

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Thursday, December 16, 2021

Present: Ms. Buckhout, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing, Ms. Hess, Ms. Moss, Ms. Prabhaker, Ms. Sheirer, Mr. Twarog, Ms. Wight. **Also Present:** Serena Smith, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library; Jason Petcen, representative of the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA); Sarah Johnson, Children's and Young Adult Librarian; Debin Bruce, Forbes Library Trustee-elect. **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 4:00 PM.

Bills & Warrants

Ms. Hess made a motion to verbally approve the warrant dated December 16, 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.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Hess moved that the Secretary's Report of November 18, 2021 and the Secretary's Report of the Special Meeting of November 18, 2021 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 November 30, 2021. The General Aid Fund had positive net activity of \$9,758 and has a balance of \$62,150. The Book & Media Fun had positive net activity of \$927 and has a balance of \$20,326. The Community Engagement Fund had positive net activity of \$1,841 and has a balance of \$2,283. The David W. Shearer Memorial Periodical Fund had zero net activity because the transfer from the Morin Fund of \$5,000 for the gifts that were "in memory of" was recorded and the funds were in turn transferred to the endowment. The Externally Financed Transaction Fund had positive net activity of \$1,000 and has a balance of \$664. The Go Local (Outside Voices) Grant had positive net activity of \$7,108 and has a balance of \$7,028. The Halberstadt Technology Fund had negative net activity of \$3,567 and has a balance of \$8,121. The Lyman Special Collection Fund has a balance of \$10,021. The Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund received \$769 in donations which was transferred to the endowment and now has a \$50 balance. The Morin Fund had negative net activity of \$165 and has a balance of \$90,244. The Outreach Fund had positive net activity of \$834 and has a balance of \$7,591. The balance in the endowment as of November 30 was \$6,838,957.39. Ms. Buckhout will invite the representatives from Bartholomew Inc. to the January meeting.

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Mr. Petcen said that the quarters collected from the parking meters for the Garvey Book & Media Fund have been less than a third of what they were pre-pandemic. Ms. Buckhout said that she

Treasurer's Report (continued)

has been having some back and forth with the auditors about what is possible in terms of stipends for committee members. Ms. Buckhout will ask Bartholomew to remove the Macfarlane Fund from the endowment report since it is at zero. Ms. Moss said that electricity is still running high as the air flow has been increased for the pandemic.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report of November 30, 2021 and place it 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.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to transfer \$7,000 from the Lyman Special Collection Fund in the operating account to the Lyman Special Collection Fund in the endowment. 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.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to transfer the \$975 in the Kellogg Fund in the operating account along with \$25 from the Morin Fund for a total of \$1,000 to the Kellogg Fund in the endowment. 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.

The following undesignated gifts were received since the last Trustees' meeting: a total of \$8,954.01 from multiple people to the Morin Fund; \$151.50 to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund; \$25 to the Lyman Special Collections Fund.

The following designated gifts were received since the last Trustees' meeting: \$100 to Lyman Special Collection Fund; \$100 to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund; and \$500 in memory of Leith Colen to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund.

The following donations were received since the last trustees' meeting: Latrobe scrapbook from Ann Latrobe, collection of 138 high-resolution scans of photographs of local subjects from Stan Sherer; Free Congregational Society of Florence records from the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence; and 10 issues of Mother of Voices Underground Newspaper from David Bickford.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the designated and undesignated gifts and donations 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 receipts from sales/rents this month.

Financial Report

There was no financial report this month.

Department Report: Children's & Young Adult

Sarah Johnson gave an illustrated presentation of the report for the Children's & Young Adult Department. She reported that entering the second year of the pandemic, people were generally less interested in virtual programming and preferred opportunities to connect in person and engage in

Department Report: Children's & Young Adult (continued)

tactile activities, although the library continued to offer both types of programming. Virtual programs included "Knit Together", "Wee the People", School Break Week, Virtual Storytimes, and Middle Grade and Young Adult Book Clubs. In-person programs included StoryWalks, Read to Sunny, Baby Storytime and Toddler/Preschool Storytime on the Lawn, Music with Mr. Liam, and Mini Pumpkin Decorating & Candle Holders. The Summer 2021 reading program was inspired by the theme "Tails & Tales" with eight weekly themes, each week offering a related special virtual event and 50 take-home activity kits. In addition to the 400 kits distributed as part of Summer Reading, take-home kits were given to kids and teens throughout the year. Two new staff members were hired in November, Julia Cornick and Pamela Acosta, both of whom speak Spanish allowing Forbes to increase services for Spanish-speaking patrons. Future plans include working with the Landscaping and Grounds Committee on the new outdoor bandshell which will allow for larger outdoor events and programming, renovation of the young adult and programming rooms, and diversification of the Children's & YA art collection.

The trustees thanked Ms. Johnson for her wonderful presentation and said they were very impressed with and appreciate all that she is doing. Ms. Hess said that as the chair of the Racial and Social Justice Committee she is so glad that Ms. Johnson is doing the "Wee the People" program as it is so important to reach children at a young age.

Ms. Johnson left the meeting at 4:28 PM.

Friends of Forbes

Mr. Twarog attended the December 1 meeting of the Friends of Forbes and reported that Ms. Johnson gave the same presentation to the Friends and that it was very well received. Their budget is looking pretty good and they had a long discussion about the project report given by Julie Nelson and Dylan Gaffney about digitization of materials. The library is moving from the "Past Perfect" software to a new software and Ms. Nelson provided examples of where it is currently being used. The initial cost is \$6,200 along with some annual cost, and it is expected to launch in fall 2022. The membership committee reported that their annual mailing went out, and that they will take up fundraising in January. Serena Smith is leaving the committee in April, so there will be two slots to fill. The Friends are looking for stickers for cars and are putting together a calendar for next year. Mr. Carrier said that on behalf of the trustees, they appreciate all that Ms. Smith has done, and hopes that she will continue to be involved with the library in the future.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the Friends report. 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.

Administrative Report

Ms. Downing thanked Ms. Hess for all her service as trustee. She said Ms. Hess has helped so much throughout these important years for the library, and that she values her insight and commitment to social justice, her commitment to advocacy, her experience in the profession and in the community, and her superb editing skills as well as her great leadership in the organization. She said she looked forward to seeing Ms. Hess as an avid reader and library patron. Ms. Hess said that she so enjoyed working with Ms. Downing, Ms. Moss and all the trustees. She said it was an honor and a privilege to serve such a wonderful library.

Administrative Report (continued)

Ms. Downing reported that four Neighborhood Free Book Boxes were installed this month, two at the Veterans Administration in Leeds, one at Meadowbrook Apartments in Florence, and one at the Northampton Survival Center. The fifth will be going out soon. Volunteers will be visiting weekly to restock the boxes. She and Ms. Moss are excited to launch the program and hope to expand it in 2022.

Forbes will be holding a Neighbors Helping Neighbors food and hygiene products drive to benefit the Northampton Survival Center during the month of January. This replaces the "Food for Fines" drive that was held for years before eliminating overdue fines.

An important piece of equipment that provides backup to the city side of the library's internet called a universal power supply failed on November 27. Quick work by Ben Kalish, Ms. Moss, and Jason Petcen along with consultant Mark Smith got it up and running. The city ordered a replacement and will be installing it soon.

Forbes was notified that it is the recipient of an unexpected \$70,000 unrestricted bequest by Priscilla Pike. Ms. Pike was an Easthampton resident who graduated from Smith College and had a long career teaching at the Clarke School. Rob Ostberg is handling her estate and it is expected that the funds will be received soon.

With the cold winter months approaching, it was decided to increase the library's collection of circulating children's puzzles and games. Forbes has lots of 100- and 200-piece Ravensberger puzzles, as well as some new HABA games. Ms. Johnson shared the following story that happened this month: Child points to a book on display. "Is it okay if I borrow this?" Me: "Yes, we put it on display like that because we were hoping someone would borrow it!" Child: "Why are you hoping that?" Me: "Well, that's sort of our job. We try to make sure people read the books in the library." Child: "Well, you're doing a really good job. I like this library."

Patrons can now access the streaming movie service called Kanopy in the Libby ebook app. This arrangement will make the collection more discoverable to the many Libby patrons.

Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss have been invited to a transition meeting with the Mayor and Mayor Elect later this month. Mr. Carrier and Ms. Wight will also attend. A report will be given at the January meeting.

Ms. Downing is expecting the legislative breakfast to be held virtually again this year on a Friday morning during February. A date will be set soon and an announcement will be sent.

Phased Reopening Plan Update

Ms. Downing reported that cases continue to climb and uncertainty remains due to the omicron variant. Forbes is holding steady with the current service model. An air purifier has been added to the staff room and the Watson Room which are two enclosed spaces with limited air circulation. There is now more availability of testing on this side of the river.

Mr. Carrier asked about how staff handle patrons who enter the library without masks. Ms. Moss and Ms. Downing said that sometimes staff have to talk to patrons and remind them to wear a mask, but that for the most part

Phased Reopening Plan Update (continued)

people have not become belligerent. Library staff will persist in insisting that patrons wear masks and it helps to be able to say that the city of Northampton has a mask mandate. If a patron refuses to wear a mask, they are asked to leave. There are some services available to patrons outside of the library, but Ms. Downing said that the risk of losing the privilege to enter the library is usually enough incentive for people to wear a mask. She said that enforcing masks can be draining and is just one more thing that staff have to contend with.

Ms. Prabhaker moved that the Administrative Report including the 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 Tuesday, January 25 at 3:45 PM. Ms. Buckhout will invite the representatives from Bartholomew Inc. to report on the endowment. The meeting dates for the rest of 2022 will be set at the January meeting, along with the election of officers.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held Wednesday, January 5, at 6:30 PM. Ms. Prabhaker will attend on behalf of the trustees.

Communications

Ms. Downing received an email on December 8 announcing the awards for state aid to public libraries for 2022. Forbes will receive \$24,404 for the first payment which is a little lower than expected. The second payment may be more and compensate for the difference. Ms. Downing will keep an eye on it. In response to a question from the trustees, Ms. Moss said that the amount awarded to each city or town is based on a formula that takes into account the population of the community, it's funding capacity, and the amount of nonresident circulation it provides through interlibrary loan.

Ms. Downing distributed an invitation received on December 14 for the city's Inauguration Ceremony on Monday, January 3, at 10 AM.

Discussion Topic

None this month.

Treasurer's Search Update

Ms. Downing reported that the committee met on December 8 to review the ten applicants. With Ms. Buckhout's help, they were able to narrow the field to four well-qualified candidates. A list of questions has been created and interviews will be completed during the first two weeks of January. It is hoped there will be a recommendation for the board's approval at the January meeting, or the February meeting at the latest. In addition to her regular duties, Ms. Buckhout continues to offer valuable advice and suggestions throughout this process, and everyone is very appreciative of her efforts.

Community Block Grant Application

Ms. Downing reported that she is preparing an application for the accessibility improvements to the restrooms that were prioritized in the facilities plan: removing the threshold lip, adding automatic door opening mechanisms, and increasing ventilation. The application is due in mid-January. Ms. Downing said that she is seeking an estimate for the work so she can move forward with the grant application. She said that the most expensive

Community Block Grant Application (continued)

piece will be the increased ventilation. Mr. Petcen said that it is complicated because the fan pulls out air, but when the door is closed there is currently no intake for fresh air. If the grant is awarded, the project will take place next fiscal year. Mr. Carrier thanked Ms. Downing for taking the initiative on this project.

Children's & Young Adult Renovation

Ms. Downing reported that she met with the Dietz architects working on the design and they are about 70% done. The drawings are looking terrific and bringing the project to life. Unfortunately, it looks as though the earliest this project can be funded through capital improvements is FY2024. Central Services said that many projects last year and again this year have been postponed, backing up the project list. \$300,000 has been earmarked and the HVAC side of the work is \$180,000. An estimate has not yet been received from Deitz, and there is concern that the total project cost could greatly exceed what the city has budgeted. There was also discussion about the role that the library's fundraising will play in the project's budget. Mr. Carrier suggested that Ms. Downing send the new mayor a copy of the library's agreement with the city for the funding of capital projects.

Library Use Statistics

Ms. Moss distributed circulation and door count statistics. The door count in November was just 12.5% lower than November 2019. Circulation is still down about 27.7% (was 33% last month) compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings

Development Committee - Mr. Carrier reported that a press release was issued about the David W. Shearer Memorial Periodicals Fund this month. Annual fund gifts are continuing to come in.

Racial & Social Justice Advisory Group - Ms. Prabhaker reported that Dylan Gaffney presented a very compelling overview of the ongoing work to diversify the archives and support researchers through the Early Black Lives of the Pioneer Valley project. The group also reviewed procedures for working with the new Behavior Policy. The group wondered if the policy reflects the range of behaviors that have come up. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing said that the policy was fine and the discussion centered around how to interpret it. It is hoped to have the new director of the Department of Community Care attend the next meeting along with a discussion about what can be learned from the cancellation of the Arts Council show as the library moves forward with its own gallery shows. They also discussed stipends for committee members and the consensus was how valuable that would be. It may take a while to see the impact, but people felt impressed by that gesture and felt it was a really positive step.

Racial & Social Justice Committee - Ms. Hess reported that the committee had a brief meeting and reviewed projects in progress. They also discussed stipends for committee members, and discussed whether they should be for everyone with an opt-out or available upon request. They will continue the conversation at the next meeting.

BIPOC Art Committee - Mr. Carrier reported that the committee met on November 29 and decided to focus on pieces for the children's department first. The list has been narrowed down to two artists and the committee will meet again on December 20. It is hoped to have recommendations ready for the January trustees meeting. Time permitting, there might also be a recommendation for a piece for the young adult area. Because the library currently has very few

Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings (continued)

female artists represented in the collection, the committee will keep that in mind when making overall recommendations.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Ms. Wight reported that the committee held the business portion of its annual meeting with the following program updates: the President's book group moved back to zoom in August 2020 and has met 13 times virtually with about 400 in online attendance; the Rushad Thomas program addressing Coolidge's record on race was held on zoom December 11, 2020 and there have been 300 views on YouTube; upcoming projects include the Coolidge documentary video, historian in residence, and a new content management system to bring more Coolidge and local history content online. A job posting for a recording secretary was released. There is a small sub group meeting to talk about the committee's goals, making sure the committee is adhering to them, and surveying committee members about how they feel things are going.

Other Business

Mr. Carrier thanked Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss for a great year under such difficult circumstances, and said that he is looking forward to working with new trustee Debin Bruce. He wished everyone a happy holiday.

At 5:05 PM Ms. Hess moved to adjourn the meeting. 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. The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 PM.