

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Thursday, April 15, 2021

Present: Ms. Buckhout, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing, Ms. Hess, Ms. Moss, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, Ms. Sheirer, Ms. Wight. **Also Present:** Mr. Brian Jamros and Ms. Kathleen Glowacki, representatives of Bartholomew Inc.; Bill Breitbart, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library; Jason Petcen, representative of the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA). **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 3:46 PM.

Bills & Warrants

Ms. Hess made a motion to verbally approve the warrant dated March 17, 2021. 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. Ms. Downing will schedule a time for the trustees to come in and physically sign them.

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing said that sometimes books need to be replaced due to water damage from the old book drops. Also the outreach program results in more books lost due to patrons relocating or other difficulties with returning items.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Endowment Report

Mr. Jamros and Ms. Glowacki presented a review of the portfolio as of close of business on Wednesday, April 14, with a value of \$6,174,689.82. The portfolio review included charts and graphs showing the asset allocations, historical market value and performance. The portfolio has increased 27.15% net of fees in the last year, 9.12% in the last 3 years, and 8.61% in the last 5 years. The annualized rate of return since inception is 8.04%. Ms. Glowacki talked about changes to the portfolio in anticipation of pent-up demand following the pandemic and an anticipated rise in inflation. The bond portion of the portfolio will emphasize inflation protected bonds where the principal rises with inflation. Real estate holdings were added as an alternative with an initial position of \$80,000, now worth \$87,000. Mr. Jamros discussed the Blackstone real estate investment and recommended increasing the position from 1.5% to 5% of the portfolio. Mr. Carrier said the decision to increase the Blackstone investment should be made by the Bartholomew investment managers and that the trustees do not need to vote on it. Mr. Jamros said that paperwork will need to be signed by Ms. Buckhout.

The trustees asked Mr. Jamros and Ms. Glowacki to give their opinion on including Bitcoin in the portfolio. Ms. Glowacki said that Bitcoin is essentially the first digital currency, although people debate whether it is a currency or an investment. It's the first way of using money that doesn't need a third party, though now there are multiple forms of cryptocurrency. Mr. Jamros said that coming from a banking background with lots of regulation and protections, he feels that Bitcoin can be subject to fraud and manipulation and is inherently risky. Although it does have some advantages,

Endowment Report (continued)

both he and Ms. Glowacki said that they do not believe it's right for the Forbes portfolio.

Mr. Carrier thanked Mr. Jamros and Ms. Glowacki for their presentation and they left the meeting at 4:11 PM.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Hess moved that the Secretary's Report of March 17, 2021 be accepted and placed on file with a few minor corrections. 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 March 31, 2021. The General Aid Fund had negative net activity of \$1,320 and has a balance of \$38,499. The Book & Media Fund closed with positive net activity of \$3,553 and has a balance of \$8,933. The COVID Fund had negative net activity of \$826 and has a deficit of \$2,581. The Distance Learning Grant had negative net activity of \$875 and has a balance of \$120. The Externally Financed Transactions Fund had positive net activity of \$360 and has a balance of \$423. The Halberstadt Technology Fund had negative net activity of \$2,258 and has a balance of \$4,534. The LSTA Social Impact Mini Grant had no activity this month and now has a zero balance. The Lyman Special Collections Fund had positive net activity of \$2,703 and has a balance of \$10,810. The Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund had negative net activity of \$28,089 due to a transfer to the endowment and now has a balance of \$500. The Morin Fund had negative net activity of \$14,075 and has a balance of \$73,822. The Moving Memories IMLS Grant had negative net activity of \$14,075 and has a balance of \$73,822. The Staff Development Fund had positive net activity of \$4,147 and has a balance of \$1,466. The balance in the endowment as of March 31 was \$6,045,421. Ms. Buckhout said that she is very close to completing the required paperwork for the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan forgiveness. Mr. Carrier asked her to find out how long the application will take once submitted and to add the PPP loan status as narrative to the Treasurer's Report.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report of March 31, 2021 and place it on file. 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.

Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.

The following undesignated gifts were received since the last trustees' meeting: \$900 from the Lucey Family Endowment Fund to the Morin Fund; \$100 from Jodie Nolan and Jonathan Thomas, Northampton, MA to the Staff Development Fund; \$100 in memory of Zane Kotker from the Community Foundation of Western MA, Springfield MA to the Staff Development Fund; \$10 from Morgan Brown, Northampton, MA to the Staff Development Fund; and a total of \$10,843.07 from multiple donors received on Library Giving Day with \$2,791.57 to the Staff Development Fund and \$8,000 to the Lyman Special Collections Endowment Fund and \$51.50 to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund.

The following designated gifts were received since the last trustees' meeting: \$250 from James and Marilyn Drisko, Northampton MA to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund; \$50 from Scott Morin, Kernersville

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

NC to the Morin Fund; \$25 from Alexander George, Amherst MA to the Lyman Special Collections Fund.

The following receipt from sales/rents was received since the last trustees' meeting: \$1,500 from Old School Commons for annual leased land payment to the Lyman Special Collections Fund. This represents the 2020 payment to Forbes on the 99-year lease of land to the former Old School Commons for a portion of their parking lot. The 2021 payment will be made in the fall.

Ms. Downing said that previously the Lyman Special Collections Fund had been funded through the sale of items not relevant to the collection, but that there were no longer any items left to sell. The fund stands at about \$40,000 and she would like to see that increased to \$100,000 so that a sustainable withdrawal amount could be made each year without hurting principal. The Staff Development Fund has been depleted for the year due to the extensive anti-racism training and needs to be replenished. Ms. Buckhout said that anytime there is a balance in the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund, she will transfer it to the endowment with Bartholomew.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the designated and undesignated gifts and receipts from sales/rents as proposed by Ms. Downing. 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.

There were no donations this month.

3rd Quarter Report

Ms. Downing reported that as noted in the Treasurer's Report, the General Aid Fund is carrying a surplus due to credits and reimbursements related to COVID-19. The plan is for the \$12,000 lighting upgrade to be paid from the Aid budget which will reduce the ending balance but she anticipates that the year will end with a surplus. There will be some housekeeping transfers that she will request closer to the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Buckhout is tracking COVID related expenses in case there is additional city or federal money to help pay for them, but in the end, they may need to be applied to the Aid budget. There will continue to be increased spending in personnel through the end of this fiscal year due to the loss of work-study students and the use of Intermittent Part Time (IPT) workers. Ms. Downing said that she is hoping things will return to normal next fiscal year.

The Book & Media budget is in fine shape as noted in the March Treasurer's report. With the spending requirement for state aid suspended for this year, it is hoped to end the year slightly underspent. That, along with additional gifts, will offset the reduced income from fees and fines. Mr. Carrier said any surplus could be returned to the endowment this summer.

Friends of Forbes

Ms. Hess attended the Friends of Forbes virtual meeting on April 7 and reported that the Friends have just over \$559,000 in their endowment, about \$28,000 in their checking account, and about \$49,000 in the Director's discretionary fund. Income was received from memberships. Expenses were for staff development, improvements to the outdoor WIFI, and the Paco webcam. The Special Events committee is working on a raffle for the garden tour which is scheduled for July 17. Ms. Downing presented the library's reopening plans. The Friends offered a match on Library Giving Day donations which was met by noon that day. The Trustees award ceremony is scheduled for May 22 at 3 PM.

Friends of Forbes (continued)

They approved the request for \$3,000 for outdoor seating, games, and a new tent for curbside pickup. Mr. Carrier said that the presentation at the annual meeting was great, and Ms. Moss said it will be up on the library's YouTube channel soon.

Administrative Report

Ms. Downing reported that the League of Women Voters of Northampton and Florence was a great partner in helping Forbes spread the word about the voting rights programming last fall. Now Forbes has agreed to help them publicize an exhibit about diverse leaders in the suffrage movement that has been mounted in 7 store windows in downtown Florence called, "She Shapes History" The exhibit is up now and will be available until early May.

Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss would like to congratulate the Smith College community on the reopening of the renovated and expanded Neilson Library. All are very eager to tour the new building which it is hoped to be able to do this fall. While students are now able to use the library, Forbes continues to extend library services to them. Ms. Moss worked with Smith staff to develop an online library card registration form specifically for Smith students that was featured in a campus e-newsletter. Mr. Carrier suggested officially congratulating Dean Susan Fliss, who has been very helpful to Forbes.

The majority of staff along with several board members have completed 12 hours of anti-racism training. This was an initiative recommended by the library's Racial & Social Justice Committee in a desire to make sure everyone had a shared vocabulary, understanding and toolkit to be able to actively participate in the library's anti-racism initiatives. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss will be continuing to the next level of Interrupting Racism training in the next couple of weeks through an opportunity made available by the Council of Social Agencies of Hampshire County (COSA) of which Forbes is a member.

Ms. Moss has made arrangements so that Lilly Library card holders will have access to Kanopy video streaming service along with Forbes card holders. In exchange, Lilly Library will contribute to the cost of the service.

The Leadership Team has compiled a list of staff and trustee committees with contact information as a resource for the employee handbook and the trustees resource document. They are suggesting a listing of the trustees standing committees with contact information on the library's website as well. The listing will include the committee's charge, membership, and information about agenda items and requesting minutes. Ms. Downing suggested that the contact point be the Director's email and she will forward requests to the appropriate committee members. The committees to be listed include the Racial & Social Justice committee as well as the Advisory Group, the Development Committee, and the Coolidge Standing Committee.

Ms. Moss was interviewed for a recently published book called *Libraries Publish: How to Start a Magazine, Small Press, Blog, and More* by Stephanie Katz. She is cited extensively in the chapter about writer in residence programs at libraries including the quote, "Develop a program that reflects the strengths and interests of your community."

It is time to invite each trustee to come in for their signatures on the last 6 months of warrants. Ms. Downing will send out an email with instructions about coming in to sign them and she thanked the trustees in advance for their time.

Administrative Report (continued)

Ms. Downing has contracted with a human resource professional through the employee association to review and refine the personnel records portion of Forbes' record retention schedule. These records constitute a large portion of the paper files and it is very important to assure that the best practices are being followed. She anticipates having a schedule for the board to approve at an upcoming meeting in the near future.

More information about Library Giving Day will be given in the Development Committee report but Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss thanked the trustees for their active participation and generous support. Ms. Downing said that Ms. Moss worked very hard to make sure that all the pieces came together.

Phased Reopening Plan Update

Northampton COVID-19 cases continue to decline and Forbes found itself in the "green" for the first time since last year although most of the surrounding communities are not doing as well. With the weighted average based on the local service population, Forbes is still in the "yellow" but anticipates being in the green soon. Preparations have begun for expanded indoor service which will start by opening up the Reading Room for browsing and inviting more people in at a time. Preparations are also underway for increased outdoor service including the purchase of additional seating and a tent with funds from the Friends as well as seeking quotes to have electricity run to the west lawn and a curb cut there as well to increase accessibility. Mr. Carrier asked Ms. Downing to let the trustees know when the next steps are taken and to publicize the reopening as much as possible. He thanked Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss for all their efforts.

Ms. Hess moved that the Administrative Report including the Phased Reopening Plan Update 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.

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, May 20 at 4:00 PM. The following meetings have been scheduled for 2020: Thursday, June 24; Thursday, July 22; Wednesday, September 15; Thursday, October 21; Thursday, November 18; Thursday, December 16. The meetings will be at 4:00 PM unless the representatives of Bartholomew 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 Wednesday, May 5, at 6:30 PM. Ms. Hess will attend on behalf of the trustees.

Communications

Ms. Downing received an email on April 7 notifying Forbes of the second State Aid to Public Libraries payment amounting to a total of \$54,000 for Forbes, which is about \$10,000 more than budgeted. In addition, the State Ways and Means budget came out yesterday and everything for libraries was funded including help with delivery costs. Mr. Carrier said that when presenting the budget to the Mayor it is important to talk about the Municipal Appropriation Requirements (MAR) in order to receive the state aid.

Overdue Fines

Ms. Moss reported that the Racial and Social Justice Committee at its March 29, 2021 meeting made the recommendation that overdue fines be eliminated for all Forbes Library materials. This recommendation is also endorsed by the

Overdue Fines (continued)

Leadership Team. Supporting materials were distributed to the trustees including multiple articles and recommendations from the ALA and CW Mars. Currently 74% of public libraries are fine free, 30% have some fine free policies, and 40% continue to have fines. Ms. Moss said that with the endowment doing so well and the establishment of the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund, now is a good time to look at eliminating fines. Over the last 5 years, the percentage of the book budget that relies on fines has shrunk from 17.8% to 3.6%, and 1.92% to .36% of the total budget.

Ms. Wight, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Hess said that they were 100% behind this decision and see it as a social justice issue and not just a financial one. Ms. Hess said that the families affected by fines are also the least able to afford them.

Ms. Wight made a motion to extend the elimination all fines for all patrons. 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. Moss asked that the trustees also approve the elimination of fees for lost library cards. Forbes is currently charging \$1 for the 2nd replacement card, but the cost per card is negligible with a budget of under \$100 for the last two years.

Ms. Hess made a motion to eliminate the fee for lost library cards. 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. Wight suggested putting out a press release making a point that this was a part of the library's budget and including a link for donations.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) Extension

Ms. Downing mentioned the FFCRA benefits extension at last month's meeting but did not realize at that time that it is optional again for Forbes to provide it. The board approved the last optional extension which went to March 31. This time it would go to September 30, 2021 and continue to provide a tax credit for leaves associated with COVID-19 including getting and recovering from the vaccine. This has been a very important benefit for staff and Ms. Downing requested that the board approve this latest extension retroactively back to April 1.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the extension of the FFCRA benefit retroactively from April 1 to September 30, 2021. 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.

Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA) Contract Negotiations

The discussion was postponed until the next meeting.

Discussion Topic: Collection Development

At last month's meeting, the trustees discussed the removal of four Dr. Seuss titles from the collection because of racist imagery, and requested a follow-up discussion on the library's collection development policy in general. A copy of the policy which was last updated in 2015 was distributed to the trustees. It includes not only the purchase of new materials, but also the

Discussion Topic: Collection Development (continued)

withdrawal of older materials to make way for new materials. There are six negative factors used when deciding if a book should be withdrawn: misleading (and/or factually inaccurate); ugly (worn and beyond mending or rebinding); superseded (by a truly new edition or by a much better book on the subject); trivial (of no discernible literary or scientific merit; usually of ephemeral interest at some point in the page); irrelevant (to the needs and interests of the community); and elsewhere (the material or information may be obtained expeditiously elsewhere through interlibrary loan, reciprocal borrowing, or in electronic format). Ms. Downing said that staff have been reviewing portions of the collection to make sure that it is representative of the diversity in our community both in terms of subject matter as well as authors and illustrators. Many other weeding and review projects are continuously being conducted to make sure that the collection is as good and useful to the community as it can be as well as the simple fact that shelf space is finite. The decision to remove the four Dr. Seuss titles was in response to his estate saying that these books would no longer be published because they do not represent the legacy that they want to live on for the beloved children's author. The racist imagery in these books could cause harm to BIPOC children unwittingly coming across depictions that are stereotypical and hurtful.

The trustees discussed the collection development and weeding policies agreeing that there are difficult questions and concerns with both. They acknowledge inherent differences between materials in the children's collection and adult collections, with children being more susceptible to damage from racist content. They also agreed that the collection, including non-fiction, should be representative of different viewpoints, although to a certain extent both collection development and weeding are determined by demand and usage so therefore reflect the views of the community. They recognized that humans and literature are flawed and that the collection and policies continue to evolve with the times. Weeding and withdrawing older content creates opportunities for new material and representation of new voices. Mr. Carrier said it was a good discussion and the trustees should have more discussion such as this in the future.

All Hamptons Read

Ms. Moss reported that Forbes has joined forces once again with several local libraries including the Lilly Library in Florence under the name All Hamptons Read. The inspiration for this multi-community initiative is the book *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel, an ALA Notable Book and Arthur C. Clarke Award winner. Spearheaded by the public libraries in Northampton, Florence, Easthampton, Southampton, Westhampton, and Williamsburg, All Hamptons Read is partnering with the Big Read Pocumtuck Valley, the Libraries in the Woods, New England Public Media, and other local organizations to give readers throughout the region the opportunity to come together for discussion and exploration of the themes from *Station Eleven*. Copies of the book are available to borrow and events including one with the author are listed on the library's website.

Digital Capacity Grant

Ms. Downing reported that Forbes has been awarded a Digital Capacity grant from Mass Humanities of \$4,999 for the purchase of a camera, related equipment and training to be able to record and stream events in the Coolidge Museum. This will allow Forbes to embark on what is envisioned as a hybrid future for library programming - meaning programs held both in person and online and when possible available to both audiences.

Community Engagement

Ms. Moss said that she has been working on the Digital Capacity Grant. She distributed a list of recent and upcoming community engagement events.

Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings

Calvin Coolidge Presidential Library and Museum (CCPLM) Standing Committee - Ms. Downing reported that the programming committee is beginning to think about its annual speaker as well as a program to address the long history of restrictions to immigrants from Asia including the Johnson-Reed Act which set quota limits on immigrants from Asia that went into effect while Coolidge was president.

Development Committee - Ms. Moss reported that Library Giving Day was a huge success. The previous largest day of giving was exceeded which was the final Valley Gives Day in 2018 with \$9,387 raised by 159 donors. This year \$10,843.07 was raised from 125 donors. The Development Committee has already discussed ways to build on this for next year. Thank you to the Friends for their generous matching gift, to Nicole, Traci and Aruna for the beautiful postcard and messaging, and to Faith, Ben and Alene for their technical and social media prowess.

Racial & Social Justice Committee - Ms. Downing and Ms. Hess reported that both the committee and community advisory group met recently. The committee discussed the overdue fines in the context of social justice and has recommended that the library no longer charge overdue fines for items in our collection. Ms. Hess said that the committee also wants to support the Human Rights Commission in condemning violence against Asians. They will be looking at other ways to get involved but for now they are supporting the Human Rights Commission recent statement.

BIPOC Art Committee - Mr. Carrier said that the committee is meeting tomorrow and has a long list of artists to consider.

At 5:20 PM Ms. Prabhaker moved to adjourn the meeting. 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. The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 PM.