

**TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY**  
**Thursday, May 25, 2023**

**Present:** Ms. Debin Bruce, Mr. Russell Carrier, Ms. Kyle Hamilton, Ms. Molly Moss, Ms. Elizabeth Sheirer. **Also Present:** Eli Porth, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library; Jason Petcen, representative of the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA); Jeannette Muzima. **Present via Zoom:** Lisa Downing; Emily Prabhaker; Katy Wight; Nicole Sibley, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library. **Absent:** Mr. Joseph Twarog.

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 for some participants as indicated.

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

**Bills & Warrants**

The trustees signed the warrant dated May 25, 2023.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**Secretary's Report**

Ms. Bruce moved that the Secretary's reports of April 26, 2023 be accepted and placed on file with a minor correction. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Treasurer's Report**

Ms. Hamilton presented the Treasurer's Report for the month ending April 30, 2023. The General Aid Fund had negative net activity for the month of \$1,608 and ended with a balance of \$59,865. The Book & Media Fund had negative net activity of \$4,976 and has a balance of \$13,030. The Externally Financed Transactions Fund had negative net activity of \$600 and has a balance of \$3,297. The Garvey Book & Media Fund had positive net activity of \$61 and has a balance of \$3,297. The Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund had positive net activity of \$2,110 and has a balance of \$2,220 which will be transferred to the endowment. The Morin Fund had negative net activity of \$4,313 and has a balance of \$82,221. The Performance Stage Fund had positive net activity of \$15,000 and has a balance of \$35,000. The Programming Fund-Adult had positive net activity of \$2,526 and has a balance of \$7,408. The Programming Fund-Children had positive net activity of \$4,049 and has a balance of \$7,303. The Rosamond Chester Coolidge (RCCR) Fund had negative net activity of \$401 and has a balance of \$2,018. The Staff Development Fund had negative net activity of \$958 and has deficit of \$52. The Watson Copier Fund had positive net activity of \$692 and has a balance of \$4,154. The balance in the endowment as of April 30, 2023 was \$5,971,401.28.

Ms. Hamilton said that the process of creating the report this month was difficult. She is planning to set up a meeting with Ms. Buckhout next week to hammer out a more detailed structure around the rest of the transition, and will include Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss as needed. Mr. Carrier said the treasurer's job has grown over the past few years and has become more complicated, and there is a lot to learn. Mr. Carrier encouraged Ms. Hamilton to make recommendations to the trustees on any areas she thinks can be simplified.

**Treasurer's Report** (continued)

Ms. Bruce said that Florence Bank is currently offering easy-out CDs at about 4%. Mr. Carrier said that Ms. Hamilton and Ms. Buckhout should consider this option when conferring and making a recommendation next month about the library's short-term operating investments. Bartholomew Inc. has recommended treasuries which are earning about 5%. In response to a question from Ms. Hamilton, Mr. Carrier said that he thought it would be preferable to use the same auditors this year and that they will send a letter of engagement in June or July. The auditor's cost has increased significantly and will be considered in future decisions.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending April 30, 2023 and place it on file. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

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

Ms. Downing submitted a list of undesignated gifts received from multiple donors since the last trustees' meeting with \$1,516.85 going to the Morin Fund, \$1,750 to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund, and \$25.75 to the Rosamond Chester Coolidge Fund.

The following donations were received since the last trustees' meeting: Russell Carrier historical materials collection, and Nona Hatay arts publications.

Mr. Carrier requested that \$250 be added from the Morin Fund to the Marie Hershkowitz Fund to make it an even \$2,000 to transfer to the endowment.

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

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

Ms. Moss said that the gifts have been reported for a period spanning the middle of the month to the middle of the next month. In order to make them easier to track and reconcile, she proposed changing the gift reporting to reflect the calendar month, as is done with all the library's funds. At the June meeting, the gifts report will reflect May 15-31, and in July the report will be for June 1-30, and so on. The trustees agreed by consensus.

In response to a question from Ms. Bruce about thanking donors, Ms. Downing said that the names of donors and their addresses come in two month batches. Mr. Carrier said that donors can be thanked by phone, by a note, or in person, whichever is more comfortable for the person acknowledging the gift.

**FY2024 Book & Media Budget Income**

Ms. Moss reported that the state mandated Materials Expenditure Requirement (MAR) for FY24 is a number equivalent to 13% of Forbes' municipal appropriation or \$198,828 (provisionally). She will distribute a proposed FY24 Book & Media budget at next month's meeting that will reflect some changes in the allowable technology line item. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, she said that there are plans for eligible technology for the next two fiscal years.

**Forbes 990 Tax Form**

Ms. Buckhout has signed off on Forbes' 990 tax form and it was distributed to the trustees. It is anticipated that the FY22 audit will be completed soon and the auditors will attend an upcoming board meeting to present the audit.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve and sign the 990 tax form. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Department Report**

There was no department report this month.

**Friends of Forbes**

Mr. Twarog attended the May 3 meeting of the Friends of Forbes and submitted a report. The Friends welcomed a new member, Ella Longpre, who works on a literary journal at Smith College and is a free-lance web designer and professional writer. The Friends endowment is at approximately \$470,000. They are working to get their next newsletter out before the Garden Tour which is on June 10. The Special Events planning committee will be meeting to discuss an event on July 29 highlighting Coolidge's favorite pies. The recent raffle basket raised \$450. The Friends approved a funding request of \$2,000 for items related to the new Forbes branding. They also approved funding \$380 for life-size Coolidge cutouts to be used throughout the anniversary year celebration. Whatever funds are raised through the annual Florence Bank community awards will go towards the performance stage. They will also try to get on the list at River Valley Coop for the checkout charity. A lot of the information on the Friends of Forbes website is out of date, and needs to be more interesting with less text. Flower bulbs that were donated by Cedar Chest last fall were planted by Ms. Bruce. Ms. Downing said that the Friends have been very generous and she is very appreciative.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the Friends of Forbes report and place it on file. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Administrative Report**

Ms. Downing reported that the administrative contracts are due to be renewed in July. She has discussed it with Jennie Lamour and there are no changes to request at this time. Ms. Downing will include an updated draft with new term dates in next month's packet.

Smith Vocational High School celebrated the 5th anniversary of their magazine featuring writing and visual arts by students at a celebration that Forbes hosted late last month. It was a great event and the students, families, and faculty were delighted to be at Forbes.

Forbes has been assigned Alta Stark as the new liaison for Smith College. She is the Director of Internal Communications and Community Relations and Ms. Bruce and Ms. Downing had the chance to meet with her and Susan Fliss, Dean of Libraries, this month. Ms. Downing was able to share background on Forbes and Smith College's long history. She plans to reach out and offer her a tour of the library. Mr. Carrier said that he would like to attend the tour. In response to a question from Ms. Muzima, Ms. Downing said that Forbes would be offering other tours in the future that Ms. Muzima could attend.

Ella Longpre, she/they, has joined the Friends board. She is a writer and enjoys event work. With a heavy heart Ms. Downing shared the passing of

**Administrative Report** (continued)

former Friends board member Kathleen Doherty. Ms. Doherty continued to volunteer after her term on the board ended and will be deeply missed.

Ms. Downing gave a quick reminder that the garden tour is on Saturday, June 10 and tickets along with raffle tickets are now on sale.

Visitors to the library have been greeted by dozens of tulips that have brightened the garden beds by the back and front doors. Many thanks again to Cedar Chest for donating the bulbs and to Debin Bruce and her neighbor David Barclay for doing the planting last fall.

Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss are pleased to announce that Alene Moroni has accepted the position of Head of Technical Services. Ben Kalish has also accepted a change in job. His new position is Cataloger/Technology Librarian. They both will be training under Paula Elliott in the coming weeks before she retires on June 23. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss wish Ms. Elliott a very happy retirement! Ms. Moss said that after the changes, there will be one open position in Public Services.

On Tuesday, May 16 there was a delayed opening to allow for an all staff meeting in the morning. Library staff gathered together to learn more about the strategic planning process and brainstorm about activities that will be part of it. There was time within each department that included reviewing the lock down procedures, exploration of the Hampshire Room, a tour of the new art at Forbes, and Tai Chi. Staff then gathered in the reference room to share lunch together, including a little celebration of Ms. Elliott and her family's favorite wacky cake.

The Bonhams auction of American Art including a piece from Peter Rowe's estate occurred on May 22. An update on the sale will be given as soon as it's known.

**Covid Safety Update**

Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss reported that Forbes has fully resumed services and they do not anticipate needing to report Covid safety updates any further at this time. They will be removing this item from the monthly report and will keep the board apprised of any future response or concerns. They would like to extend their deep appreciation to the members of the Covid Safety committee who worked alongside them to respond to this crisis with great care: Sarah Johnson, Alene Moroni, Jill Emmons, and Jason Petcen.

Ms. Bruce moved that the Administrative Report including the COVID Safety Update be accepted and placed on file. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Next Meetings**

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, June 22 at 4 PM. The trustees previously scheduled the following meetings for the remainder of 2022: Thursday, July 20; Thursday, September 21; Thursday, October 19; Thursday, November 16; and Thursday, December 21. Meetings will convene at 4 PM, unless the representatives of Bartholomew Inc. 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 on Wednesday, June 7 at 6:30 PM. It will be a hybrid in-person and virtual Zoom meeting. Ms. Bruce will attend remotely on behalf of the trustees.

## **Communications**

There were no communications this month.

### **Discussion Topic: Strategic Planning Action Plan**

Ms. Downing and Ms. Wight presented an overview of the data collection, analysis, and summary of results along with key takeaways and the draft goal areas. The trustees discussed the takeaways and goals, and brainstormed steps to take to achieve those goals.

There were 1,285 responses to the Community Survey: 1) The largest demographics responding to the survey were frequent library visitors. The respondents skewed female, white, and older, i.e. more than half were 60+. 2) Generally speaking, people strongly agreed, i.e. have a positive view of the library, based on the modified likert scale questions. 3) The questions comparing Forbes to other libraries generally resulted in people saying Forbes was similar. The library stood out as being more involved in the local community and inviting to families with children. 4) No surprise, but the library is vastly used by patrons for borrowing materials. After that, people used the library for reading, indicating that the library's most iconic purpose, i.e. books, remains highly relevant. Some popular ideas that came out of the survey include: 1) Charging station for phones and tablets; 2) Bookmobile or Bikemobile; 3) Other types of outreach; and 4) Adding to circulating collections (crafting equipment, recreational equipment, tools). Comments included praise for library staff, the beauty of the library, interlibrary loan, the library's response to the COVID-19 epidemic, art exhibits including the permanent art collection and for the library's events, particularly outdoor events. The most popular suggestions were asking the library to host more events and expanding the Library of Things (tools and museum passes were the most common suggestions).

Focus groups were held with library staff, trustees, the open community, and invitational community members. The library's strengths are its knowledgeable and friendly staff, iconic building, lack of fines, and great programming. Aspirations include creating an equitable and welcoming city and keeping the community informed about local issues. Opportunities include diversifying staff and programming, more partnerships, better publicity, and expanding the Library of Things. Results include increasing usage of the library across a broader population, financial support, partnerships and powerful testimonials. The key takeaways are: 1) Focus on strategic partnerships, 2) Continue to diversify the people who are associated with the library and its offerings, and 3) Improve marketing.

Stakeholder interviews were conducted with 30 community leaders. Key takeaways are: 1) Strategic partnerships structured to mutually build capacity and reach, 2) Improve marketing, 3) Focus on responding to changes and challenges in the community (i.e. social isolation, affordability, digital divide).

The draft action plan goals and objectives include inspiring, well-being, and awareness. Sample activities to support inspiration include: create a children's and young adult programming room, build accessible outdoor program space, grow Library of Things collections, invest in staff development, and offer new and expanded programming initiatives. Sample activities to support well-being include: strengthen digital access and digital literacy for the community, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, improve building ventilation, and increase BIPOC participation and voices in trustee decisions. Sample activities to support awareness include: deploy a Bookmobile or Bikemobile,

**Discussion Topic: Strategic Planning Action Plan** (continued)

develop a communications strategy, expand bilingual signage, and strengthen outreach to new residents.

Ms. Downing said that the plan is due to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) on October 1, but it is hoped the plan will be approved by the trustees sooner and go into effect in FY2024. Ms. Downing asked the trustees for their ideas for specific actions on how to address the three goals of inspiration, well-being, and awareness.

Mr. Carrier suggested collaborating with Lilly Library on the Bookmobile/Bikemobile as it would help with staffing and costs. He also suggested that in order to increase diversity, bringing the library to locations where underserved populations reside, and finding ways to reach out with other organizations with the same goals. Ms. Prabhaker asked if there is more need for outreach than what is currently provided. Ms. Downing said that currently home deliveries are done by car and bike and that the library does not provide the vehicle. She said that a Bookmobile is like a mobile branch library that could bring the library to those areas and would be a great way to publicize the library and create excitement. Ms. Bruce said that it would be good to team up with the Survival Center, which has two vans that make regular visits to under-served populations. The advantage is that they go regularly to the same places and create relationships with the communities the library is trying to reach. She also suggested a satellite station at the senior center. Ms. Muzima suggested pop-up libraries in various locations using spaces that are available, and connecting more with the schools K-12. Ms. Prabhaker said that in her role at the Easthampton public library, she uses a Bikemobile to bring the library to various events, fairs, and other locations. Mr. Carrier suggested farmer's markets. Ms. Moss said that it is physically difficult to get a Bikemobile up to Florence or Leeds. Ms. Muzima said that in her role in children's theater in Oakland, CA, a trailer was used to transport costumes and sets to various locations, and the same concept could be used to transport a pop-up library. Mr. Carrier suggested that a committee begin to work on coalescing all of these ideas into an action plan. He said to start small and grow from there, to be ambitious, but also realistic, especially concerning staff time.

**CCPLM Standing Committee's Annual Goals**

Ms. Downing reported that the Standing Committee of the Coolidge Museum is bringing forward goals for the board's approval. This is an important time for the museum in light of the 100th anniversaries coming up and these goals support and build off of this moment. The FY2024 goals include: completing the CAP grant and onsite assessment, increasing membership of the CCPLM Standing Committee, celebrating anniversaries, approving and implementing new CCPLM branding, completing next steps on Exhibit Committee work, expanding CCPLM merchandise, launching CCPLM Standing Committee web page, forming the Development Committee, finishing the Coolidge documentary, engaging with NAGPRA and submitting inventory and documentation of Native American made items, and discussing inventory with Sioux leaders - ownership, exhibition, interpretation or transfer of Presidential gifts.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the FY2024 goals of the CCPLM Standing Committee. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

### **CCPLM Standing Committee Appointments**

Ms. Downing reported that the Standing Committee unanimously recommends the following people for appointment by the Board President: Dr. Eli Porth is a retired ENT with a love for history. He is a member of the Friends of Forbes Library and a volunteer guide in the Coolidge Museum. Cynthia Simison is editor emeritus of the Springfield Republican newspaper. Her grandfather was a tailor and furrier in downtown Northampton and Mrs. Coolidge was among his clients. Leslie Skantz-Hodgeson is the librarian at Smith Vocational Agricultural High School.

Mr. Carrier said that the trustees' by-laws call for the President to appoint new members, and he appointed the proposed new members to the CCPLM Standing Committee. He asked Ms. Downing to let them know.

### **Meeting Room Policy**

Ms. Downing said that following up on the board's discussion in March, she reached out to the ACLU and the library's attorneys and both agree that Forbes should simply strike the restriction on hate groups and racist ideology from the meeting room policy. A revised policy was distributed to the trustees.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the revised Meeting Room Policy as presented by Ms. Downing. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

### **Ironhorse Collection Funding Request**

Ms. Downing reported that local history specialist Dylan Gaffney has been in talks for the last few months with Jordi Herold, founder and owner of the Iron Horse Coffee House and Nightclub about the donation of the Iron Horse Archive which reflects the years of his ownership 1979-1994. This is an incredible and well-kept archive of band files, correspondence, posters, flyers, photos, menus, files, publications, 500+ cassettes, manuscript booking calendars, memorabilia and ephemera. It is a truly unique and historic collection which contains materials on many famous international musicians in the latter half of the 20th century, and also reflects the cultural history of the city and a key downtown business during this period. In order to do this large and valuable collection justice, and to satisfy the donor's wishes for a detailed inventory for tax purposes, it is proposed to hire an experienced archivist as a consultant, to create a detailed finding aid for future discovery, arrange the materials by category, and create a detailed inventory to satisfy the donors wishes. There is a local experienced archivist who has worked with similar music related collections at Rutgers, UCLA, and NYPL and would be able to start work immediately after receipt of the materials. A budget of \$4,000 is being proposed for the project, with the project to be completed in a timeline of 3-6 months, and paid via stipend at the Local History MLS substitute pay rate. Ms. Downing requested \$2,000 from the Morin Fund to pay for half of the cost of the consultant and she will seek funding for the other half from the Friends. Mr. Carrier and Ms. Downing said there were other local history collections that could use a similar approach, and that this project could serve as a pilot, with an outside archivist being hired and the cost split between the library and the Friends.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve \$2,000 from the Morin Fund to pay for half the cost of a consultant for the Ironhorse Collection. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

### **FLEA Contract Negotiations**

Mr. Carrier said there is nothing to report at this time, and the planned executive session was postponed until next month.

### **Increasing Board Size Update**

Ms. Downing reported that she does not have any updates about the filed petition. This month she and Mr. Carrier prepared testimonials about the critical need to increase the board size for the court's consideration.

### **Trustees Election**

Ms. Downing reported that she is working on spreading the word about the trustee openings as far and wide as she can including the press release that is linked from the library's homepage. There are three positions up for election, with Ms. Wight running for re-election, and Mr. Twarog and Ms. Prabhaker stepping down. As new candidates reach out, she is encouraging them to attend an upcoming meeting. Mr. Carrier is planning a letter to the editor in the Daily Hampshire Gazette.

### **Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings**

Strategic Planning Committee - Ms. Wight reported that this month the committee has been focused on rolling out the new branding and plan to launch it publicly in early June. Ms. Downing gave a presentation to the staff that included a brainstorming activity.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Ms. Wight reported that at this month's meeting three prospective members were welcomed and the committee's goals were reviewed. Plans for the upcoming centennial are underway. The Friends have agreed to help staff the July 29 lawn concert that will feature hand pies by the Pie Bar in Florence. There is a virtual event on Wednesday, June 7 at 7 PM, "When the President Dies: How Calvin Coolidge and Others Guided America Through Mourning."

Racial and Social Justice Advisory Group - Ms. Prabhaker reported that the group brainstormed ways to get diverse interest in the board openings, discussed different models for racial and social justice work at libraries, as well as the state of book banning across the country that is focusing on books by and about LGBTQ+ and BIPOC people. They also welcomed a new member.

### **Other Business**

There was no other business this month.

At 5:35 PM Ms. Bruce moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 PM.