

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Thursday, September 19, 2024

Present: Ms. Rebekah Anderson, Ms. Debin Bruce, Mr. Russell Carrier, Ms. Lisa Downing, Ms. Ruth Francis, Ms. Shelly Ruocco, Ms. Elizabeth Sheirer, Ms. Anne Teschner, Ms. Katy Wight. **Also Present:** Priya Charry, Head of Adult Services. **Present via Zoom:** Ms. Molly Moss; Ms. Julie Bartlett Nelson; Ms. Jo Landers; Maxine Schmidt, 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 4:03 PM.

Bills & Warrants

The trustees signed the warrant dated September 19, 2024.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Bruce moved that the Secretary's report of July 25, 2024 be accepted and placed on file with a minor correction. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Bookkeeper's Reports

Ms. Landers presented the report dated September 19, 2024 covering July and August. It includes standard reports, but does not yet include a budgeted to actual report which she will add once she gets the budget entered into the bookkeeping software. The standard reports include Profit & Loss, with a comparison to the previous year, Balance Sheet with prior year comparison, Statement of Cash Flows, and Sales by Product/Service.

Ms. Landers said that the Profit & Loss statement shows a net loss of \$47,957.70. The Balance Sheet shows the balances in the bank accounts and CDs at Florence Bank as well as the balances in the endowment funds. The balance in the endowment as of August 31, 2024 was \$6,952,028.78. Ms. Francis requested that the maturity dates of the CDs be listed on the report. The Balance Sheet report has negative balances for both Stripe and PayPal because she has not finished entering everything in those accounts. She suggested allowing all product sales to go to the general fund and then adding any designations or restrictions at the end of the month, which would greatly simplify the process and save a few thousand dollars a year in staff and accounting time. She said that PayPal and Stripe do not provide sales reports, but that Square does.

Mr. Carrier said there is nothing sacred about how things were done in the past, but that he found it helpful to have a narrative at the beginning of the report pointing out any areas of concern or interest, and if any transfers are needed. He said the trustees don't need to get into a fine level of detail, while Ms. Downing, Ms. Moss and the Finance Committee require more detail. He said he'd like to work toward having an accounting of

Bookkeeper's Reports (continued)

local fund balances in Florence Bank. In the future Ms. Landers plans to get the report to the Finance Committee for review a week prior to the trustees' meeting. Mr. Carrier emphasized that Ms. Landers should not feel too stressed about meeting deadlines and that the trustees understand she is a small firm. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier about accounting in years when there is an extra pay period, Ms. Downing said that should be taken account of by charging forward or backward based on when the wages are accrued. Ms. Downing said that with the goal of streamlining processes, more changes will be coming. The Finance Committee will discuss some of the issues raised today at their meeting next week. Ms. Moss and Ms. Downing are also meeting with Ms. Landers next week to help with entering the budget into the software and ironing out outstanding questions.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the Management Report dated September 19, 2024 and place it on file. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

The trustees thanked Ms. Landers for all her work.

Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.

Ms. Downing submitted a list of undesignated gifts received from multiple donors in July and August totaling \$11,597.30 with \$9,000 going to the Book and Media Fund, \$2,402.30 to the Morin Fund, \$125 to the Watson Fund, \$50 to the Coolidge Renovation Fund, and \$50 to the Special Collections Fund; and designated gifts with \$50 going to the Lyman Endowment Fund, \$3,520 to the Coolidge Renovation Fund, and \$903.75 to the Coolidge Fund.

The following donations were received since the last trustees' meeting: Coolidge campaign pennant, Iron Horse flyers, Rahar's Pub Collection, 1976 Northampton memorabilia, arts related memorabilia and photographs, Stan Sherer silk images and local history books, Joseph Harrison papers, Hotel Northampton menu, geological maps of Northampton area, Howard Karger Photo Collection, Lesbian Calendar 1997-2001, and 1915 photograph of Main Street.

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

Ms. Downing said that Ms. Landers has suggestions for streamlining the gift reporting by not listing individual donations under \$5,000 in the monthly report to the trustees. The Finance Committee will discuss these suggestions at their next meeting.

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Moss said that including a recent \$1,000 gift, the \$10,000 budgeted for the Book & Media Fund has been met, and that future undesignated gifts will now go toward the Morin Fund. The Morin Fund is undesignated and can be used for projects and purposes of the trustees' choosing. The Watson Fund is for printing, and while the library no longer charges for printing, people can make donations if they choose to.

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

Mr. Carrier said that the trustees have been doing the annual fund for about 15 years. It started small, but combined with library giving day and with the Friends' fundraising and their endowment income, now brings in about \$100,000 per year in discretionary funds that allow the trustees to do the things that make Forbes special. Additionally, the agreement with the city has clarified what the city funds and what Forbes is responsible for. He suggested the new trustees read the agreement with the city, which can be found on the trustees' resources page on the website.

Department Report: Adult Services

Ms. Priya Charry presented the Adult Services Department report. She said that the Adult Services Department is in a place of exciting growth, one year after its transition from Information Services. "Adult Services" encompasses the full spectrum of adult patrons' needs; accordingly, the team has a broad range of expertise and interests, as well as close relationships/crossover with other departments. They have provided excellent service to patrons during this time of transition while tackling department and collection maintenance, diverse programming, and special projects. A job announcement will go out tomorrow for a revised Arts & Music Librarian position, who will help out with programming and community engagement, and also be another librarian ready to answer patron questions.

Highlights of the last year include expanded access to technology such as expanding the volunteer-run Drop-In Tech Help program, discontinuing redundant/outdated digital resources, and the introduction of free black and white printing for a limited number of pages per patron. This has had a big impact for patrons who really appreciate it. Increased programming this year included ten live musical performances, ten live author events, more than two dozen virtual author events, two community forums on the war in Ukraine, ten monthly book groups, and well-attended monthly film discussions and creative art gatherings. The past year has been fruitful for building and developing relationships with local partners. These include class visits from the Center for New Americans and International Language Institute, as well as resource fairs at ILI and the Senior Center. Forbes' partnership with MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center is also of great value. A notable new relationship is with the Division of Community Care outreach staff, who began a practice of casual check-ins with Reference staff while on their downtown rounds.

Challenges facing the department include staffing, which is an issue for every service desk. This will ease a bit with the new librarian, but serving individual people with various needs and emotions, is time and energy consuming. A good supportive team and environment is invaluable. As for specific needs, Ms. Charry said that ergonomic chairs, a canopy for outdoor events, and a tablet would be helpful. She is working on identifying specifics, which will be brought back to the trustees for approval at a later date. The trustees thanked Ms. Charry for all her and the department's work and she left the meeting at 5:04 PM.

Friends of Forbes

Ms. Bruce attended the Friends of Forbes meeting on September 4 and reported that they have \$633,878 in their endowment, \$35,542 at Greenfield bank, and \$42,995 in the Director's fund. Year to date expenses are in line with the

Friends of Forbes (continued)

projection. They discussed the garden tour and the accounting of t-shirts. Planning for next year begins in October. The Membership Committee noted that after the Artisan's Fair they will get started on the newsletter. Special Events focused on the Artisan's Fair, scheduled for October 6. It is shaping up well and 47 artisans are confirmed, with more sponsors than last year, four food vendors and three music groups. A bus trip to the Morgan Library in NYC is planned for Thursday, November 7. Ms. Downing and Ms. Nelson requested \$10,000 for design work on the Coolidge Museum "refresh." Ms. Downing reported that the bathroom ventilation and water bottle filling station project was ready to start and will take about three months. Plans for the outdoor stage now involve architecture drawings instead of a prefab construction.

Administrative Report

Ms. Downing reported that Representative Lindsay Sabadosa held a Town Hall style meet and greet with constituents on the lawn earlier this month. She had recently been asked about her stance on libraries along with other representatives on the ballot this fall and she replied with the following:

"Libraries serve as the front line in a community. They are where kids go after school but also where the unhoused go to get warm. Job seekers use them for computer access. They see everything that goes on. I think support for libraries through increased funding, better access to e-books, and support as AI and other technology emerges will be critical."

Thanks to the Friends of Forbes a "Huddle" by Nook has been installed that provides well-lit seating for two with acoustical enhancements to reduce outside noise.

The Northampton Reparations Study Commission reached out for a summary of reparative supportive activities. The summary Forbes provided was distributed to the trustees.

Ms. Downing accepted a nomination for the board of the Massachusetts Library System, the organization that coordinates statewide delivery, training, and consulting services to libraries across the state. The swearing in for the three-year term will be in November.

Forbes held a second annual open house event for Smith College students. It was a huge success with 83 students registering for cards and many taking tours and borrowing their first items from the library.

Dylan Gaffney and Elise Bernier-Feeley are being recognized for their exceptional local history research support by the Betty Allen Chapter of the DAR. They will be presented with awards in November.

Ms. Moss has launched core competencies assessments for staff. This allows staff to self-report their understanding of a wide range of knowledge that has been deemed essential for all employees. Staff will be provided with training on areas they need to develop.

An Adult Services Librarian position with a specialty in Arts and Music has been posted. This position's responsibilities will include public service, collection, and programming. Ms. Downing, Ms. Moss, and Ms. Charry are on the search committee.

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Administrative Report (continued)

The children's department offered an arts and crafts program with Mass Audubon Arcadia this summer and received a card from "Jack" featuring a drawing of Paco that was too cute not to share.

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

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, October 24 at 4:00 PM. The trustees previously scheduled the following meetings for the remainder of 2024: 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, October 2, 2024 at 6:30 PM. Ms. Ruocco will attend on behalf of the trustees.

The annual meeting of the Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum will be held on Thursday, October 17 at 6:30 PM. Ms. Wight and Mr. Carrier will attend the meeting.

Communications

There were no communications this month.

Discussion Topic

There was no discussion topic this month.

Coolidge Exhibit Design

Ms. Downing reported that the Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum (CCPLM) was established in 1956, following the state appropriation and room allocation by an act of commonwealth legislation in 1955. Housed within the Forbes Library, the then Coolidge Memorial Room experienced several partial renovations, case additions, and several significant infrastructure updates between 2000 and 2020. With the exception of minor content updates, the core permanent exhibition, however, has been static. The lackluster, dated presentation of historical content - with uncomplicated narrative structure concerning class, race, gender, indigenous peoples, economic and foreign policy - overshadows the significant educational potential of the museum. Therefore, the Coolidge Presidential Museum Advisory Committee is embarking on a project to renovate and revive the content of the museum space. The Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum is seeking to update the content of the permanent exhibit that will offer a balanced portrayal of Calvin Coolidge, his record of public service, personal life, early 20th century history, and the life of Grace Coolidge. The Standing Committee of the CCPLM is planning to issue a Request for Proposal in order to find a qualified source to provide a museum exhibit redesign.

The goal with the redesign is:

1. To significantly remodel and modernize the current museum room while maintaining some of the historic "feel" of the current museum
2. To increase attendance and engagement with the museum

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Coolidge Exhibit Design (continued)

3. To create spaces that encourage immersive passive and active education about Calvin Coolidge, life, legacy, and connection to local history
4. To provide flexible implementation options for the redesign including the ability to phase the work

The anticipated budget for the exhibit design work is \$30,000 which is based on looking at comparable project costs and an anticipated construction budget of \$300,000. Once funding for the RFP is secured, we plan to issue the call for proposals.

The development subcommittee of the Coolidge Standing Committee issued their first annual appeal and have netted about \$5,700 in donations to date. The Friends have committed \$10,000 and the Standing Committee committed \$5,000 from their funds towards the project bringing funds to about two thirds towards the goal. Ms. Downing requested that the trustees allocate the additional funds needed to get to \$30,000 from the Morin Fund. Additionally, Ms. Downing requested that the trustees cover the cost of the Coolidge mailing totaling \$1,871.75 from the Morin Fund.

Mr. Carrier said that the focus of the CCPLM Committee this year will be to come up with the estimated \$300,000 it will take to redesign the space. Jay Fleitman is interested in participating in the project and has both state and national connections. Once there is a plan in place, it can be used to help fundraise. Mr. Carrier emphasized that the trustees will always maintain autonomy over the design and content of the exhibits and space. Additionally, the room is used as the library's largest public space for meetings and programs. In response to questions about funding of presidential libraries, Mr. Carrier and Ms. Nelson said that only presidential libraries starting with Hoover receive federal funding. Some libraries receive state funds through earmarks but are not line items in state budgets. Ms. Wight said that the trustees could become involved in the project if they were interested.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to allocate up to \$15,000 from the Morin Fund to go towards the design budget of \$30,000 for the Coolidge Exhibition Redesign and to cover the cost of the Coolidge mailing. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Nelson left the meeting at 5:30 PM.

Treasurer Job Description

Ms. Downing said that as reported at the July meeting, the trustees need to hire a treasurer to fulfill the amended will of the library. She distributed copies of a job description prepared by the Finance Committee for approval by the trustees. The revised treasurer's position is designed not to overlap with Ms. Lamour or Ms. Landers, and to minimize the day to day duties. As stipulated in the will and the ruling of probate court, small compensation or an honorarium will be offered. Ms. Francis said they are looking for a three year commitment. She is putting together a list of people that might be interested.

Ms. Teschner made a motion to approve the Treasurer's job description as recommended by the Finance Committee. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Tabling and Collection Drive Policies

Ms. Dowling reported that the leadership team recommends the following policies that set parameters around tabling at the library and holding collection drives. These requests are received with relative frequency and these policies are in keeping with Forbes' mission and capacity. She asked that the trustees approve these policies.

Tabling at the Library

City departments and city department partners are welcome to "table" (share information, resources, and small giveaway items) in the library lobby for up to three hours at a time, once per month. No sales or solicitation is permitted. Library staff or volunteers promoting library-sponsored events/services may also table in the lobby; library-sponsored tabling will be given priority.

The library can provide one 6' long table and two chairs in a predetermined location. City departments/department partners are expected to bring all other materials needed for their visit.

Collection Drives at the Library

The library may host collection bins/boxes for donation drives organized by city departments and city department partners for up to one month, once per quarter. The library may also hold donation drives in the lobby; every effort to accommodate both will be made, however, library-sponsored donation drives will be given priority. Collection drives will be limited to one at a time, if possible.

The library will provide space in the lobby for a collection bin/box in a predetermined location. City departments/department partners must provide all containers and signage.

In response to a question from Ms. Wight, Ms. Downing said that Forbes may need to say no to some requests, unless Forbes acts as a partner, such as with the Survival Center.

Ms. Ruocco made a motion to approve the Tabling and Collection Drives policies as proposed by Ms. Downing. Ms. Teschner seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Performance Stage: HAI Proposal

Ms. Downing reported that HAI Architecture firm was invited to submit a proposal to design and manage the performance stage project. This firm is on the city's pre-vetted list of architects and the principal was involved in one of the children's project renovations so has familiarity with the library. The proposal, distributed to the trustees, proposes a fee of \$22,600. Also distributed were some preliminary concepts for stick built structures.

Ms. Francis made a motion to approve the proposal from HAI Architecture for design work for the performance stage for a fee of \$22,600 to be paid from the Performance Stage Fund. Ms. Teschner seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Mr. Carrier thanked Ms. Bruce for all her work on this project.

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Shicoff and Gomez Art Proposal

The art selection committee met with mural artist Rochelle Shicoff and poet Magdalena Gomez to discuss their offer to create a permanent or semi-permanent piece of art for the outside of the building. They had a great conversation and reviewed an impressive resume of work by the artists including the women's history mural in Northampton. They explained that the subject and approach of the art would be left open to Forbes and developed through an input process led by Shicoff. Possible formats could include mural, sculpture, or banners. The goal is to create a "place making" piece of art that would become part of how the community identifies the library.

While the committee is very grateful to the artists for approaching Forbes, they do not recommend moving forward with this proposal at this time. They felt as though the grounds are going to see lots of changes with the addition of the performance stage in the coming year. Additionally, there was concern about approving a project without a clear sense of what the outcome would be in terms of approach or subject matter. The trustees were asked to accept the committee's recommendation.

Ms. Francis made a motion to accept the Art Selection Committee's recommendation not to move forward with the outdoor art project at this time. Ms. Teschner seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Quarterly Strategic Plan Update

Ms. Moss reported that this represents the first quarter of the new strategic action plan. Forbes' staff have jumped right in and are already making good progress. A copy of the plan with updates was distributed to the trustees. Ms. Downing said that the trustees are mentioned in some of the action items, and should pay particular attention to them.

Building Updates

Ms. Downing reported that the bathroom improvements project is beginning on September 23 and work is expected to last three months. While it will be disruptive, some bathroom access will be maintained through almost all of the construction.

Utilizing existing energy credits, the city's CAPA department has initiated the process for Forbes to have its remaining fluorescent lights converted to LED. This project is expected to begin fairly soon.

A part broke in the HVAC system for the Hampshire Room so it has been without air conditioning for the past couple of weeks. The part is eagerly awaited to arrive.

Ms. Downing said there has been some activity around the Children's Department renovation and she expects it will be on the capital improvements plan this year. She is meeting with the Children's Department staff tomorrow for input.

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings

Finance Committee - Ms. Francis reported that the committee met with Jo Landers to discuss the handling of gifts, designated funds and undesignated funds as well as the duties of the treasurer. The transition to QuickBooks

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Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings (continued)

Online was reviewed. The committee reviewed and approved the treasurer job description and discussed next steps. The addition of information about donating stocks to the Giving website was presented.

Art Selection Committee - Mr. Carrier and Ms. Francis reported that the committee decided that Ms. Francis and Mr. Carrier would serve as co-chairs. The committee met with Rochelle Shicoff & Magdalena Gomez to discuss their proposal to create either a mural or a banner for the library. They then reviewed the Art Selection Criteria policy and made a recommendation to the full board on their proposal. In addition, the committee discussed Historic Northampton's inquiry as to whether or not Forbes might want to be included with them & others in eventually taking responsibility for the upkeep of the Hestia mural in downtown Northampton. They also discussed the possibility of acquiring two pieces from the current exhibit in the Hosmer gallery. Finally, they discussed the possibility of eventually trying a more creative way of displaying the library's art collection throughout the building both to make it more interesting to the public as well as allowing for more art to be displayed rather than being stored and rotated in and out of the public display areas.

Building and Grounds - Ms. Bruce reported that the Building and Grounds Committee met on August 19. The August agenda revisited the new projects that the board was asked to approve for this fiscal year. A list showing project names, estimates, and source of funding are available for the trustees. Projects of note: 1.) Friends of Forbes funded a study nook for the Reference Room; 2.) Three concrete projects are likely to be done concurrently in the Spring (repair of front patio, pad for storage shed, and stage platform); 3.) Roof and gutter work has been estimated and will be scheduled and the Children's entrance roof needs to be repaired before winter; 4.) The bathroom ventilation project will begin in September; and 5.) A meeting to finalize the design of the Young Adult/Basement project was scheduled for August 30, 2024. Plans for a prefabricated stage have changed. The library has engaged HAI architects to develop custom plans and oversee construction of the west lawn performance stage. That project is anticipated to occur in the Spring in time for use next Summer.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Ms. Wight distributed minutes from the committee's July and September meetings.

Development Committee - Ms. Anderson reported that the committee selected Ms. Anderson as chair. The FY24 fundraising summary was provided: 720 gifts from 460 donors totaled \$358,000. This compared well to FY 23 metrics and the committee exceeded its goals. For this next year, there will be some effort to do prospect gifts. The Fall Annual Appeal was discussed and this has gone to the mail house earlier this week and will go out around the end of the month. The committee will be reviewing the FY25 goals at the next meeting.

Other Business

Mr. Carrier said that he had a long conversation with the Coolidge Committee about fundraising and said that it is a team effort. Every person on that committee made a contribution as have a majority of trustees. He said that the committee along with the Friends are all volunteers, and also make financial contributions. He said it was really important for the trustees to support not only the library, but also the events and fundraising efforts of

Other Business (continued)

the Friends and the Coolidge Committee. He said the contribution can be of any size, but that it is important to be able to say that the 100% of the board has contributed financially when looking for outside funds. It is the fundraising outside of the regular budget that allows Forbes to do the extra things that make it so special. Ms. Francis added that there are new ways to support the library through gifts of securities and qualified charitable donations. Ms. Ruocco said that she felt the library's fundraising could benefit from the advice of a professional fundraiser to help with the wording in the appeals.

Ms. Wight said that she has been approached by the Northampton Education Fund (NEF) to be a word pronouncer at their upcoming Spelling Bee on October 22. She asked the trustees to let her know if they are interested in participating as well.

Ms. Bruce said that she is back on the Community Preservation Commission, and wanted to get the word out that the bike path will be closed this fall from State Street to Bridge Road for repairs.

At 6:02 PM Ms. Teschner moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:02 PM.