

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Present: Ms. Buckhout, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing, Ms. Hess, Ms. Moss, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, Ms. Sheirer, Ms. Wight. **Also Present:** Serena Smith, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library; Jason Petcen, representative of the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA). **Absent:** None.

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 4:01 PM.

Bills & Warrants

Ms. Hess made a motion to verbally approve the warrant dated March 17, 2021. 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. 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 no public comments.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Hess moved that the Secretary's Report of February 18, 2021 be accepted and placed on file with a few minor corrections. 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.

Ms. Hess said that she does not plan to run for re-election in the fall after serving three full terms. She hopes that more diversity can be brought to the board. Mr. Carrier said that he does plan to run for another term. He said that when recruiting others to run for trustee to keep in mind how much the position has changed over the years and to seek someone with a connection to the library, an interest in public libraries, a willingness to fundraise, and who is easy to work with and has time for all the committee meetings each month.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Buckhout presented the Treasurer's Report of February 28, 2021. The General Aid Fund had positive net activity of \$23,530 and a balance of \$39,819. Revenue is higher than budgeted by \$4,826 attributed to the increase in state aid, and expenses are underspent by \$10,844. The Book & Media Fund had positive net activity of \$2,680 and a balance of \$5,370. The Externally Financed Transactions Fund had positive net activity of \$5,839 and has a balance of \$64. The Garvey Book & Media Fund had negative net activity of \$3,563 which was the balance transferred to the endowment and now has a zero balance. The Go Local (Outside Voices) Grant had negative net activity of \$571 and has a balance of \$6,929. The M. Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund received general donations of \$25,092 and \$3,500 from the Friends of Forbes. The balance through January of \$16,247 has been transferred to the endowment creating the positive net activity for the month of \$12,341 and a balance of \$28,589. The current fund balance will be transferred to the endowment by the end of the month. The Morin Fund had negative net activity of \$45 and has a balance of \$87,897. The Moving Memories IMLS Grant had positive net activity of \$2,867 and has a deficit of \$1,809. The Outreach Fund had negative net activity of \$1,397 and has a balance of \$8,368. The balance in the endowment as of February 28 was \$5,966,310. Ms. Buckhout said

Treasurer's Report (continued)

that she will be communicating with Florence Bank about the PPP loan forgiveness on Friday. She will invite the representatives of Bartholomew Inc. to the next trustees' meeting.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report of February 28, 2021 and place it 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.

Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.

The following *undesigned gifts* were received since the last Trustees' meeting: \$2,000 from Jane Sommer, Northampton MA to the Morin Fund; \$323.55 from the Committee to Elect Andrew Smith, Northampton MA to the Morin Fund; \$250 in Memory of Zane Kotker from Lynn and David Barclay, Northampton MA to the Morin Fund; \$100 from Judith and Richard Abuza, Florence MA to the Morin Fund; \$100 from Brian Wilby, Florence MA to the Morin Fund; \$100 in Memory of Zane Kotker from Jay Neugeboren, New York NY to the Morin Fund; \$52 from Jonathan Hogan, Ware MA to the Morin Fund; \$51.50 in Memory of Zane Kotker from Linda Butler to the Morin Fund; \$50 in Memory of Zane Kotker from Roberta Liebman, Northampton MA to the Morin Fund; \$30 in Memory of Zane Kotker from Henry Rosenberg, Northampton MA to the Morin Fund; \$10 from Morgan Brown, Northampton MA to the Morin Fund; \$1,000 from the Estate of Gerald Budgar to Lyman Special Collections Fund.

The following *designated gifts* were received since the last Trustees' meeting: \$25,000 from Melvin Hershkowitz, Hyattsville MD to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund In Memory of Marie Hershkowitz; \$250 from "Mark Moggio Northampton Lions Club", Northampton MA to the Programming Fund - Children.

The following donations were received since the last Trustees' meeting: \$50 Northampton gift card from Cheri Buckhout; Antique Needlepoint Map of 1873; 8 small prints of 1936 flood photos from Mary Reutener; approximately 125 original letters addressed to or pertaining to Gerald Stanley Lee and family from Janet Ross; and 25 prints and 30 strings of negatives of the Northampton State Hospital ca 1996-97 from Meg Noonan.

Ms. Downing said that the goal for the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Book Fund had been met and that future undesigned gifts will go to the Morin Fund.

Ms. Hess made a motion to approve the designated and undesigned gifts and donations as proposed by Ms. Downing. 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.

There were no receipts from sales/rents this month.

FY22 Budget

The Mayor's office sent Forbes' draft budget which reflects a 3% increase in appropriations as was expected and matches the preliminary operating budget that was presented last month. The proposed FY22 city appropriation is \$1,432,981 and an additional \$273,060 in non-city funding bringing the total budget to \$1,706,041.

Ms. Downing reported that she, Ms. Moss, Ms. Hess, and Mr. Carrier had a budget discussion this morning with Mayor David Narkewicz and City Finance Director Susan Wright. It was a very productive and cordial meeting. Both Mayor Narkewicz and Ms. Wright are leaving office and said they will work on ensuring a smooth transition.

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FY22 Budget (continued)

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the preliminary FY22 Budget as presented by Ms. Downing pending approval by the city council. 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.

Friends of Forbes

Ms. Prabhaker attended the Friends of Forbes virtual meeting on March 3 and reported that they transferred about \$40,000 from the checking account to the endowment and now have over \$500,000 in the endowment. Ms. Moss credited the Friends with funding the expansion of wireless into the parking lot which has been very well received. The Special Events committee reported that they can't hold the wine tasting fundraiser in the fall and are exploring other forms of revenue enhancement, but that the loss of anticipated funding should not affect the core funding they've committed to. They are exploring different ideas around special events including concerts, game day, antiques road show and other events. A bench is being made in collaboration with Smith Vocational School and it will be part of a raffle during the garden tour. Other fundraising ideas include greeting cards with images from special collections. Ms. Downing thanked the Friends for the treats and for decorating the staff room for Valentines' Day. Forbes will participate again this year in "community reads" and the chosen book is *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel. Ms. Downing presented her funding wish list including 10 items totaling \$25,000. The Friends are offering a match for Library Giving Day. They enjoyed hearing from Ms. Moss about adult programming. They discussed planning for their annual meeting on April 7.

Administrative Report

Ms. Downing reported that this year's legislative agenda prioritizes State Aid to Local Libraries (budget line 7000-9501) which is a very important part of Forbes' operating budget each year. There was strong support from the western delegation at the virtual Legislative Breakfast that was held last week and there will be another opportunity to show support at the virtual Legislative Days being organized by the Massachusetts Library Association as well as the school library association. The session specifically for Western Massachusetts is on Tuesday, April 6, 10:00 AM and you can register at <https://mla.wildapricot.org/event-4169013>

Notes of appreciation for library services continue to pour in from community members. Here are two that were received this month:

So grateful for this extension of library broadband signal and for the printing services! You've done an amazing job of keeping this beloved library open during our plague years. Thank you, again and again. - Pelle Lowe

*I'm just doing a shout out for Faith! Yesterday she called me and through pure Moxie landed a vaccine for me at the Northampton Senior Center. It was amazing! Suddenly she was back on their site and a window had just opened for an appointment. She nailed it. It was so wonderful to celebrate that achievement with her! Please forward this where applicable. The whole Reference department is amazing! Truly.
Best regards, Susan Balboni*

The library loaned 4 laptops to the warming center day shelter that Manna is running so that guests could have internet access during their visit. Books and magazines were also sent.

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Administrative Report (continued)

Forbes has been awarded a \$450 Northampton Arts Council grant towards a program geared at local educators called Decolonize This Space: Building Racial Literacy and Anti-racist Practice for Educators presented by Wee the People. Sarah Johnson has extended the invitation to local schools and registration for the event is almost full.

The Friends annual meeting will be held over zoom and following the brief business meeting at 6:30 there will be a premier screening of a 35 minute documentary about Forbes Library that was directed and produced by Stan Sherer. It features historic and contemporary photographs along with interviews with staff. You can register to attend online, <https://forbeslibrary.libcal.com/event/7618927>.

Saturday, May 22 at 2 PM has been confirmed for the trustees' award ceremony. It was hoped that the preceding weekend could be reserved as well in case of inclement weather but Ms. Downing has a conflict so hopefully the weather will be good on May 22. Martha McCormick and Elaine Reall will be in attendance with their honored guests. We have not been able to confirm participation by Dr. Melvin Hershkowitz or his family but will continue to work on that.

Dr. Seuss Enterprises has ended the publication and licensing of six books by Theodor Seuss Geisel that have racist imagery. Forbes had 4 of the 6 in the collection and have decided to withdraw them in support of the library's mandate to be an anti-racist library. This decision was not made lightly. Because these books contain images that could cause harm to young readers, it was decided they did not belong in the collection. Ms. Downing said the books have been removed from the shelves but have not been discarded. Ms. Buckhout suggested that the books could be used in educational programs as examples of racism. Mr. Twarog suggested that the diversity committee could discuss how the books could be used. Ms. Hess said she had some hesitation over the censorship issue but believes their removal is a collection development issue and that the library makes decisions all the time about which books should be removed to make way for new materials. Ms. Prabhaker agreed and said that the fact that Seuss Enterprises decided to discontinue the books carries weight with her. Mr. Carrier raised the question of what other books with racist content might still be in the collection. Ms. Moss said that children's librarian Sarah Johnson has already looked at the children's collection and that weeding of the adult collection is done regularly and that is one of the factors they look at. Mr. Carrier asked about books that contain sexist, homophobic, or antisemitic content. Ms. Moss said there is a difference between a children's picture book and a book in the adult collection. Mr. Twarog said that this needs to be part of a much larger discussion and asked who makes the collection decisions. Ms. Prabhaker said it will be a complicated discussion, but that this decision is correct because the Seuss organization has discontinued the books and the images in the books can cause harm to children. Ms. Moss said that items are constantly being removed each year to make way for new books. It was agreed by consensus to discuss this further at the next trustees' meeting and Ms. Downing will share the collection development policy in advance of the meeting.

Most of the board's ethics certificates have expired. An email was forwarded with instructions to each board member needing to renew. The training and certification should be completed by April 10.

Phased Reopening Plan Update

Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss reported that Forbes' service population has remained in yellow for the last month matching the library's current service model. Staff

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Phased Reopening Plan Update (continued)

have been answering vaccination questions from the public and have surveyed staff about their intentions for getting the vaccine when it is ready and the results are encouraging for both benefitted and IPT staff. 86.4% can't wait to get the vaccine and 13.6% are pretty sure they'll get it.

Ms. Hess moved that the Administrative Report including the Phased Reopening Plan Update be accepted and placed on file. 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.

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, April 15 at 3:45 PM. Ms. Buckhout will invite the representatives from Bartholomew Inc. to attend. The following meetings have been scheduled for 2021: Thursday, May 20; Thursday, June 24; Thursday, July 22; Wednesday, September 15; Thursday, October 21; Thursday, November 18; Thursday, December 16. The meetings will be at 4:00 PM unless the representatives of Bartholomew are invited, in which case the meeting will begin at 3:45 PM.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held Wednesday, April 7, at 6:00 PM for the regular meeting and 6:30 PM for the annual meeting. Ms. Hess will attend the regular meeting on behalf of the trustees.

Communications

There were no communications this month.

Library Giving Day Mailing

Ms. Moss reported that Library Giving Day (LGD) is coming up on Wednesday April 7 and the Friends are providing a \$5,000 matching challenge grant which is the fundraising goal for the day. The Development Committee recommends that we do a postcard mailing to raise awareness of the online giving day. The trustees are asked to approve this request with the funds coming out of what is raised on LGD.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve funding for a postcard mailing to raise awareness about Library Giving Day to be funded from the proceeds raised. 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.

Lighting Upgrade

Ms. Downing said that she and Mr. Petcen have been working with the city to issue an RFP to improve lighting for safety reasons in the front vestibule and on the main staircase. A copy of the RFP was distributed to the trustees. The trustees were asked to authorize Mr. Carrier and Mr. Twarog to approve a winning bid with funding for the project of up to \$18,500 from the Aid Fund. This project was already approved in concept in last year's facilities plan.

Ms. Wight made a motion to grant Mr. Carrier and Mr. Twarog authorization to approve a winning bid for new lighting of up to \$18,500 from the Aid fund. 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.

Labor Relations

Ms. Downing reported that she and Ms. Moss met with Jason Petcen and Dylan Gaffney who are the current president and vice-president of the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA) for a semi-annual discussion. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss presented the desire to add a resignation policy to the contract and

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Labor Relations (continued)

discussed what it might include. Mr. Petcen and Mr. Gaffney said that FLEA will be holding a meeting soon and voting in new officers as well as taking a vote on the PFML policy that the trustees approved pending FLEA agreement last fall. The timetable was discussed and the first negotiation meeting will be set up after the April trustees meeting.

Mr. Carrier said that once the wording for the administration's proposal is drafted, it should be brought to the Labor Relations committee, Mr. Carrier and Ms. Prabhaker, for their review and then brought to the trustees for approval before open discussion with FLEA.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) Extension

Ms. Downing reported that while earlier relief packages allowed employers to voluntarily extend FFCRA and with that the corresponding tax credits through March 31, 2021, American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 allows for FFCRA to be extended now through September 30, 2021. It is also expanded in terms of covered reasons in that leave taken because the employee is receiving or recovering from a vaccination is now also eligible for the credit. Also of note here is that the ten-day maximum amount of paid sick leave that ran from April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021, will reset on April 1, 2021, allowing a new ten days of paid sick leave. Finally, it increases the aggregate maximum credit for qualified family leave wages from \$10,000 to \$12,000.

March Trustee Deep Dive

Ms. Downing reported that this month the MBLC has invited trustees together for an in-depth conversation on the topic of recruitment of new board members including how to use a board matrix. It is being offered twice and pre-registration is not required: Tuesday, March 16, 2021 from 6:00pm - 7:00pm - <https://mblc.libcal.com/event/7499993> and Thursday, March 25, 2021 from 10:00am - 11:00am - <https://mblc.libcal.com/event/7506560>_Ms. Hess has registered for the March 25 session.

Community Engagement

Ms. Moss reported that Forbes Library has been named as a community partner for a Smith College project led by The Jandon Center for Community Engagement and the Office of Multicultural Affairs at Smith College, titled 'Resistance Through Storytelling: Indigenous Histories/Radical Futures.' This project has been proposed as part of the Kahn Institute's Year on Democracies program for 2021-2022. We will find out if the project has been funded sometime this summer and it would start in the fall.

The Forbes Library Zine Club published *Dreaming the Future: Youth Voices on a Climate Just World* in collaboration with the UMass Amherst Feinberg Series, Lilly Library, Jones Library, and the Valley Zine Club with 22 contributions from young people. This is also available online: <https://blogs.umass.edu/feinberg/dreaming-the-zine/>

Ms. Moss distributed a list of recent and upcoming community engagement events.

Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings

CCPLM Standing Committee - Ms. Downing reported that this month marks the 100th anniversary of Coolidge's election as vice president. Forbes Library has applied to Mass Humanities for a Digital Capacity grant to provide technology in the Coolidge Museum for library programs to be live streamed and recorded. The \$5,000 grant includes funding for a camera, installation, computer and training. The library is partnering with Northampton Open Media and grants will be

Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings (continued)

announced around April 1. If the grant is not received Ms. Downing hopes the project can be implemented anyway.

Development Committee - Ms. Moss reported that welcome letters were sent to Forbes Legacy Society members this month to identify members who can be listed publicly. The committee is also preparing for Library Giving Day and asks board members to record a short video about why they give to Forbes. Videos can be recorded with a smartphone: <https://flipgrid.com/b53a06f8>

An additional donation of \$25,000 was received from Dr. Melvin Hershkowitz for his daughter's memorial fund bringing his total contribution to \$75,000 and the fund balance over \$100,000 allowing us to begin taking a sustainable yield for children's books beginning next fiscal year.

The BIPOC Art Committee will have its first meeting on Friday and a report will be given at the next trustees' meeting.

Presidential Legacies Discussion

Ms. Downing reported that Julie Bartlett Nelson led a discussion at the most recent CCPLM Standing Committee meeting about presidential legacies based on a few articles that were recently published. Copies of the articles were distributed to the trustees. She welcomed the trustees to think about their responses to the articles in light of the Coolidge museum and what they think are the key takeaways from the articles. The three articles are "Tarnished Legacies: Presidential libraries grapple with the histories of their subjects" by Lara Ewen in American Libraries Magazine, January 4, 2021; "People are calling for museums to be abolished. Can whitewashed American history be rewritten?" by Brian Boucher, CNN, July 12, 2020; and "A Dr. Seuss Expert Cuts Through the Noise on the Cancel Culture Controversy" by Adrienne Westenfeld, Esquire, March 5, 2021.

Mr. Carrier said that the Coolidge museum has always been a problem. The trustees have been so busy working on the building that it is only recently that they've been able to focus on the museum, and then COVID hit and pretty much shut everything down. It needs to be completely renovated and the exhibits re-thought, which requires money and staff, and the work is overwhelming. Ms. Wight said that the fact that the Coolidge museum is not mentioned in the article is telling in that no one even knows it exists. She said she is on the Coolidge committee because she believes in it and wants to make it better. It's part of the city and the history should be kept, but it needs to be modernized. Ms. Hess said it made her feel better that we are not the only museum going through this re-examination. Her thinking has evolved over her 11 years on the board and she feels that the museum is working to present an accurate and balanced portrayal of Coolidge. Mr. Carrier said that much of what needs to be done is not related to content, but has more to do with presentation. It's not a modern person's idea of what a museum should be.

At 5:12 PM Ms. Wight moved to adjourn the meeting. 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. The meeting was adjourned at 5:38 PM.