

**TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY**  
**Thursday, December 21, 2023**

**Present:** Ms. Debin Bruce, Mr. Russell Carrier, Ms. Lisa Downing, Ms. Molly Moss, Ms. Emily Prabhaker, Ms. Elizabeth Sheirer, Mr. Joseph Twarog, Ms. Katy Wight. **Also Present:** Ruth Francis, trustee-elect. **Present via Zoom:** Jacqui Fraser, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library; Sarah Johnson, Head of Children's & Young Adult Services; Kyle Hamilton, Treasurer. **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 for some participants as indicated.

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 PM.

**Bills & Warrants**

The trustees signed the warrant dated December 21, 2023.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**Secretary's Report**

Ms. Bruce moved that the Secretary's report of November 16, 2023 be accepted and placed on file with a few minor corrections. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Treasurer's Report**

Ms. Downing presented the Treasurer's Report for the month ending November 30, 2023. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing said that there was nothing to worry about at this time. She and Ms. Moss looked at the Aid Fund and Book & Media Fund budgets and said there are still a lot of seasonal and one-time expenses that have not been paid this fiscal year. Mr. Carrier said that he has spoken with Ms. Hamilton and she hopes to spend some time in early January working on simplifying some of the reporting processes.

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

Ms. Hamilton joined the meeting at 4:07 PM.

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

Ms. Downing submitted a list of undesignated gifts received from multiple donors in November with \$7,683.55 going to the Morin Fund; an anonymous \$50,000 bequest to the Janet Moulding Technology Fund (to be created); \$500 to the Programming Fund-Children; \$200 to the Performance Stage Fund; \$200 to the Rosamond Chester Coolidge Endowment Fund; \$200 to the Aldrich Fund; \$103 to the Lyman Special Collections Fund; and \$20 to the Watson Copier Fund. There were no designated funds and no receipts from sales/rents this month.

The following donations were received since the last trustees' meeting:  
Coolidge 1983 commemorative plate, Coolidge ceramic calendar, 16 original

**Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.** (continued)

Iron Horse Posters, and Florence Second Congregational Church World War II Collection.

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

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hamilton said that there is \$40,700 plus the \$200 from today in the Performance Stage Fund.

**Financial Report**

There was no financial report this month.

**Department Report: Children's & Young Adult Services**

Ms. Sarah Johnson presented the Children's & Young Adult Services department report. It included reporting on new partnerships and special events including an author even in May with support from the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations' Public Intellectuals Program where debut author Vivienne Chang read aloud from her book. In May there was a Fairy Tea Party including a craft activity making fairy wings and wands. The summer reading program kick-off party was the biggest yet with about 200 attendees. In September the Chinese Association of Western MA offered a free educational workshop for families that included information about how the Moon Festival originated and the Lunar calendar, how to make a mooncake, and how to write a few Moon-related Chinese characters in calligraphy. In November Forbes hosted Amherst College's Beneski Museum of Natural History for an event entitled "Tracking Dinosaurs Around Forbes Library." Also in November, students from Smith College's Jandon Center offered a program entitled "STEAM Explorers: Where Science Meets Creativity." Thanks to funding from the Friends, A Dungeon Master was hired to run a biweekly Dungeons & Dragons club for tweens and teens. Grant funding was awarded to further supplement programming. Thanks to a \$2,500 Mass Cultural Council Festivals and projects Grant, Forbes hosted three "Find Your Voice" concerts featuring Grammy-nominated artists Alastair Moock and Divinity Roxx and local author and spoken word poet Tem Blessed. A \$550 grant from the Brookline Birding Club enabled Forbes to create two circulating birding kits featuring birding guides and binoculars and host a live bird event with Wingmasters in August. Two new outreach initiatives were piloted. In the fall there was a special event to welcome Smith College first-year students to Forbes and in November a partnership was formed with the new Superintendent of Northampton's Public Schools, Dr. Portia Bonner, to distribute library card registration forms to all kindergarten students at the city's four public elementary schools. Second graders from Bridge Street School visited in the spring and Jackson Street School in the fall for behind-the-scenes tours of the library and special meet-and-greets with Ms. Downing and Paco. Ms. Johnson said it was a busy and exciting year. She is in the process of applying for a \$15,000 LSTA grant to help create a "Move, Play, Read" space in the craft area outside the Community Room, with a cozy reading nook and a new play structure.

Mr. Carrier said it was a very impressive report and that the trustees greatly appreciate all of Ms. Johnson's outreach efforts. He asked what the trustees can do to help. Ms. Johnson said that if the LSTA grant is not received, then alternative funding for some pieces of it would be helpful.

**Department Report: Children's & Young Adult Services** (continued)

Mr. Carrier asked Ms. Johnson to let the trustees know if it is needed.

The trustees thanked Ms. Johnson and she left the meeting at 4:20 PM.

**Friends of Forbes**

Ms. Wight attended the December meeting of the Friends of Forbes and reported that they discussed funding for a new tank for Paco and the performance stage. They approved funding to replace the current grommets with ones that include both power and USB connections. They have two new board members and are forming a new communications committee.

**Administrative Report**

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Moss said that so far the annual appeal has received \$28,413.94 from 183 donors.

Ms. Downing reported that this is Mr. Twarog's and Ms. Prabhaker's last meeting. She and Ms. Moss are so grateful for their years of service that for Mr. Twarog included a director transition, completion of the agreement with the City of Northampton, a pandemic, and a time of social and political unrest. They would especially like to thank Mr. Twarog for representing the library with pride at Northampton Pride parades every year, the professional experience shared from his background in labor relations, and his good humored way of keeping everyone on their toes. Ms. Prabhaker came in just prior to the pandemic and did an exemplary job of rising to the occasion during tumultuous times. They would like to especially recognize her unwavering commitment and leadership for the library's racial and social justice efforts and her eloquent public speaking on behalf of the library. Mr. Carrier also thanked Ms. Prabhaker and Mr. Twarog for all their efforts and encouraged them to stay involved with the library.

Ms. Downing said that there has not been an electrician on site for regular maintenance in about 18 months resulting in many lights and other electrical projects being deferred. William Roberts Electric Co., Inc. from Wilbraham spent several days on site doing all of the repairs including the emergency lighting system. The bill totaled \$15,611.62 which exceeds the entire labor and repairs budget for the year.

Forbes has been invited to give a presentation to the City Council on January 4 that will include the recently elected councilors. Ms. Wight will join Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss for a 10 minute presentation about the library and the strategic plan. This will be the first time Forbes has presented to the Council in this manner in several years.

Priya Charry and Mary Biddle provided a tour to students at the Center for New Americans recently that was very well received. The tour concluded with signing up for library cards.

The fall team outings are wrapping up and have been very successful. Staff have enjoyed getting off site and spending time with colleagues. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss are grateful to the trustees for approving funding for these outings and hope to be able to continue them in the new year.

The staff was also very grateful for the \$50 Downtown Northampton gift cards that the trustees funded. These cards can be used at many area restaurants,

**Administrative Report** (continued)

stores, and service providers and their purchase has the added benefit of supporting the local economy.

The Hosmer Gallery will feature art made by Forbes staff members in January. Staff member and artist Pam Acosta worked with Faith Kaufmann to organize the exhibit. The reception is on Tuesday January 16 from 5:30-7:30 PM.

The Friends winter newsletter utilizes the new branding and has great content including an article about Priya Charry.

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

**Next Meetings**

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, January 25 at 3:45 PM. Ms. Hamilton will invite the auditors to the meeting.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held on Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at 6:30 PM. Ms. Bruce will attend on behalf of the trustees.

**Communications**

The library received illustrated thank you letters from students and Jackson Street School after their recent visit.

**Discussion Topic: Artificial Intelligence and Public Libraries**

Ms. Downing reported that the Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) tool ChatGPT just turned one and it along with other GAI Tools are being utilized widely to produce text, video, images, and other types of content based on prompts provided by the user. This technology is so powerful and pervasive that it is hard for anyone to know just what it means for the future. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss distributed a few articles for the trustees to review and invited them to discuss issues and concerns around AI. She said that Mary Biddle, Head of Borrower Services, is currently in library school and recently did a unit on AI. She gave an hour-long in-service training to library staff. Ms. Downing said that there are so many things that are aided with generative AI, which brings concerns about false information that could be replicated. She said that there is also some inherent bias in the data on which the AI is built, for example facial recognition software not recognizing or mis-identifying people of color. She said there are also large privacy concerns with more and more of our data being gathered by platforms such as Google and Amazon. She said that funding for training is important to help keep staff informed. Another way the trustees can help is to send her articles and content of interest to them and to express their thoughts, questions, and concerns. She said that libraries are already using AI for things like FAQs, and copyright free images in Canva. She said she used ChatGPT to write the first draft of the Forbes' strategic plan. She said it is useful as a draft generator, but needs to be carefully vetted and reviewed. She said the library has a role in helping library patrons understand how AI can be used and the risks involved. She said librarians can have a role in leveling the playing field by helping patrons use the software to generate content.

**Discussion Topic: Artificial Intelligence and Public Libraries** (continued)

Ms. Wight said that there is a lot of conversation about AI in the publishing world, and publishers are collaborating with librarians on its use in digital literacy and research skills. She said it is being used in the publishing world for copy editing, project management, and research. Ms. Moss said that there needs to be more transparency around the underlying information the AI software is using to generate responses. Ms. Prabhaker said she used it to create a flyer for an event, but that the resulting images were very problematic. Mr. Twarog said there were a lot of positives, but that he was concerned about the implications for AI taking the place of jobs currently held by people. Mr. Carrier said that if it does take work away from staff in the library, it will free them up to do other things that are needed. Ms. Downing said that the European Union has already set regulations about ethical decision-making and a code of conduct around AI, but that the United States is behind on this.

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing said it was hard to predict the budgetary implications at this point. It will take funds for training and time for staff to be away from the desk to learn about it. Mr. Carrier asked Ms. Downing to let the trustees know when she has some ideas for professional development about AI and budgetary requests, or other ideas about how the trustees can be supportive. Ms. Bruce said that there are connections and resources in the Five Colleges who may be able to offer advice and training.

**Janet Moulding Technology Fund**

Ms. Downing reported that Forbes received an anonymous unrestricted bequest of \$50,000. In consideration of the library's technology needs outpacing the income from the existing Halberstadt Technology Fund, she recommended that the gift be used to create a board designated fund as described below. The fund is named in honor of Ms. Downing's predecessor, who was the first woman to direct Forbes Library. Ms. Moulding came in during a time of great transition at the library. She was committed to ensuring that Forbes was keeping up with technology and, where it made sense, to get out ahead including offering public Wi-Fi before it was widely available and starting a circulating collection of eBook readers.

Ms. Downing recommended the creation of the Janet Moulding Technology Fund with the following description: Established by the Trustees in 2023 with an unrestricted anonymous bequests of \$50,000 and \$10,000 of additional unrestricted gifts from a variety of donors. The income is used to purchase technology and technology related furnishings for the library and other operating expenditures as needed or desired by the board.

Ms. Moss said the \$50,000 bequest would be supplemented with \$6,000 from the Morin Fund and an additional \$4,000 from a bequest that will be reported on next month. Ms. Hamilton will create the fund in the endowment and transfer the \$56,000 by the end of the month.

Mr. Carrier noted that the city does not pay for technology, and that the library covers this expense, which is unusual. The Book & Media Fund is allowed to be used for technology for patrons, but not for staff.

Ms. Wight made a motion to create the Janet Moulding Technology Fund as described by Ms. Downing with an anonymous \$50,000 bequest and an additional

**Janet Moulding Technology Fund (continued)**

\$10,000 from unrestricted gifts. Ms. Bruce seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Trustee Committees Revision**

Ms. Downing reported that she, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Wight, and Ms. Moss met and created a recommendation for revision to the trustee committees. They distributed it along with the list of committees as they currently exist to the trustees. In anticipation of the increased board size, they have increased the number of trustees that can serve on committees from two to three. They are recommending the addition of a Finance Committee. The Negotiation Committee will be replaced with the Personnel Committee which has expanded duties. The Facilities and Landscaping Committees have been combined into the Building and Grounds Committee. The last piece of their work was to develop more detailed descriptions of each of the committees.

Mr. Carrier said that the full recommendations would be implemented once the number of trustees has been increased and implemented. In the meantime, the current committees will stay in place, except for the merging of the Facilities and Landscaping Committees into the Building and Grounds Committee, which will meet in January. Committee appointments will be made at the January trustees' meeting.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the new committee structure and descriptions as proposed by Ms. Downing. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Bylaws Revision**

Ms. Moss said that in preparing the committee revision proposal, the board's bylaws were also reviewed and several areas were discovered that need to be updated. A redlined version of the proposed changes was distributed to the trustees. Ms. Moss said that further changes would be likely after the number of trustees is expanded. The changes mainly involve remote attendance and roll call voting.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to revise the trustees' by-laws as proposed by Ms. Moss. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Increasing Board Size Update**

Ms. Downing reported that she has been copied on correspondence between the Mayor's office, Representative Sabadosa, and the Lucentinis as the appeal is working its way through the legislative process. She said she heard from Representative Sabadosa on Monday that the legislation passed the house. Senator Commerford has said she will move it quickly through the Senate. It is hoped it will be approved early next year.

**Building Projects Update**

Ms. Downing reported that the new boiler was shutting down at night and wasn't able to be restarted earlier this month. Central Services was very responsive and worked with Jason Petcen and the appropriate contractors to resolve the issue. Everything seems to be working now.

Ms. Hamilton left the meeting at 5 PM.

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

Development Committee - Mr. Carrier reported that they met on December 14. The fall appeal is doing very well. The committee decided that the library will make a limited effort to increase visibility on Giving Tuesday next fall. The committee reviewed the first draft of a new major gifts policy. The committee also decided to try to increase the recurring donors in the coming year.

Trustee Committees Review - Mr. Carrier reported that the committee met on December 5 for what they believe was the last time. They finished identifying the basic duties and responsibilities for each of the committees that they are recommending to the full board for its approval at the December board meeting.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Ms. Wight reported that the committee is moving ahead with a renewed effort to work on updating the exhibits. They hope to connect with Beth Myers, Head of Special Collections at Smith College on next steps early next year. Julie Bartlett Nelson gave an overview of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) which was enacted to outline a requirement and process for museums and federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items (including human remains) to lineal descendants, culturally affiliated Indian tribes, or Native Hawaiian organizations. The collection includes several indigenous objects that are subject to a review by this process. The first step is to update the library's inventory. Ms. Nelson has secured a student intern from Smith to work on this project in January.

COSA's "Legislators and Cookies" - Ms. Bruce submitted a report of the meeting on December 12. Several people associated with Forbes Library - Maxine Schmidt, Ruth Francis, Maria Sperduti, and Debin Bruce - attended the Council of Social Agencies (COSA) of Hampshire Counties meeting featuring Senator Jo Comerford and State Representative Mindy Domb. The general purpose was to explain the role advocates play in the political process and to make sure that the several dozen attendees knew how they view constituent services. With regard to budget and bond bills, they talked through the steps of the 1 yearly budget cycle and the 2 year legislative cycle. January is the time to contact politicians about constituent priorities. Senator Comerford emphasized how we need to provide the details for the "mind" that speak to the "heart" of our legislators as this will lead to more support for our specific projects when a vote is required. Their legislative work runs on a 2 year cycle and involves filing bills, co-sponsoring bills, attending hearings, and participating in committee decisions with the goal to create the social and political conditions for change. They discussed the sequence and timing of rulemaking but noted that developing legislation often wasn't along a clear "path."

#### **Other Business**

Performance Stage - Ms. Bruce said that she spoke with the city's contract administrator and is concerned about losing the ARPA funding if there isn't a clear path forward since the bid came in significantly higher than anticipated. Mr. Carrier said that the library has other sources of funding and that the city will not need to pay more than the \$80,000 already awarded. He hopes that the library will still be able to do this project in the coming year, and will

**Other Business** (continued)

be able to have more control over the project and bidding process. He said the Building and Grounds committee will discuss the project in January.

Mr. Twarog said that it's been an honor serving on the board and wished the trustees good luck in the future. He said that Northampton is a liberal bubble, and that books are being banned at other libraries in Massachusetts. He suggested the library put up a display of banned books to help publicize the danger. Mr. Carrier said that the trustees appreciate all his efforts over his 12 years as trustee. Ms. Prabhaker said that her time on the board has inspired her to transition to work in a public library. The trustees thanked her for her work and wished her well in the future.

At 5:15 PM Ms. Prabhaker moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 PM.