

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Thursday, November 19, 2020

Present: Ms. Buckhout, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing, Ms. Hess, Ms. Moss, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, Ms. Sheirer, Ms. Wight. **Also Present:** JoEllen MacKenzie, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library; Sarah Johnson, Children's and Young Adult Librarian, Wally Rapalus. **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.

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 PM.

Bills & Warrants

Ms. Hess made a motion to verbally approve the warrant dated November 19, 2020. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Downing said she would wait until there are a few more months of warrants and then schedule a time for the trustees to come in individually to sign them.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Hess moved that the Secretary's Report of October 22, 2020 be accepted and placed on file. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Buckhout presented the Treasurer's Report of October 31. The General Aid Fund had negative net activity for the month of \$11,933 and has a balance of \$34,880. Large spending variances such as the overspending in Personnel of \$5,878, General Library Supplies of \$9,109 and Labor and Repairs of \$5,945 are offset by underspending in Heating Gas of \$4,765 and Workstudy of \$4,000. The Book & Media Fund closed with positive net activity of \$7,453 and has a cumulative deficit of \$2,907. The Community Engagement Fund had positive net activity of \$1,408 and has a balance of \$2,084. The Distance Learning Grant had negative net activity of \$500 and has a deficit of \$1,355. The Externally Financed Transaction Fund had negative net activity of \$3,225 and has a deficit of \$3,165. The Halberstadt Technology Fund had positive net activity of \$9,954 and has a balance of \$6,762. The Mass Humanities Grant fund had negative net activity of \$685 and has a balance of \$1,348. The Morin Fund had negative net activity of \$371 and has a balance of \$111,538. The Moving Memories IMLS Grant had negative net activity of \$711 and has a deficit of \$1,723. The Staff Development Fund had negative net activity of \$1,625 and has a balance of \$1,353. The Watson Copier Fund had negative net activity of \$1,012 and has a deficit of \$1,091.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report of October 31, 2020 and place it on file. Ms. Hess seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.

Ms. Downing distributed a list of undesignated gifts totaling \$4,886.83 received in response to the annual appeal to be deposited in the Book & Media Fund. Other undesignated gifts include: \$103 to be deposited in the Aldrich Fund and \$75.75 to be deposited in the Lyman Special Collections Fund. Ms. Downing said that the amount in gifts budgeted to go to the Book & Media Fund has been met this year and that future undesignated gifts can be allocated elsewhere.

The following designated funds were received since the last trustees' meeting: \$100 from Lisa Downing and Kelley Hopkins, Easthampton MA to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund; \$100 from Anonymous, Northampton MA to the Hershkowitz Fund; \$51.50 from Beth Girshman, Conway, MA to the Hershkowitz Fund.

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

There were no donations or receipts from sales/rents this month.

Financial Report

There was no financial report this month.

Children's and Young Adult Services Report

Ms. Sarah Johnson, Children's & Young Adult Librarian, presented the Children's and Young Adults Department report. Like many organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to rethink the way programs and services are offered. Ms. Johnson reported on grant-funded programming including the Early Literacy Everywhere Mural grant which funded the painting of a mural in the children's restroom created by local author and illustrator Jeff Mack; the Summer Learning Expanded-World Voices grant which funded the hosting of five online performances this summer; the Virtual Programming for Distance Learning grant which funded two anti-racism webinars hosted by local author Tiffany Jewell, Books and Art to Go! Kits, and knitting kits and webinars. They are in the process of applying for a Northampton Arts Council FY21 Grant to host the Boston-based justice project "Wee the People" for a virtual interactive workshop for parents, caregivers, and educators entitled "Decode and Disrupt: Reading Children's Books Critically." Many in-person programs were transitioned to a virtual format including uploading a new Storytime to Facebook every Friday, hosting monthly Middle Grade and Teen Book Clubs on Zoom, hosting a Kids' Show & Tell on Zoom in July, and hosting a virtual Kids' Write-in every Monday afternoon in November. As the pandemic wore on, they offered more opportunities for tactile experiences including assembling and distributing 120 Teen Art kits. Last month they gave away 84 Halloween kits to kids featuring everything needed to make a window decoration. To encourage families to enjoy spending time outdoors and share a book together they hosted StoryWalks on the library lawn in partnership with Northampton/Hadley Family Connection. Looking ahead, they plan to keep trying things out, applying for alternative funding sources, soliciting feedback and seeing what resonates with patrons.

Ms. Johnson said that when the pandemic started, they had to completely rework plans for summer programming. They cancelled some performers and transitioned others to a virtual format. They learned how to use Facebook Live and set up a virtual summer reading challenge. Further on in the pandemic, they realized that people wanted more tactile experiences and less

Children's and Young Adult Services Report (continued)

screen time, so they made art kits for teens and younger kids, for which they have received a lot of positive feedback. Ms. Johnson read an email from a grandmother who said how one of the art kits had inspired her granddaughter and what a wonderful resource Forbes has been. The art kits were funded by the Friends of Forbes and the program was funded through the CARES Act.

Ms. Prabhaker said that as a parent, Forbes has been an amazing source of joy and light from curbside pickup, to book displays, to the art kits, story walks and more. She thanked Ms. Johnson for all her work. Ms. Hess said that as Chair of the Racial and Social Justice Committee, she appreciates what Ms. Johnson is doing in that area and said that is exactly where this should be starting.

The trustees thanked Ms. Johnson for the report and she left the meeting at 4:12 PM.

Friends of Forbes

Mr. Twarog attended the Friends of Forbes virtual meeting on November 4 and reported that representatives from Bartholomew Inc. were there and discussed the Friends' investments and risk strategy. Their funds are doing well despite the pandemic and no changes are planned at this time. Their membership mailing is going out in December. They are planning a newsletter and are looking for articles. The wine tasting netted about \$8,800. They received about \$8,900 in sponsorships, sold 62 tickets, and had \$184 in expenses. The Friends plan to finalize their annual budget in December or January. Ms. Downing gave an update on the library's re-opening plan and self-service. They have begun planning for the garden tour in June and are waiting for guidance from the health department. They are also considering a virtual component.

Administrative Report

Ms. Downing reported that the library has secured funding to purchase the ScanPro 3000, a microfilm reader and a high-speed desktop conversion scanner. It provides quick, high quality scans of microfilm that is of much greater quality over the analog machines. The result is much clearer and easier to read content that is saved in a digital format which is what most researchers now prefer over paper printouts. The total price including the computer that is needed to run it is over \$10,000 and it has been included in this year's book & media budget under the "public facing technology" provision. This helps meet the book budget requirement in a year when several income lines are down due to the pandemic. The Friends are contributing \$4,150 and a \$3,000 donation was received from Gordon Tatro who is a frequent user of the current machines for a project on the history of the Veterans Administration center in Leeds. The balance will come from the Doland Fund.

The city asked Forbes to submit COVID-19 related expenses, of which just over \$21,000 are potentially eligible for reimbursement from the CARES act funding that the city received. Ms. Downing expects to know soon how much reimbursement Forbes will receive.

Susan Schaeffer, a library assistant in Borrower Services, has announced her intention to retire in the coming months. She has worked at the library for 16 years providing customer service at the main desk. Ms. Downing said staff are very sorry to see her go but wish her all the best in her retirement.

Administrative Report (continued)

Scott Kennedy has announced his resignation from the Friends board for personal reasons. The library is so grateful for his years of volunteer service especially for his hard work at the wine tasting events.

Ms. Moss shared an info graphic she is working on based on the ARIS statistics she presented last month. The format is a little different this year, focusing on the statistics about what Forbes is currently doing in response to the pandemic. She will send out the finished version to the trustees very soon.

Phased Reopening Plan Update

Ms. Downing reported that as COVID numbers continue to worsen locally, and across the state and the country, library staff are keeping a close eye on them to determine service levels. The state recently updated the metrics they are using to be more fine-tuned to the population sizes of both large and small communities: <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-covid-19-command-center-department-of-elementary-secondary>

After consulting with the Northampton Health Department, it was decided to follow the state's new metrics. Ben Kalish made a spreadsheet that includes both the number of cases and the % positivity rate. This week is still green, although barely (9.6). The current service level, self-service, is for yellow, and curbside-only is red. There is no change anticipated to the current service level for this coming week. Ms. Downing plans on sending an update about the library status and service levels weekly on Fridays.

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

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, December 17 at 4:00 PM.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held Wednesday, December 2, at 6:30 PM. Ms. Wight will attend on behalf of the trustees.

Communications

Ms. Downing received a letter dated October 26, 2020 from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts thanking Forbes for their donation.

FY2022 Action Plan

Ms. Downing distributed copies of the proposed action plan for the 4th year of the current strategic plan beginning in July. Future planning feels challenging due to the uncertainty of the timeline and long term impacts of the pandemic. The leadership team has done their best to project where Forbes expects to be in FY22 and are optimistic that there will be more in person opportunities. Ms. Downing is also pleased that there are several actions being proposed to advance racial and social justice. The plan is due to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) by December 1.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the 4th year of the strategic plan. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Expanding Outreach Delivery Service

Ms. Downing reported that it is anticipated that there are elders in the community who might benefit from delivery service this winter due to the pandemic. She proposed offering delivery service to people over the age of 65 with an underlying health condition who may not have qualified for service under the existing delivery service parameters or have been interested in delivery service before. She proposed mailing a postcard presenting the options of curbside, drive-up, traditional Outreach Delivery Service as well as expanded delivery service for the duration of the pandemic. The estimate to mail to this group, totaling 4,265 households in Northampton, Florence and Leeds is \$1,434.60.

Additionally, Ms. Downing anticipates needing to temporarily use paid staff hours to assist with the proposed temporary expansion of the service. She proposed utilizing existing staff hours as much as possible but would also like to temporarily hire someone to be the primary delivery person. She is uncertain about the number of hours needed because it will depend on how many people request the service.

Ms. Downing asked for approval of this temporary expansion as well as approval of funding for the mailing from the Outreach Delivery Service fund and staff hours from the existing personnel line in the Aid Fund with the understanding that it may cause overspending in that budget line, in which case she would ask the board to consider using some of the PPP loan funds to cover the balance.

Mr. Carrier suggested promoting the expanded outreach service in the Senior Center newsletter. Ms. Downing said she plans to publicize the service, and that it is good for the community to know about it even if they don't use it themselves. Mr. Carrier said she should also make sure the Mayor and City Council are aware of the service expansion. In response to a question from Ms. Wight, Ms. Downing said they would consider expanding the service further to include people under the age of 65 with underlying conditions once they see if they can handle the response from people over the age of 65. Ms. Downing said she would work with Lilly Library to include them in the program.

Ms. Hess made a motion to approve Ms. Downing's plan to expand Outreach Delivery Service as proposed for this fiscal year. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Unemployment Claims

Ms. Downing reported that there have been three fraudulent unemployment claims made in the names of library staff. She sought and received a service proposal from Unemployment Tax Control Associates (UTCA) to administer claims, audit claims, do the necessary paperwork, handle complaints, and assist with hearings. The auditing portion of the service would be beneficial to ensure that no charges are erroneously assigned to Forbes moving forward. The proposal is for \$900 annually with a \$95 registration fee. The city has a contract with UTCA, and Ms. Downing hopes that in the future Forbes can be included in the city's contract. Ms. Buckhout added that this is a statewide, even nationwide problem, and not due to any lack of security on Forbes' part.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to approve the UTCA service proposal for one year and funding of \$995 from the Aid fund. Ms. Hess seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Drainage Project

Ms. Downing reported that work has begun on the city capital improvement project to improve the drainage on the slope at the back of the property leading down to the bike path. The project is being overseen by the DPW and the first step was some tree removal on the slope. They expect the project to take about a month to complete. The rear of the parking lot is closed off during this work, but there are still plenty of parking spaces available. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss said that the project has been scaled back from the original plan, which included redirecting the water drainage from the bike path, to fixing and replacing the current drainage pipes that were broken.

Community Engagement

Ms. Moss distributed a list of recent and upcoming community engagement events. She reported that she and Heather Diaz hosted an online discussion group as part of the Feinberg discussion series. Forbes has also been collaborating with Northampton Open Media (NOM), and are testing captioning software that will be able to be used soon, both to caption existing video and hopefully live programs as well. NOM has also offered to share Forbes' programs on their YouTube channel, as well as on their public access cable channels.

Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings

CCPLM Standing Committee - Ms. Downing reported that the programming committee created a web page of resources regarding Calvin Coolidge's record on African-American rights, Native American rights and immigration. These topics are often asked about. The page provides links to primary sources and historical analysis for each topic area. The page is linked from the museum's page on the library's website.

Development Committee - Ms. Downing reported that the annual appeal has reached \$8,000 in contributions which is the amount needed in donations for the book & media budget for this year. Several donations have also been received for the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund.

Racial & Social Justice Committee - Ms. Hess reported that the first meeting of the advisory group will take place later this month and begin with introductions and an overview of the role of the group and its structure. The first of the library's anti-racism trainings has been held and 40 people were in attendance. The trustees agreed that the training was beneficial.

Massachusetts Library Trustees Association Annual Meeting - Ms. Hess reported that the speaker was Sally Gordon Reed, former Executive director of United for Libraries. Ms. Reed spoke about creating diversity in library boards: diversity in race, age, gender, disabilities, and socioeconomic status. She said not to think of individuals as representative of a group, but as a conduit to that group. She spoke in particular of age diversity, and said there is a need for younger people to be on boards and that many boards have teenage members. She recommended term limits as a way to create diversity and sustainability.

Other Business

Mr. Carrier said that since the library will not be doing a holiday get together this year, he and Ms. Downing proposed sending Downtown Northampton gift certificates to library staff in appreciation for their hard work. The cards are easy to disseminate, can be used at a variety of businesses, and can be used over a period of time. The trustees discussed the gift card amount and whether full-time and part-time staff should receive the same amount. If all staff received a \$50 gift card, it would cost \$2,700 from the

Other Business (continued)

Aid Fund. Ms. Buckhout pointed out that gifts over \$25 must be reported on the employees W-2.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to give all library staff a \$50 gift card to Downtown Northampton for a total of \$2,700 to come from the Aid Fund. Ms. Hess seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Prabhaker asked that if the trustees had any further thoughts on what they want her to communicate to the Racial and Social Justice Advisory Group before the meeting on November 30, they should get in touch with her.

Mr. Carrier informed Mr. Wally Rapalus of the open meeting process, and that he can address the trustees during the public comment period at the beginning of the meeting or contact the director to have an item added to the agenda.

At 4:59 PM, Ms. Hess moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Mr. Carrier, Ms. Hess, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 4:59 PM.