media Fund has been met, undesignated gifts will be put in the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund with a target goal of \$10,000. Ms. Downing sent a thank you video to Dr. Hershkowitz and will follow up with a phone call to make sure he knows how much the gift is appreciated.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the designated and undesignated gifts as proposed by Ms. Downing. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

There were no donations or receipts from sales/rents this month.

Ms. Downing said that an anonymous \$10,000 donation for the purchase of artwork by people of color was just received and she will report more on it at the trustees' meeting in January.

**Financial Report**

There was no financial report this month.

**Friends of Forbes**

Ms. Wight attended the Friends of Forbes virtual meeting on December 2 and reported that they talked about what to do with money not spent in this year's budget, adult programming, and volunteer appreciation. Their membership mailing went out in November and they discussed moving it earlier next year. They are still waiting for a couple of checks from the wine tasting and discussed fundraising ideas around Valentines' Day. Children's and Young Adult Librarian, Sarah Johnson, gave the same departmental report that she gave to the trustees' last month. The Friends are paying for a live webcam for Paco, the fish in the Children's Room.

### **Administrative Report**

Ms. Downing reported that the new book drops arrived this month after a long delay. They are significantly larger than the old ones which will assist with the workflow and leave room for future circulation growth. Mr. Petcen and Ms. Moss worked together on the installation which is nearly complete. They should be in use very soon and then the old drops will be removed and reused or recycled.

Painting in the young adult room has been completed and it brightens up the space just as it was hoped it would.

The annual volunteer appreciation event and holiday staff gathering have both moved online this year. While everyone will miss sharing food and drink and having in-person conversations, all are grateful that technology will allow staff to safely connect. The holiday gift that the board provided for staff was announced and is very much appreciated.

Several staff will begin reviewing the library's cybersecurity and making recommendations for improvements beginning in January.

Adam Novitt from Lilly Library has approached Forbes about collaborating on programming. A pilot program, together with Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, is being offered consisting of a two-part series of nature themed book discussions called "Reading Nature". The programming committee will be meeting in January to discuss what might be feasible in the future.

The FY21 legislative budget called for a 3% or larger increase in all of the library lines including a 20% increase in the State Aid to Local Libraries line. Unfortunately, the Governor has vetoed increases in 4 of the 7 library budget lines. The legislature now has an opportunity to override the Governor's vetoes and restore the funds to the reduced lines. The State Aid to Local Libraries line was not reduced in the Governor's budget. Work will begin on the FY22 budget very soon and it has the potential to be an "austere" budget.

Ben Kalish figured out how to add closed captioning to all of the library's virtual programs on Zoom. It has been used successfully this past week for several programs and the response is positive.

Information Services is exploring software to add real time chat assistance for the public to the website. Springfield City Libraries offers this service and it has been very well received. Not only will it increase access to staff to get questions answered it will also provide valuable information about ways to improve navigation or content on the website.

The temporary delivery service to those over 65 with an underlying health condition has been renamed to "Pandemic Delivery Service". Maria Sperduti has been working with several staff to get the details sorted out for launch right after January 1.

The winter reading challenge will take place in January. The goal is to read 3 books over the course of the month but any and all reading is a reason to celebrate. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss hope that the trustees will participate, and an announcement about signing up will be on the library's Facebook page.

Staff received an illustrated thank you note from the Jones Family that made everyone smile. A copy was distributed to the trustees.

### **Phased Reopening Plan Update**

Ms. Downing reported that she and Ms. Moss continue to monitor the case numbers in the library's service area. The library is holding relatively steady in the yellow service category which means self-service holds for now. They are anticipating that it may be necessary to move back to red service level at some point over the next month which means that only curbside service would be offered while continuing with all of the virtual offerings.

They are actively working on figuring out how to keep staff working the front door comfortable and library materials dry on inclement weather days now that the tent has been removed for the winter. The staff continue to impress them with their resilience, camaraderie and commitment and they are very grateful to them for all of their hard work.

Ms. Hess moved that the Administrative Report including the Phased Reopening Plan Update be accepted and placed on file. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

### **Next Meetings**

The next regular meeting of the trustees was scheduled for Thursday, January 21 at 3:45 PM. Ms. Downing will ask Ms. Buckhout to invite the representatives from Bartholomew Inc. to the meeting.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held Wednesday, January 6, at 6:30 PM. Ms. Hess will attend on behalf of the trustees.

### **Communications**

Ms. Downing received an email on December 9 from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) about the status of the current State Aid Program and the extended timeline for certification due to budget delays. The MBLC is relaxing the standards for both the book & media expenditures and open hours. She and Ms. Moss will look at it more closely and bring recommendations to the trustees at the January meeting.

Ms. Hess sent an email to Representative Lindsay Sabadosa advocating for support for public libraries in the state budget and received a response on December 10 saying that Representative Sabadosa is impressed with all the library has been doing during the pandemic, and to let her know if there's anything she can do to help.

Ms. Hess sent an email to Senator Jo Commerford advocating for support for public libraries in the state budget and received a response on December 10 thanking her and the trustees for their work, and saying she is glad to make the libraries a priority.

### **Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) Policy**

Ms. Downing reported that the new Massachusetts Paid Family and Medical Leave policy will begin in January and benefit eligibility will roll out over the course of the first half of 2021. A policy has been drafted and was distributed to the trustees to review. It is being presented to the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA) who will bring it back to their membership. The policy is based largely on a sample provided by the employee association. While the PFML is a state policy, Ms. Downing said it should be included in Forbes' policies as a reminder to staff that it is available. The trustees decided earlier that the library would fund the full cost, while other organizations have asked employees to pay a share of the expense. The

**Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) Policy** (continued)

trustees are asked to preliminarily approve the policy contingent upon FLEA's approval. Because the law goes into effect on January 1, the new policy should be put in place as soon as possible.

Mr. Twarog moved to preliminarily approve the proposed new PFML policy contingent upon approval by FLEA. Ms. Hess seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Director's Evaluation**

Ms. Downing said that it is time for the Director's performance review. The last one was conducted early in 2019. Ms. Downing distributed documents from the last evaluation, and she and Mr. Carrier described the process that was used in 2019. Ms. Downing prepared a list of her accomplishments as they relate to her goals over the past 2 year. Library staff were asked to evaluate Ms. Downing's performance and the results were distributed to the trustees. The trustees then each filled out an evaluation form individually. A designated trustee compiled the results which were then discussed in executive session at a trustees' meeting and a consensus reached. This time Ms. Downing suggested that only staff who report to her be asked for feedback including the assistant director, administrative assistant, and department heads. Ms. Wight agreed to be the compiler of the results of the trustees' evaluations this year. Ms. Moss will facilitate getting the feedback from library staff and Ms. Downing will prepare a list of her accomplishments with a target date of mid-January, at which point the trustees will have what they need to fill out the evaluation form.

**Drainage Project**

Ms. Downing reported that the drainage project has been completed. The DPW did a great job managing the project and it is hoped that it achieves the project objectives of improving rainwater runoff to limit erosion of the hill and its impact on the bike path down below.

**Unemployment Claims Update**

Ms. Downing reported that the library has signed up to work with Unemployment Tax Control Associates (UTCA) who is now managing the library's unemployment claims. Although there haven't been any more claims this month, there has been confirmation from many sources about the widespread fraudulent claims being filed. UTCA will review claims and advise on the best way to handle each claim, and they will audit monthly statements. It is believed this will adequately address the fraudulent claims Forbes has received and that no further action is needed at this time. UTCA is suggesting that Forbes review and update policies for part-time workers not covered by the FLEA contract, and that those policies form the basis of an employment contract. There are implications for the FLEA contract where some content isn't clear. Mr. Carrier said that the contract policies should go through the labor negotiations sub-committee.

**Pronoun Guide**

Ms. Downing reported that the library has encouraged staff to include their pronouns on their name tags and in other places where they are identified. This is an important step in creating a culture that is inclusive for transgender and non-binary people to feel safe and visible. Ms. Downing distributed a short piece about the importance and impact of pronouns.

### **Community Engagement**

Ms. Moss said that Forbes continues to meet with the neighboring libraries to coordinate and share ideas and resources as they work to make library services available for the community as safely as possible. She distributed a list of recent and upcoming community engagement events.

### **Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings**

CCPLM Standing Committee - Ms. Downing reported that the programming committee held a program called "Opening the Door to Hope: Coolidge and Civil Rights," which was a conversation between historian Rushad Thomas and Bill Scher, vice president of the CCPLM standing committee. The program was well attended and received and is now available on the Forbes Library YouTube channel.

<https://youtu.be/dHEvjcbMZFg> The video already has 165 views which is three times as many as who were present at the virtual screening. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing said she has been sending press releases to the Daily Hampshire Gazette and Springfield Republican.

Development Committee - Ms. Downing reported that the annual appeal has received just over \$12,500 in contributions and fundraising efforts are now being focused on the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book. There were 16 donations on Giving Tuesday for \$1,184.

Racial & Social Justice Committee - Ms. Hess and Ms. Downing reported that they are surveying participants about the level 1 Interrupting Racism training that was held last month and announcing level 2 dates which are March 8, 15 and 22 from 10-12. The first meeting of the community based Racial & Social Justice Advisory Committee was held and a schedule is being developed for meetings in 2021. The Advisory Group looked at a list of Forbes strengths and areas of opportunities. They discussed the Boston Public Library's racial equity plan and what changes to make to Forbes' hiring plan. They are meeting again on January 11. Ms. Prabhaker said she felt hopeful after the meeting that change is possible with many different people coming together.

### **Other Business**

Ms. Downing thanked the trustees for the holiday card and bonus. Mr. Carrier thanked Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss again for all their hard work this year during the pandemic. He said it was encouraging that Forbes was getting through the year with its finances in better shape than what was expected. Ms. Hess echoed Mr. Carrier's appreciation for all that Ms. Downing, Ms. Moss and library staff are doing. Ms. Downing said she could not do all she has done without the help of Ms. Moss. Mr. Carrier also thanked the Friends for all their continued support which makes so much possible.

At 5:00 PM Ms. Hess moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.