

**TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY**  
**Thursday, April 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:** Ms. Rebekah Anderson, trustee appointment; Ms. Shelly Ruocco, trustee appointment; Ms. Mary Biddle, Head of Borrower Services; Maria Sperduti, Head of Outreach Delivery Services; Eli Porth, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library. **Present via Zoom:** Kyle Hamilton, Treasurer; Martha McCormick, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library. **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 4:04 PM.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments. Mr. Carrier explained that the board follows the open meeting laws even though they are not a public governing body, and therefore provide an opportunity for public comment at the start of each meeting. Members of the public are welcome to comment. The trustees do not respond in the moment, but may follow up later with an agenda item at a future meeting, or it may be handled by the Director or Assistant Director.

**Secretary's Report**

Ms. Wight moved that the Secretary's reports of March 21, 2024 and the special meeting of April 10, 2024 be accepted and placed on file with a few minor corrections. Ms. Francis seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Trustees' Contact Information**

A list of contact information for the trustees was distributed. Trustees should let Ms. Sheirer know if they have any changes, and an updated list will be distributed at the next meeting.

**Bills & Warrants**

Mr. Carrier explained the purpose and process of the warrant to the new trustees and the trustees signed the warrant dated April 25, 2024.

**Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's Report for the month ending March 31, 2024 was distributed to the trustees. Mr. Carrier said that the first part is a summary of the budget to date including the General Aid Fund and the Book & Media Fund. The second part is a summary from Bartholomew Inc. of the endowment funds. There is a link to a summary of the endowment funds in the trustees' orientation packet. The third part is a summary of the local cash accounts at Florence Bank. Fourth is a document showing activity and balances in the locally held funds at Florence Bank.

The Aid Fund ended the month with a balance of \$60,474.69. The Book & Media Fund ended with a balance of \$12,518.78. The total cash balance in the operating account, savings account, and CDs at Florence Bank was \$270,760.50. The value of the endowment on March 31 was \$6,758,672.54. Ms. Hamilton said

**Treasurer's Report** (continued)

that payroll is running behind the budgeted amount and she will work with Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss to understand the cause. There is a question about the MBLC Technology line item that Ms. Moss will resolve with Ms. Hamilton. The library is permitted to spend up to 10% of its Book & Media fund on public technology, and Forbes purchased new computers for the reference room. Ms. Hamilton has created a new format for the local fund balances. The list includes funds with zero balances, as well as two grant funds with small balances that can be closed out using Morin funds. In response to a question from Ms. Hamilton, Mr. Carrier said that it makes sense for this report to show monthly activity going forward, and to remove the funds that are no longer active. Ms. Hamilton recommended removing the zero balance funds from the report, and transferring funds to and from the Morin Fund to zero out the balances in the Go Local and Managing Fine and Decorative Arts grant funds and then removing them from the report.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the recommendation of the Treasurer to remove the zero balance funds from the report, and transfer funds to and from the Morin Fund to zero out the balances in the Go Local and Managing Fine and Decorative Arts grant funds, and then remove them from the report. 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.

Ms. Hamilton said that she is awaiting guidance from the new Finance Committee, once it is formed, about investing the cash accounts in higher return vehicles. The trustees expect that committee to be formed and come up with a recommendation before the next trustees' meeting on May 23. There is a CD at Florence Bank that matures on May 29, and Ms. Hamilton will let Florence Bank know not to roll it over until they've heard definitively from her. Ms. Hamilton also said the cash accounts at Florence Bank exceed the maximum amount insured by the FDIC. Mr. Carrier said this is largely due to the Performance Stage Funds being held there, and this issue will also be addressed by the Finance Committee.

Ms. Hamilton also said that she has been offered a part-time controller position with the New Haven Symphony and will be stepping down at the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Carrier asked if she could review the job description and make recommendations about how to simplify it.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending March 31, 2024 and place it 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.

Ms. Hamilton left the meeting at 4:38 PM.

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

Ms. Downing submitted a list of undesignated gifts received from multiple donors in March with \$1,574.55 going to the Morin Fund; \$4,039.65 going to the Performance Stage Fund; \$30.15 to the Watson Copier Fund; and a designated gift of \$50 to the Lyman Special Collections Endowment Fund. There were no receipts from sales/rents, or donations in March.

Ms. Downing said this report reflects gifts received in the prior calendar month, and does not reflect the money received on Library Giving Day, which

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

will appear on next month's report. Mr. Carrier said that the Morin Fund is where a lot of undesignated gifts go, and is used for projects not funded by the city.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the designated and undesignated gifts 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 that Forbes' budget operates on a fiscal year beginning in July and ending the following June. Every quarter the budget is reviewed for problem areas. Mr. Carrier said that at the end of the fiscal year, Forbes is required to send the city a report on how the money was spent. Ms. Downing said that personnel is underspent, revenue is on target, and state aid was higher than budgeted. Work study is billed quarterly. She said Forbes is an off-campus employer of work-study students from Smith College. Forbes pays 10% of their wages and all of their FICA withholdings. It is a good deal for both Forbes and Smith. Mr. Carrier said that Forbes has a longstanding and good relationship with Smith College. Ms. Downing said that Electricity is overspent. Ms. Moss said the rate will be going down in November. Ms. Downing said Labor & Repairs was over budget due to unexpected required electrical work, and that more is needed. The city has just done geothermal testing, but Forbes has not yet received the results. Ms. Wight said the city is looking at geothermal in multiple locations, and that a geothermal well in the Forbes parking lot would serve both the Resilience Hub and Forbes Library.

**Department Report: Borrower Services**

Mr. Carrier said that each department in the library writes a report once a year and then presents it to the trustees. He said that since the trustees have already read the report, the presenter should highlight a few items, and then let the trustees know if they have any needs and how the trustees can help.

Mary Biddle introduced herself and presented some highlights from Borrower Services. First, the plexiglass barriers put up at the beginning of the pandemic were removed and communication is much better. Secondly, the Borrower Services office received standing desks and was reconfigured so that staff face outward toward the service desk. This allows them to jump in and help more quickly when needed. Third, they have begun a review and update of their services manual with a "Tacos and Manuals" meeting format. They will continue this process until done. Next, Ms. Biddle introduced the core Borrower Services staff: Tex Teghtsoonian, Brian Marchese, Steven Stover, Joshua Vrysen, Pam Acosta, Jill Emmons. In addition are 10 intermittent part time workers, 4 Smith College work study students, and 17 volunteers with a record breaking 13 from the senior tax work off program. In response to a question from Ms. Anderson, Ms. Downing said that Forbes has about 24 benefitted staff and 24 intermittent part-time workers.

Mr. Carrier thanked Ms. Biddle for her work and asked if she had any requests for her department. Ms. Biddle said that staff want to continue learning and that more funds for professional development including conferences, workshops, classes, etc. are what people are most interested in. Ms. Downing said that there is currently \$6,000 in the budget for staff development.

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**Department Report: Borrower Services** (continued)

Mr. Carrier suggested adding an additional \$6,000 from the Morin Fund for a total of \$12,000.

Ms. Wight made a motion to transfer \$6,000 from the Morin Fund to the Staff Development Fund. 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.

**Department Report: Outreach Delivery Services**

Maria Sperduti presented the Outreach Delivery Services report. She said Outreach is comprised of two delivery services, homebound and short-term. She is considering changing the name "homebound" to long-term delivery service. It includes not just anyone with a physical disability, but also people with transportation issues who can't get to the library regularly. Forbes will assign a volunteer to make deliveries every three weeks. She's also simplified the process for signing up for the service and would like to expand it to include delivery to the correctional center, including the addition of a book box at the facility. Outreach delivers materials in multiple formats from books and magazines, to CDs and DVDs, to e-readers and items from the Library of Things. She has also begun to work more closely with facilities, thus far Linda Manor and Christopher Heights, and would like to add more. Some facilities have their own transportation, but others do not, and that is an issue that needs to be worked out. Ms. Sperduti said that during the pandemic, Forbes expanded their as-needed delivery service. It currently serves two to three patrons per week, and is not widely known. They are in the process of expanding the neighborhood free book boxes from 5 to 12 by taking over the boxes currently managed by the city. The boxes are individually curated by volunteers who select materials from shelves organized by topic. The boxes are flexible and can be moved to other locations including low income and rural areas.

Mr. Carrier thanked Ms. Sperduti for her report and asked if she had any needs. Ms. Sperduti said she would let Ms. Biddle know when needs arise. She said she was in the process of on-boarding new volunteers for the book boxes. Ms. Anderson said to let her know if more volunteers were needed, as she has a connection with Northampton Neighbors and hears from people looking for meaningful volunteer work. Ms. Bruce suggested also being in contact with the local organization RSVP, which is a conduit for volunteer services. Ms. Sperduti said that funds may be required for materials for the book boxes, as well as costs for promotional materials. She said that new book carts will also be needed.

The trustees thanked Ms. Biddle and Ms. Sperduti for their reports and they left the meeting at 5:20 PM.

**Friends of Forbes**

Mr. Carrier explained to the new trustees that the Friends of Forbes meet about ten times a year, and that the trustees take turns attending those meetings. The meetings are held in Ms. Downing's office and via Zoom. The trustee in attendance writes a brief written report covering anything interesting or important for the trustees to know, which will be distributed to the trustees before their monthly meeting. Mr. Carrier encouraged the trustees to join the Friends if they haven't already done so.

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**Friends of Forbes** (continued)

Ms. Bruce attended the April 3 meeting of the Friends of Forbes and reported that their tax return has been filed, the balance in the endowment is \$606,000, and the balance at Greenfield Savings Bank is \$27,000, on target with an expected \$30,000 annual budget. \$6,000 for staff training funds has been transferred. The Special Events committee is working on the Artisans Craft Fair and already have some sponsors and applicants. The Garden Tour is scheduled for June 8 and tickets go on sale May 13. Unfortunately, there are two other competing garden tours scheduled this summer. They are also considering a design for a T-shirt sale. The Friends are working on their spring newsletter. Ms. Moss gave an update including information about the eclipse viewing, Library Giving Day, and a Poetry Festival on April 20. She invited people to join the library and its new banner in the Hampshire Pride March on May 4. Ms. Moss also announced that the library has identified a carpet cleaner appropriate for the library's use, indicating that there will be a funding request to Friends to cover that expense. The meeting adjourned to take a Friend's group photo and everyone went up to the Coolidge Museum Room for the Annual Meeting.

**Administrative Report**

Ms. Downing welcomed the new board members, Ms. Anderson and Ms. Ruocco. She said that this is a historic moment, the first meeting of the seven member board. She and the trustees have dreamt of this day for a very long time.

The library website went down on Thursday, March 28. The process of getting the new site up has been quite extensive and involved many hours of work by Ben Kalish, Faith Kaufmann, and others on staff. A consultant has also been brought in to work on salvaging content from the old site and migrating to a new host.

Mr. Carrier, Ms. Wight, Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss went to a budget meeting with the mayor at the end of March. The meeting was very cordial and they discussed the pressures on the city's budget overall as well as the library's energy costs. The mayor will present the library's budget to the city council for approval next month. Ms. Downing said that the bathroom ventilation project has been approved for FY25. The project also includes accessibility improvements such as adding automatic door openers and the removal of a lip preventing wheelchair access, as well two water bottle filling stations.

The library hosted two events in conjunction with the solar eclipse. Through grant funding that Sarah Johnson secured, Forbes was able to hand out 400 pairs of glasses and Molly Watstein, an LMT Community Support Scientist from the Department of Astronomy at UMass Amherst presented during the events.

Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss reported that Library Giving Day was a record breaking success! The first match of \$25,000 was met and then the second match of \$5,000 was quickly surpassed. In addition to the incredible generosity, Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss were blown away by the dozens of comments expressing appreciation for the library and for the library staff in particular. They would like to thank the trustees for helping this day to be so successful.

The library held AED/CPR trainings coordinated by the Health and Human Services Department for Forbes' staff as well as staff from Lilly Library and the city. The training met basic CPR certification requirements and gave

**Administrative Report** (continued)

staff hands-on experience with the new AED device recently installed in the front lobby.

The Children's Department was the first to go on their team outing this spring. They went to an art exhibit at UMASS, followed by Vietnamese food at T. Roots. Paco took a trip downtown that was shared on Forbes' Instagram account to great acclaim.

Forbes will be marching in Hampshire Pride on May 4. The parade kicks off at 11:00 AM from Sheldon Field. The trustees were encouraged to join.

Work on the Athena sculpture garden bed has begun. The public unveiling is scheduled for the afternoon of June 15 with the June 22 as the rain date. Plantings were removed and some were set aside to be replanted later. New plantings from Wanczyk's Nursery, donated by the landscape architect, will be delivered and planted by volunteers.

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, May 23 at 4:00 PM. The trustees previously scheduled the following meetings for the remainder of 2024: 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, May 1, 2024 at 6:30 PM. Ms. Teschner will attend on behalf of the trustees.

**Communications**

Forbes received an email on April 12 from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) that the second and final payment of state aid has been sent out. Ms. Downing said the payment has been received and is about \$15,000 more than budgeted. She said it is looking like next year will be level funded or possibly decreased. In response to a question from Ms. Anderson, Ms. Downing said the funds are unrestricted, and that they are built into the library's operating budget.

**Discussion Topic: Being a Forbes Trustee**

Mr. Carrier said that some months, not every month, the trustees set aside time for discussion about an issue related to public libraries. For example, in the past there have been discussions about artificial intelligence, book censorship, and racial and social justice. Any trustee can propose a discussion topic. Due to the late hour, Mr. Carrier proposed that the planned discussion this month be postponed until the May meeting.

**Action Items**

Mr. Carrier explained that roll call votes are taken for financial and substantive votes of the trustees. If a trustee feels a particular vote should be done by roll call, they should let him know.

### **Wahconah Falls Drawing**

Ms. Downing reported that Dana Salisbury is a visual and performance artist currently living in Easthampton. She has exhibited extensively including at the Drawing Center and Broadway Windows in NYC and regionally at the Real Art Ways, Berkshire Museum, Boston Center for the Arts, DeCordova Museum, GWV Smith Art Museum, and Boston University. She is also a longtime Forbes patron and has offered to donate a piece to the library's permanent art collection. Faith Kaufmann, Mr. Carrier, and Ms. Downing visited her studio and selected a charcoal and conte drawing called "Wahconah Falls: Notched Space" from a series called "Wahconah Reconstruction" intended to recreate the experience of hiking the complicated landforms and shifting perspectives of Wahconah Falls in Dalton. They are recommending accepting this piece for the permanent collection. Mr. Carrier said that collecting and stewarding the library's art collection was in the will of Judge Charles Forbes and has been part of Forbes' mission from its beginning. Ms. Downing said that finding a place for it to hang will require some shuffling around of artwork.

Ms. Wight made a motion to accept the donation of "Wahconah Falls: Notched Space" from Dana Salisbury and funding from Morin Fund to reframe it. Ms. Francis seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

### **Harassment Policy Update**

Ms. Downing asked the trustees to review a draft of the Harassment Policy, which was last reviewed by the trustees in 2012. This proposed revision incorporates the latest guidance from state and federal guidelines. It brings it up-to-date to include online harassment, definitions, protected classes, and more examples. It is based on a model policy provided by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and spells out more clearly the process for filing a complaint, along with federal resources. Ms. Downing thanked Sarah Johnson for working with her on the revision. She said that the Labor Relations Committee, Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA), and Leadership have reviewed the document and signed off on it.

In response to questions from Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Downing said the policy is part of the employee handbook and will be discussed in person at a staff meeting in May. The handbook is online, but some sections such as this one are printed out and made available physically.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the revised Harassment Policy as proposed by Ms. Downing. 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.

### **Committee Assignments**

The trustees discussed the available committees and the process for committee selection and assignments. Below is the process that was recently approved. This will be implemented now and again in the January following the November 2025 election.

In the January following the city's biannual elections, board members should submit a form with ranked subcommittee requests along with a brief rationale for their top choice to the president and library director. The president, in consultation with the Personnel Committee, will make selections based on areas of expertise, seniority, and the best interests of the library. Each trustee will be assigned to two or

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**Committee Assignments** (continued)

more standing committees. When ad hoc committees are formed, trustees should express interest to the president.

Ms. Downing said that the Personnel Committee will do their best to match people to their requested committees. Ms. Moss will send out the link to the form. At the top of the form is a link to a document with descriptions of each committee. Trustees should use the form to explain why they do or don't want to be on a committee. Mr. Carrier asked that the trustees fill it out within the next couple of days. If they have any questions or would like to meet with Ms. Downing or Ms. Moss for more information, they should reach out.

Mr. Carrier said it is important for everyone to have a role and that most committees don't meet every month; some meet quarterly, some meet every other month, and some meet only as needed. Generally, committees do not bring action items to the trustees until thoroughly vetted, which helps make the trustees' meetings run more smoothly and quickly. Sometimes a committee may want more input from the board before making a recommendation, and sometimes there are time constraints requiring issues be brought before being thoroughly vetted. He said there can be no more than three trustees on any given committee, otherwise it would constitute a quorum and open meeting laws would apply. Mr. Carrier said that there is not currently a Policy Committee, and that Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss prefer to handle policies themselves and bring them to the board for approval. Ms. Bruce suggested considering adding an Art Committee to vet new artwork donated or purchased by the library.

**Geothermal Update**

Ms. Downing reported that work on the test well began on Wednesday, April 10. This required blocking off the back left quarter of the parking lot. The disruption from that and the noise was very manageable and Katie Deppen from Central Services was very communicative and sensitive to the library's needs. The test well drilling went very smoothly and they reached a depth of 500 feet, hitting bedrock around 50-60 feet. The next step is to run a generator for two days to see what kind of energy the well produces, which was scheduled for April 22-24. Ms. Downing is awaiting results from that test.

**Performance Stage Update**

Ms. Downing reported that Ms. Bruce has developed a scope of work that Ms. Downing will run by Central Services. She spoke with Pat McCarthy, Director of Central Services, who said there were 14 applicants for the list of city-approved architects, which will be reviewed and approved in the next few weeks. The bid document will be sent to the approved list. Mr. Carrier said that Forbes has around \$250,000 for the project from various sources, and it is hoped that the project will not exceed \$300,000 which would then cause additional requirements to kick in.

**Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings**

Building & Grounds Committee - Ms. Bruce reported that the committee met on Wednesday, April 10. Ben Snape of Milltown Excavation and Landscaping joined the meeting to talk about his estimate to replace the degraded pavers in front of the library's main entrance with concrete. He is also the contractor who will be installing the Athena statue in the garden to the left of the entrance and the timing and logistics for that were discussed. Ms. Bruce and Ms. Moss made plans to complete a state electric vehicle charging station



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**Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings** (continued)

grant; Ms. Bruce is researching some needed city information. That grant would pay for electric service to be run from the building to the parking lot and supplement the cost of service to the performance stage. Ms. Bruce agreed to draft a performance stage bid package for distribution to selected contractors and Ms. Downing agreed to coordinate that document with Central Services when it is complete. Three more topics were discussed but no actions were assigned: geothermal testing started the day of the meeting and should be cleared from the parking lot in a day or two; raised beds for a garden project with Grow Food Northampton needs a decision on size and location; and they revisited the need to develop a master landscape plan for grounds development and funding. Ms. Moss reviewed the city's Capital Improvement projects associated with library work. The next committee meeting was set for May 30, at 1 PM.

Development Committee - Mr. Carrier reported that the Development Committee met on April 11. Great news regarding the recent Library Giving Day. The total is currently approaching \$39,000 in gifts and pledges which is a new record for the event. It also includes 54 new donors. The highly successful Donor/Volunteer Appreciation Event was reviewed and the committee recommended that it become an annual event. The committee also reviewed the draft of the Major Gift Acceptance Policy for the final time and recommended the Finance Committee review it before it is sent to the full board for final approval at a later date. The next meeting is July 11.

The Coolidge Standing Committee - Ms. Wight reported that the subcommittees are hard at work on centennial programming, launching the first annual fundraising appeal, and preparing to hire a designer for the exhibit redesign. There was a discussion about the successful panel about the Indian Citizenship Act. Their next big event is a concert on June 1. The Exhibit committee is working on an RFP to redesign the museum space. They are also working on a letter for potential donors.

**Other Business**

There was no other business.

At 6:04 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 6:04 PM.