

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Thursday, January 25, 2024

Present: Ms. Debin Bruce, Mr. Russell Carrier, Ms. Lisa Downing, Ms. Ruth Francis, Ms. Molly Moss, Ms. Elizabeth Sheirer, Ms. Anne Teschner, Ms. Katy Wight. **Also Present:** Eli Porth, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library; Mr. Joseph Twarog. **Present via Zoom:** Kyle Hamilton. **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 January 25, 2024.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Wight moved that the Secretary's report of December 21, 2023 be accepted and placed on file. Ms. Bruce seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

The FY2024 contact list for the trustees and state and local legislators was distributed. The trustees were asked to let Ms. Downing and Ms. Sheirer know if there were any changes to their contact information.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to release the executive sessions meeting notes of April 26 and June 13, 2023. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Hamilton presented the Treasurer's Report for the month ending December 31, 2023. The Aid Fund has a balance of \$19,540.74 and the Book & Media Fund has a balance of \$5,414.71. The balance in the endowment as of December 31, 2023 was \$6,349,014.56. Ms. Hamilton said there has been a lot of work behind the scenes to simplify the reporting of the data reflected in the report to make it faster and easier. There are a few small variances that need to be worked out. Ms. Hamilton will work with Ms. Downing on the variance in the Personnel budget. The library has not yet been billed for the auditing services. Book and media purchases are running a bit behind the budgeted amount due to timing of reporting these expenses. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hamilton said that she hoped to have a list of all the library funds at Florence Bank soon and to be able to provide a more detailed list of Book & Media Fund expenses for Ms. Moss. Ms. Downing recognized the restructuring Ms. Hamilton is doing and that it takes a lot to make these transitions happen. Ms. Hamilton has also been working on the quarterly report to send to the city, which first needs to be approved by the trustees. She will send it out to the trustees when ready, and the trustees can approve it or let her know if they have questions or concerns. Ms. Moss said that since it does not include any city money, it is not necessary to prepare a

Treasurer's Report (continued)

quarterly report for the Book & Media Fund to send to the city. For the trustees, the same information is covered in the monthly reports.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending December 31, 2023 and place it on file. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing said that electricity was running over budget. Ms. Moss said it was partially due to the manual operation required when the system was not working properly, and that she hoped the rates would be going down in February. Ms. Downing said she had tried to account for higher electricity costs in the FY24 budget, but that she would bump it up more for FY25.

Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.

Ms. Downing submitted a list of undesignated gifts received from multiple donors in November with \$6,950.25 going to the Morin Fund; \$4,000.00 to the Janet Moulding Technology Endowment Fund; \$435 to the Lyman Endowment Fund; \$50 to the Aldrich Fund; and \$50 to the Harding Local History Special Collections Endowment Fund; and a \$24,868.91 bequest from the Arlene C. Hines Estate to a new fund to be discussed.

The following designated gift was received in December: \$250 from Dr. Melvin Hershkowitz, in loving memory of Marie Hershkowitz, to support children's books and learning, to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Endowment Fund.

There were no receipts from sales/rents this month.

The following donations were received since the last trustees' meeting: David Stevens Northampton Pride and Gay History Materials; Northampton Gay and Lesbian Liberation March/Pride Parade and AIDS activism Photos.

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

Financial Report

Ms. Downing said the formatted 2nd quarter FY24 report will be provided to the trustees for their approval at the next meeting, though it should closely match the December 31st report presented earlier. At the moment, the only area of concern is electricity. Ms. Hamilton said she has been in contact with the auditors and they are working on the library's report. Mr. Carrier noted that the auditors have never uncovered any major issues, but have sometimes had suggestions to improve processes.

Friends of Forbes

Ms. Bruce attended the December meeting of the Friends of Forbes and reported that the Membership and Finance committees had nothing to report, while the Finance committee will be meeting before the next Friends Board meeting. The Special Events committee has begun planning for the Garden Tour and there will be more to report at the next meeting. The Friends are having new

Friends of Forbes (continued)

bookmarks printed with the new library logo and the Friends' QR code on one side and library hours on the other. Ms. Downing discussed a volunteer/donor event to be held in February and six people volunteered to help plan the event. Ms. Moss reported that the annual fund was just a bit below last year, but overall giving to the library was ahead of last year. Ms. Downing announced that Senator Comerford would be holding a Legislative Breakfast January 18, 9:30 AM, at the Greenfield Library which will be attended by state library associations, such as the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), Massachusetts Library Association (MLA), and Massachusetts Library System (MLS). This summer, JoEllen MacKenzie will arrive at her 12 year term limit for serving on the Friends' Board. There was a motion to examine the bylaws which were last revised in 2017. Ms. MacKenzie also asked anyone was interested in the position of President to get in touch with her. She also indicated that it was time to renew the raffle license and that she would visit the city office and take care of that. Eli Porth suggested organizing a bus trip to the New York Morgan Library to see the current show about the librarian, Belle da Costa Greene.

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

Administrative Report

Ms. Downing welcomed Ruth Francis and Anne Teschner to their first official meeting and congratulated Ms. Wight on the start of her third term. She said she looks forward to working with them, and that they should feel free to bring any questions to her or Ms. Moss.

Ms. Downing said that *Building a Stronger Commonwealth: one person at a time* is the theme of this year's legislative agenda. Ms. Bruce, Ms. Teschner, several members of the Friends and the community attended the breakfast event in Greenfield last week to advocate for state library funding as well as support for bills aimed at providing fair access to libraries for e-content and a second suite of bills to support library staff and policies in regard to intellectual freedom.

A donor and volunteer event has been scheduled for Sunday, February 25 at 2 PM, with a snow date of March 3. It will include a meet and greet with library trustees. Planning for the event has begun and Ms. Downing will bring budget requests to the trustees at the next meeting. Ms. Downing plans on asking the Friends to split the cost. All library volunteers and donors are invited, totaling 750 people, but that it likely only a fraction will attend. Mr. Carrier said that this is a good way to build relationships with donors and volunteers.

The library is offering a winter reading challenge in the form of a bingo card for patrons of all ages. A Silent Book Club is also being launched where you bring your own book (or borrow one from the collection) and read alongside neighbors and friends. The group will gather at 6:30 PM for a group welcome, then settle in for an hour of quiet reading, followed by (optional) sharing and socializing. This Silent Book Club chapter meets on the last Tuesday of each month in the Reading Room. All are welcome to come read in community, and no library card is needed.

Administrative Report (continued)

Forbes has received a grant from the Northampton Arts Council of \$697 that will be matched with Friends funds for hands on art making workshops. Several workshops were offered in the fall and they were incredibly popular.

The first ever staff art show ended up representing 22 different staff members. The show is spectacular in the variety and quality of the work represented. Kudos to Pam Acosta, Jill Emmons, Faith Kaufmann, and Joshua Vyrsen for conceiving of the idea and curating a beautiful show.

The library hosted an ice sculpture for the downtown winter festival. The frigid temps allowed the reindeer, sculpted by David Barclay, to be enjoyed for several days.

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

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, February 22. The trustees scheduled the following meetings for the remainder of 2024: Thursday, March 21; Thursday, April 25; Thursday, May 23; Thursday, June 20; Thursday, July 25; Thursday, September 19; Thursday, October 24; Thursday, November 21; and Thursday, December 19. Meetings will convene at 4:00 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, February 7, 2024 at 6:30 PM. Mr. Carrier will attend on behalf of the trustees.

Communications

Ms. Downing received a notice of FY2024 State Aid to Public Libraries Certified Municipalities and Initial Awards. Northampton will receive \$45,106.36 to be divided between Forbes and Lilly Libraries with Forbes receiving 80% and Lilly Library 20%. Ms. Moss said the second payment will arrive in March and it is not possible to predict exactly how much that will be. Ms. Moss said it is anticipated that the total awarded will be more than the budgeted amount.

The trustees received notification from the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA) on the election of officers. Jason Petcen was re-elected as President, Dylan Gaffney as Vice-President, Madison Socha-Bishop as Treasurer, and Heather Diaz as Secretary. The current contract with FLEA has two more years.

Discussion Topic

There was no discussion topic this month.

Election of Officers

Ms. Wight nominated Mr. Carrier for President. Ms. Teschner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Election of Officers (continued)

Ms. Bruce nominated Ms. Wight for Vice President. Ms. Francis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Appointment of Secretary and Treasurer

Ms. Wight made a motion to appoint Elizabeth Sheirer as Secretary and Kyle Hamilton as Treasurer. Ms. Francis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Committee Appointments

Ms. Downing submitted a list of current committee assignments. The current board size limits the number of trustees that can serve on a committee to two. She asked the trustees to please reach out to the Board President if they would like to drop or join any of the current committees, as this is the process detailed in the trustees bylaws. Current committee assignments are: Building and Grounds Committee (Ms. Bruce, chair; Mr. Carrier); Development Committee (Mr. Carrier, chair; Ms. Bruce); Racial and Social Justice Advisory Group (2 vacancies including co-chair); Standing Committee of the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum (Mr. Carrier and Ms. Wight, chaired by non-board members); Personnel Committee (Mr. Carrier, chair; Ms. Wight); and Finance Committee (not yet formed). Once the board expands, there can be up to three board members per committee and the Finance Committee will be activated.

Mr. Carrier said that when the number of trustees increases to seven, the trustees will need a process to appoint new trustees and also to assign committee membership. He said that according to the by-laws, the President appoints committee members but that he does that with recommendations and input from the board.

Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum (CCPLM) Standing Committee: The Nominating Committee unanimously recommends that the Board President appoint David Murphy to the committee. David is a former city councilor and longtime business owner in the community who has a deep interest in Coolidge. Mr. Carrier made the appointment. Ms. Wight said that there are also a number of sub-committees for the CCPLM including Programming, Marketing, and Exhibits that interested trustees can serve on.

Trustees Award

Ms. Downing asked the trustees to discuss potential recipients for the Gertrude P. Smith Trustees Award. The award honors a community member or members who have given exceptional volunteer service or have made another significant contribution to Forbes Library and is named after the first recipient who is responsible for starting the Friends of Forbes Library.

Ms. Downing suggested two recipients this year, the first being Stan Sherer for his many years of volunteer service and the film he made about Coolidge during the pandemic. He worked tirelessly to put the film together tracking down a lot of photos and videos. He has been a great friend to the library providing photography services when requested. The second suggestion is recent trustee Joseph Twarog who served as trustee for three terms. Mr. Twarog served through challenging times including the disagreement with the

Trustees Award (continued)

city and the pandemic. He has been a solid presence, keeping everyone on their toes, and caring about the library and social justice.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to award the Gertrude P. Smith Trustees Award to Stan Sherer and Joseph Twarog as recommended by Ms. Downing. Ms. Teschner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Downing will notify the recipients and begin planning for the event. In the past the award ceremony has been combined with the Friends' annual meeting in April.

Peter Rowe Coolidge Fund

Ms. Downing reported that she has been notified that the library is a beneficiary of the late Peter Rowe's retirement account with a value of \$104,993.51. A request is in process for the funds be transferred to the management of Bartholomew Inc. Last year the trustees established the Peter Rowe Special Collections Fund and now Ms. Downing is seeking approval to establish the Peter Rowe Coolidge Fund seeded with this latest bequest from Peter Rowe's estate.

Mr. Rowe had a long career and passion in government, including serving as Chair of Smith College's Government Department. The naming of this fund is in honor of his lifelong work in history and government. The trustees are asked to approve the establishment of this fund as described below with an additional \$6.49 from the Morin Fund for a starting balance of \$105,000.

Peter Rowe Coolidge Fund - Established by the Trustees in 2024 in part with an unrestricted bequest by Peter Rowe, Trustee from 2005-2015. The income from the fund is to be used to support the needs of the Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum and other operating expenditures as needed or desired by the board.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to establish the Peter Rowe Coolidge Fund as described above with the \$104,993.51 received from his estate along with \$6.49 from the Morin Fund for a total of \$105,000. Ms. Teschner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Mr. Carrier said that the library is likely to receive more from the estate upon the sale of Mr. Rowe's residence.

Arlene Hines Book Fund

Ms. Downing reported that she has been notified that Forbes has received an unrestricted bequest of \$24,868.91 from the estate of Arlene Hines who had a deep love of libraries and her community. The trustees are asked to approve the establishment of this fund as described below with an additional \$131.09 from the Morin Fund for a starting balance of \$25,000.

Arlene Hines Book Fund - Established by the Trustees in 2024 in part with an unrestricted bequest by Arlene Hines, longtime community member and library patron. The income to be used to purchase circulating materials and other operating expenditures as needed or desired by the board.

Arlene Hines Book Fund (continued)

Ms. Wight made a motion to establish the Arlene Hines Book Fund as described above with the \$24,868.91 bequest received from her estate along with \$131.09 from the Morin Fund for a total of \$25,000. Ms. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Mr. Carrier said there may be additional funds coming from this bequest as well.

Performance Stage

Ms. Downing reported that work continues in realizing the longstanding desire of an accessible, functional, and attractive performance stage on the library's west lawn. The Building and Grounds Committee regrouped after learning that the project had been cut from the city's Capital Improvement Plan. They have recommitted to the timely accomplishment of this goal and seek the board's input and approval of the direction they would like to move forward with. Between the \$80,000 ARPA grant and private funds raised and pledged, over \$200,000 has been committed. They seek to contain project costs below \$300,000 for financial prudence and so that the project does not trigger additional expensive requirements which would kick in if the project cost exceeds this amount. They seek to continue with the site selection work and prefabricated building structure that was previously approved which limits the scope of architectural design and engineering work that would need to be done. Mr. Carrier and Ms. Downing will be meeting with Pat McCarthy and his team from Central Services to seek his endorsement of this path forward later this month. In anticipation of that meeting, Ms. Downing is seeking the board's approval to move forward with this plan.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve moving forward with plans for the performance stage with funds already received, and keeping the total cost below \$300,000. Ms. Teschner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Team Development Funding

Ms. Moss said that library staff are phenomenal and they work in teams to accomplish great things for the community, yet have very little time or resources to come together to grow and bond. The trustees approved \$3,000 from the Morin Fund a year ago to allow teams to have two offsite gatherings on work time that emphasized team building and growth. This initiative was very well received and greatly appreciated. Ms. Moss and Ms. Downing are seeking funding of \$3,000 again this year from the Morin Fund to allow teams to go out twice again.

Ms. Teschner made a motion to approve funding of \$3,000 from the Morin Fund for team building outings. Ms. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Mr. Porth left the meeting at 5:10 PM.

Review Prior Year's Trustee and Administrative Goals

Ms. Downing said that significant progress has been made on both the trustees and administration's goals. A summary was distributed to the trustees. Ms. Downing invited the trustees to review their goals and develop an updated

Review Prior Year's Trustee and Administrative Goals (continued)

list for 2024 in consultation with the committees they are serving on that can be approved at next month's meeting. A draft document was distributed for review. Some of the goals are carried over from 2023, and some are taken from the strategic plan. Mr. Carrier said that if anyone has a goal they would like to add, they should get it to Ms. Downing a week before the next meeting. Ms. Wight said she would like to see a goal both for the trustees and the administration about supporting the business community through the downtown renovation which is expected to begin in 2025. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss will be relying on the strategic action plan as their ongoing list and reporting mechanism.

Trustees Resource Page

Ms. Downing gave an annual reminder that there is a resource page for trustees and the link to access it is: <http://bit.ly/39EkVCs>.

Strategic Plan Update

Ms. Downing reported that work on the strategic plan has begun, and she distributed a summary of the plan and progress to date. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss plan to report quarterly with updates.

Increasing Board Size Update

Ms. Downing reported that there have been no updates from Senator Comerford's office so far this month.

Building Projects Update

Ms. Downing reported that the programming for the HVAC system went down with a power outage last month. Forbes coordinated with Central Services to get the company that could repair it on site. In the meantime, it meant inconsistent temperatures in the building and less efficient heating because everything needed to be controlled manually.

Mr. Twarog left the meeting at 5:15 PM.

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings

Building and Grounds Committee - Ms. Bruce reported that the first order of business was to designate a chair of the committee. Ms. Bruce volunteered and the others were in agreement. The agenda had a discussion of the performance stage as the first item of business. City Central Services had included the stage project in its Capital Improvement List but review of that proposal dropped the project. The committee discussed the proposed design and agreed that Ms. Downing and Mr. Carrier would meet with Pat McCarthy and Will Coffey to confirm a plan for putting together contractor bid documents. Elements of the project, electrical work, a yard side patio, and landscaping were alternates to be added to the project. That topic closed with a discussion of funding. The funds available and anticipated are around \$200,000, and there will be time in the coming months before contract award to fundraise for additional monies. The topic of outdoor lighting was reviewed. The City Council is considering a more rigorous lighting standard. For any new lighting, Forbes would follow the approved standard but would not incur the expense of switching out serviceable lights. The current lights are LED and all but one are shielded. The Athena Statue is to be installed in front of the library on the east side of the front door. The donor will pay for the installation and help redesign the plant bed where it will be located. Ms. Downing agreed to follow through to firm up the arrangements. Ms. Downing

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings (continued)

pulled up the Facilities Project spreadsheet and talked through FY24 projects. New desks have been ordered for circulation with further plans to rework that area put on hold. Enlarging the Hampshire Room in the future is expected. Mr. Carrier asked that Dylan Gaffney discuss that at his briefing to the Trustees. Several projects around the Children's Department were summarized. Jason Petcen was asked to secure a contractor bid for the roof work. The Committee agreed on a quarterly meeting schedule for 2024, with the next meeting on Wednesday, April 10 at 12:30 PM. Ms. Bruce added that after the meeting on Monday with the city about the performance stage, she plans to have a meeting with the architect to refresh the conversation that was had a long time ago.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Ms. Wight reported that the committee welcomed guest David Murphy. In January intersession term, Smith College student Ryan Turner did a 100 hour internship in Special Collections and working with the Coolidge collection's Native American gifts. Tasks included inventory, review and updating of catalog entries, new photographs, and research of items. She also worked with transcribing documents and oral histories in the local history collections. In December the new Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) rules that take effect in 2024 were approved and released by the Interior Department. Information, interpretation and new best practices are coming out from multiple agencies and professional groups. A new "Herstory" book group started this month along with the start over of the Presidential Book group. Both groups had editorials in the Daily Hampshire Gazette that were effective at getting some new members. A rough plan for 2024 programs includes the Indian Citizenship Act panel in March or April, the Immigration Act panel over the summer, an election themed event in the fall that is perhaps around Coolidge and civil rights, and a potential event as part of First Night programming on December 31st.

Racial and Social Justice Advisory Group - Ms. Downing reported that Ms. Teschner and Priya Charry joined the group as guests. They discussed tabling at community events as a way to gather information and spread the word about the library and the group. Ms. Charry will help coordinate this effort on behalf of the group.

Other Business

Mr. Carrier and the trustees expressed appreciation for the art exhibit of works by library staff. He said that a lot of the work is equal to anything he's seen and the presentation is excellent.

At 5:25 PM Ms. Wight moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Teschner seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 PM.