

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Wednesday, June 18, 2025

Present: Rebekah Anderson, Debin Bruce, Elizabeth Sheirer, Katy Wight. **Also Present:** Suzy Campos, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library. **Present via Zoom:** Russell Carrier; Lisa Downing; Ruth Francis; Jo Landers; Molly Moss; Shelly Ruocco; Anne Teschner; Doug Wheat; Lolana Sevilla, Racial & Social Justice Advisory Group; Adrienne Andrews, Racial & Social Justice Advisory Group; Fred Kass. **Absent:** None.

Pursuant to the extended authorization for certain remote meeting provisions signed into law by the Governor, and now available through June 30, 2027, this meeting was available for remote participation.

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

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Secretary's Report

Rebekah Anderson moved that the Secretary's report of May 22, 2025 be accepted and placed on file with a few minor corrections. Debin Bruce seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Bills & Warrants

The trustees will sign the warrant dated June 18, 2025 on Friday.

Financial Reports

Jo Landers distributed and presented the Trustees' Financial Report for the period ending May 31, 2025, which included a Profit and Loss Comparison, Balance Sheet Comparison, Statement of Cash Flows, Stage Fund income and expense report, and Endowment Fund Balance Report from Bartholomew Inc. The value of the endowment on April 30, 2025 was \$7,146,252.76.

In response to a question from Anne Teschner, Molly Moss said that due to timing issues around signing the monthly warrant, the bills that would incur late fees are paid early. In response to a question from Shelly Ruocco, Jo Landers said that capital expenses over \$2,500 appear as expenses on the Profit & Loss statement so that they can be tracked but will be moved to the Balance sheet as assets at the end of the year. She said there wasn't anything concerning in the reports.

Debin Bruce made a motion to approve the Trustees' Financial Report for the period ending May 31, 2025 and place it on file. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.

Lisa Downing reported that \$77,793.25 in undesignated gifts were received last month including a \$75,000 bequest from Marguerite Bedell. The following designated gifts were received since the last trustees' meeting: \$10,000 from the Brian Turner Estate to the Lyman Special Collections Fund; \$515 to the Performance Stage Fund; and \$105.15 to the Coolidge Fund. The following donations were received since the last trustees' meeting: Broadside advertising the Caledonian Thistle Club 1872 Scottish Games at the

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

Northampton Agricultural fairgrounds July 20, 1872. There were no receipts from sales/rents this month.

Lisa Downing said that the \$75,000 and \$10,000 bequests would be transferred to a money market fund at Bartholomew Inc., currently earning 4.02%.

Shelly Ruocco made a motion to accept the designated and undesignated gifts and donations as reported by Lisa Downing. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, July 24 at 4:00 PM. The trustees scheduled the following meetings for the remainder of 2025: Thursday, September 25; Thursday, October 23; Thursday, November 20; and Thursday, December 18. Meetings will convene at 4:00 PM unless otherwise noted.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held on Wednesday, September 3, 2025 at 6:30 PM. Shelly Ruocco will attend on behalf of the trustees.

Discussion Topic: Racial & Social Advisory Group

Anne Teschner recently asked the advisory group about their past accomplishments and what they think the group's role moving forward should be. She is now asking the trustees to have a similar conversation to discover what they have found useful about the advisory group's work in the past and what they would like the group's role to be moving forward. Members of the advisory group were also invited to be part of the conversation.

The group was formed in 2021 and has had a couple of iterations. The original charge was distributed. It states: "The Racial & Social Justice Advisory Group advises the Racial & Social Justice Committee of the Trustees of Forbes Library to ensure that the voices of diverse community members are represented in the library's efforts to seek out and eliminate underlying structures of white supremacy, and promote racial and social justice in our policies, procedures, and programs." A copy of a brochure that was created last year to help recruit new members was also distributed.

Anne Teschner led a discussion with the trustees focusing on the purpose and structure of the group. Katy Wight said the group was formed in the wake of the George Floyd protests when the library wanted to put out a statement and wanted to be sure they were being thorough with diversity and equity initiatives within the organization. There was a series of training courses for the trustees and staff. One of the recommendations was to form a committee, which then recommended forming the advisory group to get more input from the community.

Anne Teschner said the group's current charge is both too large and not specific enough. Lisa Downing agreed that it needs to be reworked. Debin Bruce said she did not want to oversimplify, but she sees a large part of their role as outreach to let various communities know what the library has to offer. Anne Teschner asked if the group could be a useful guide to trustees in terms of governance and policies, and if group members could also serve on trustee committees. She also asked if they could advise library

Discussion Topic: Racial & Social Advisory Group (continued)

staff. Katy Wight said she didn't want to overburden group members with more meetings and work than they initially signed on for, but that it would be valuable to have their input when revising policies or creating communications to make sure both the policies and the language are inclusive. Debin Bruce said she would love their input on programming for the new performance stage and Lisa Downing said they had already been brainstorming some ideas. She said that specific actions for the group could be incorporated into the library's annual action plan. Shelly Ruocco said the group could give advice on how to make the library more welcoming and effective for diverse communities. Rebekah Anderson asked about encouraging group members to get on the ballot for Forbes trustee in the fall. Lisa Downing introduced Lolana Sevilla and Adrienne Andrews, who are Racial & Social Justice Advisory Group members.

In response to a question from Anne Teschner about what the trustees like that the group has done in the past and what they want them to focus on in the future, Debin Bruce said she liked them teaming up with Grow Food Northampton. She suggested they be given a small budget to be able to do outreach in a fun way. Anne Teschner thanked the trustees for the discussion and said that they should let her know if they have other ideas.

Department Reports: Building & Grounds

Debin Bruce presented a status update on Building & Grounds projects. A spreadsheet showing completed projects, approved projects, and proposed new projects was distributed to the trustees. Completed projects include: replacing the shed fascia, making restrooms more accessible and improving ventilation, installing water bottle filling stations, repairing broken slates and gutters, mulching garden beds, and the purchase of a privacy pod. Already approved projects include: repairing sidewalk and driveway damage, completing the performance stage, the Coolidge Museum redesign conceptual planning, upgrading the broken steam coil and replacing the chiller, renovating the Children's and Young Adult Room, and repairing the front patio. New projects for FY26 include: replacing or reupholstering soft seating at a cost of approximately \$10,000 with a combination of funding from unrestricted funds and the Friends. Future projects include: the Coolidge Museum redesign construction, larger storage shed with concrete pad, tractor salt spreader, digital sign for the front lawn, redoing the garden bed to the right of the front door including a patio, replacing main floor stacks carpet, Community Room restoration, and renovating the Hampshire Room/Special Collections.

Lisa Downing said she was pleased with the movement on capital projects, particularly the roofing projects that were done this year. She said that with an older building there's always something that needs to be done. Debin Bruce said that the bid opening for the HVAC and Children's & Young Adult department is next Wednesday. She's heard that the plumbing came in under, the electrical a little over, but that the HVAC work came in much higher due to tariffs. In response to a question from Katy Wight about the front patio, Lisa Downing said the repairs would begin after July 1.

Fundraising Workshops

Lisa Downing reported that there has been discussion among the library's Development Committee and Coolidge Development Committee, as well as the Friends, about the need for skill building around fundraising. There is the

Fundraising Workshops (continued)

opportunity to have access to a series of two training sessions on Donor Cultivation Stages presented by Sarah Tanner of the Financial Development Agency, a firm that has helped libraries, museums and other institutions raise money locally and beyond. Sarah Tanner's proposal costing \$1,500 was distributed to the trustees. If approved, the workshops will be scheduled for early fall. They would be available within reason to all from the library who wish to attend and would include evening and weekend options. The Friends committed \$750, the Coolidge Standing committee committed \$250, and the Development Committee recommended that the trustees fund the balance of the workshops totaling \$500 from unrestricted funds.

Debin Bruce made a motion to approve funding \$500 from unrestricted funds to go towards fundraising workshops. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously with Rebekah Anderson, Debin Bruce, Russell Carrier, Ruth Francis, Shelly Ruocco, Anne Teschner, and Katy Wight all voting in favor.

Forbes Library FY26 Budget

Lisa Downing reported that the Finance Committee is bringing forward a FY26 Budget pending approval of the mayor's recommendation of a 2.5% appropriation increase by the city council. This is a first of its kind budget for the library that encompasses all anticipated income and expenses for the year. The other major change is that it is structured to align with the library's audit and tax filing which assigns all expenditures to program, fundraising, or administrative categories. Income sources are listed but this budget does not structure expenses to those sources of income. Lisa Downing thanked Molly Moss, Jennie Lamour, Jo Landers, and the rest of the Finance Committee for this structural transition. She and Molly Moss have done their best to anticipate as much as they can to produce a tight but realistic budget. She is expecting that there will be unanticipated expenses and to a lesser extent expense categories. She also expects that this will get better in subsequent budget years. This budget will be input into QuickBooks in such a way that it will be possible to accurately and quickly produce reports for the trustees as well as the staff. This will be a great improvement.

Jo Landers shared her screen and walked the trustees through the proposed budget. It includes anticipated funds such as expected grant funding, undesignated gifts, and funds from the Friends, which depend upon their approval. Due to the large amount of capital projects, she said the library may need to draw upon prior years' savings and do additional fundraising if necessary. She said the total budget of \$1,630,650 is conservative in estimating income and slightly overestimates expenses. The \$25,000 in advertising expense is covered by a google grant, and she doubled the amount for auditing services since 2 audits will need to be completed this year. There is a much more detailed spreadsheet she would be happy to share if the trustees are interested.

Katy Wight thanked all involved in the tremendous amount of work in putting this budget together for the first time.

Debin Bruce made a motion to approve the FY26 budget as presented. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously with Rebekah Anderson, Debin Bruce, Russell Carrier, Ruth Francis, Shelly Ruocco, Anne Teschner, and Katy Wight all voting in favor.

Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum (CCPLM) FY26 Budget

Katy Wight presented the FY26 budget for the CCPLM recommended by the Coolidge Standing Committee. It represents a 3.5% yield from the endowment funds. The total budget is \$8,460 with \$2,000 for the Programming Committee, \$950 for the Development Committee, \$1,000 for the Marketing Committee, \$4,010 for the Exhibits Committee, and \$500 for a recording secretary. Lisa Downing said that this budgeted amount is included in the overall library budget that the trustees just approved.

Debin Bruce made a motion to approve the FY26 budget for the CCPLM as recommended by the Coolidge Standing Committee. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously with Rebekah Anderson, Debin Bruce, Russell Carrier, Ruth Francis, Shelly Ruocco, Anne Teschner, and Katy Wight all voting in favor.

Administrative Report

Lisa Downing reported that Molly Moss will soon be back after an extended vacation to the west coast to visit family and Lisa Downing is now in the middle of a trip to Europe with family and will be zooming into the meeting. They are very grateful for this rejuvenating time off and for the support of Jennie Lamour and the leadership team who assisted during their absence.

There are now four candidates who have taken out papers, including Shelly Ruocco and Rebekah Anderson, who have returned them, and Fred Kass and George Danziger, who Lisa Downing met with this month.

Ide Thompson has announced their resignation to pursue a PhD from Penn State for a dual degree in English and African American/ African Diaspora studies. They have been with Forbes since January and will be missed on the team, although everyone completely understands this amazing opportunity to further their career. All wish them the best in their future endeavors.

The six panel exhibit about the Life and Legacy of The Marquis de Lafayette sponsored by the Betty Allen Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution is on display on either side of the columns in the reading room. This exhibit coincides with the 200th anniversary of Lafayette's visit to Northampton during his farewell tour.

There are five library staff attending the national conference of the American Library Association later this month in Philadelphia thanks to scholarships, complimentary admission for speaking, outside agencies, and generous support by the trustees and Friends for professional development. Lisa Downing and Molly Moss are so proud and grateful to have Forbes so well represented at the conference and in the lineup of speakers.

This year's summer reading kicked off with a party on June 14. As always, there are programs for all ages including adults. Pick up your reading log and join in the fun!

Suzy Campos said that the garden tour went well, with rain letting up in the afternoon. Many people stopped by the library to get tickets following the No-Kings demonstration downtown in the morning.

Rebekah Anderson moved that the Administrative Report be accepted and placed on file. Debin Bruce seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Communications

The library received a letter dated May 7, 2025 from the Northampton Survival Center thanking them for the recent donation of paper goods.

Performance Stage Update

Lisa Downing reported the performance stage project is moving right along and is on track to be completed around July 4 with hydroseeding as one of the final steps. The new grass will need time to grow, and the stage will be able to be used by the end of the summer. There have been some additional expenses this month related to adding solar panels, EV chargers, and for a tree that needed to come down: \$3,227.32 for revisions to the stage project, \$3,320.62 to add a solar conduit from the stage to the library, and \$10,890.00 for EV conduits from the library to EV box.

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings

Friends of Forbes - Shelly Ruocco attended the June 4 meeting of the Friends of Forbes and reported that this was their last meeting before the Garden Tour.

The Treasurer's Report included mention of the \$25,000 for the performance stage construction. The Bartholomew account started with \$630,000 but after expenditures was now closer to \$590,000. \$2,880 was collected from Garden Tour advanced sales so far. Online tickets are selling well. The Friends Membership Committee has a process for mailing out membership requests where those who made donations within the last year do not get a second mailing in that year. The Newsletter includes a reminder to recipients to make their donation in case they have not yet done so for the year. A good point made was that when writing for donations, the email letter should be short. The Special Events Committee notes that they have "loads" of artisans interested in the Fair this fall, which is great news! There are two sponsorships so far for the Artisan Fair. There was discussion about the difficulty of getting sponsorships as local businesses had to ramp up orders in advance of tariffs and therefore did not have any funds on hand for sponsorships. There have been a few "no's" so far, which could be concerning if this trend continues. The Artisan Fair is scheduled for Sunday, October 25 from 10 AM-3 PM. The Garden Tour is all set, with final details including refreshments, tents and tablecloths discussed. Many volunteers are on board. The Friends are very well organized, and all seemed very calm as they did their check-in on final details. The Friends are working on a new website design, and a sample was passed around. The Friends do not meet in July and August, but subcommittees do meet. The final numbers for the Garden Tour may be known in July.

Building and Grounds Committee - Debin Bruce reported that they met on Friday, May 23. Lisa Downing, Debin Bruce, Katy Wight, JoEllen MacKenzie, and Jason Petcen attended. Two major building projects were on the agenda for discussion: (1) The groundbreaking to start the outdoor performance stage occurred on May 14 and excavation work has begun. A trench from the building, across the entrance driveway, to carry stage electric power, electric charging station power, and solar connections is scheduled for May 27. Jason Petcen will provide signs and cones. As an extra precaution, the contractor will provide a police detail. Electric conduit requirements were coordinated among the three different service providers. The committee took an action assignment to coordinate and order a brass sign acknowledging donors. (2) The bid package for the Children's basement renovation, including HVAC system upgrades has been released. The bidders meeting and walk through was

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings (continued)

scheduled for May 27 with bid openings scheduled for June 18. As an item of new business, Dylan Gaffney had reported to Lisa Downing that the Hampshire Room air quality is degrading the archive collection. Temperature swings are most problematic during transition months between winter/summer. Debin Bruce offered a portable floor A/C unit as a stop gap measure until Central Services can be engaged to fix the compressor.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Katy Wight presented their FY26 budget earlier in the meeting which was approved. Their focus now is on fundraising, with three target areas: the amount needed for the exhibit redesign, a second amount to include digitization work and a full-time archivist position, and a third level to establish an endowment. They are working on putting together fundraising messages, with some discussion about what should be the top line goal for now. Legislators have been invited to an event scheduled for July 7 at 4:00 PM, for a presentation on the proposed plan for the renovation and exhibit space and how they can support it. There will be a similar event for professional groups at the Chamber of Commerce. There is a new summer intern doing cataloging work.

Development Committee - Rebekah Anderson reported that they did not meet this month. Their next meeting is July 10 at 4:30 PM. Rebekah Anderson is excited about the fundraising training and is working with someone to keep a close eye on possible grants.

Finance Committee - Ruth Francis reported that the Finance Committee met last week on June 11 to discuss the budget presentation for the upcoming trustees meeting. Committee members agreed that a simplified summary would be presented to the full board of trustees with the detailed version available upon request. In reviewing current cash flow, they would like to highlight for the trustees that the construction expenses for the Performance Stage will be paid from the designated funds held at Florence Bank. They briefly spoke about the compensation analysis study scheduled for FY26 and noted that any salary changes would not go into effect until FY27 as the current FLEA contract goes through FY26. Lisa Downing also added that the bidding is opening for the Children's Department project, and the cost could potentially impact next year's budget planning. The Form 990 has been filed and will need to be amended. The amendment is necessary to correct misstated information (i.e.: number of voting trustees, the name of the trustee holding an officer position, and the mission of Forbes). For continuity in communications, Jo Landers will coordinate with the auditor. The committee also discussed whether a third authorized signer was necessary. They all agreed that with the upcoming November elections and board changes it would be prudent to add a third signer. Ruth Francis tentatively agreed to be added, pending check with broker-dealer. They discussed two gifts the library received: the Bedell bequest of \$75,000 and the Turner estate gift of \$10,000. All members agreed that the funds should be transferred to Bartholomew & Company and added to the money market fund. Keeping the funds liquid will allow for accessibility when funds need to be disbursed. Current yield on the money market fund is 4.02%. Doug Wheat shared that based on previous feedback, Bartholomew & Company made some changes to the endowment portfolio; a few funds were sold and new positions added. All agreed it would make sense to have Bartholomew present to the full board in September. They began preliminary discussions on how to track and manage unrestricted funds, particularly in relation to the city's financial oversight. The discussion centered on whether to track unrestricted funds separately from restricted funds. They agreed to table the

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings (continued)

conversation until the July meeting as that will give each committee member time to read a memo dedicated to fund designation. At a future meeting they will review the investment policy statement to see if there is potential for more flexibility in fossil fuel restrictions. The next meeting of the Finance Committee is on July 16 at 11:00 AM.

Personnel Committee - Shelly Ruocco reported that they did not meet this month. Their next meeting is July 16 at 4:00 PM. They will have an update from consultants on the compensation study. Lisa Downing said that the consultants have interviewed every benefited employee. They will meet to work through their recommendations and wrap up at the end of July. This will give the board time to work with FLEA on their next contract.

Racial and Social Justice Advisory Group - Anne Teschner reported that their next meeting is June 23 at 4:30 PM.

Other Business

There was no other business.

At 5:18 PM Debin Bruce moved to adjourn the meeting. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:18 PM.