

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Thursday, May 19, 2022

Present: Ms. Debin Bruce, Mr. Russell Carrier, Ms. Lisa Downing, Ms. Molly Moss, Ms. Emily Prabhaker, Ms. Elizabeth Sheirer, Mr. Joseph Twarog, Ms. Katy Wight. **Present via Zoom:** Mr. Keith Purcell and Eric Nickolaison of Downey and Pieciak, Fitzgerald & Co., P.C.; David Pascucci; Jacquie Fraser, observer for the Friends of Forbes. **Absent:** Cheri Buckhout.

Pursuant to Governor Baker's Emergency Order Modifying the State's Open Meeting Law issued March 12, 2020, this meeting was held using remote participation via Zoom teleconferencing for some participants as indicated.

The meeting was called to order at 3:49 PM.

Bills & Warrants

The trustees signed the warrant dated May 19, 2022.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

FY 2021 Auditor's Report

Copies of Forbes' 2020 Exempt Organization 990 tax return and Exempt Organization Annual Report were distributed to the trustees. Mr. Keith Purcell of Downey, Pieciak, Fitzgerald & Co., P.C. discussed the audit and the management letter the firm is issuing in regards to the FY2021 audit. He said the audit went very smoothly and they are issuing an unmodified opinion. There were no adjustments or disagreements with management. He discussed some upcoming changes to accounting standards and said that although the new standards will change some reporting practices, they will have minimal impact on Forbes. The changes include how property leases are reported and there are enhanced requirements for disclosure of non-financial donations of assets. In response to a question from Ms. Downing, Mr. Purcell said that it was okay for Forbes to renew its copier lease but that it would be labelled differently on the financial statements. Mr. Purcell said that next year a longer form will be required. He said that Forbes should obtain invoices from the city for any improvements done to the building that are paid for by the city for depreciation purposes.

Mr. Eric Nickolaison also said that the audit went smoothly and he discussed the process and tests conducted. He noted that the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan was forgiven and was reclassified as revenue. He noted that there were significant additions of property and equipment and a net gain in operating income despite the elimination of fines.

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Mr. Purcell said he expects the audit fee to increase about 10% next year to about \$10,800 due to the accounting changes and longer form requirement. He said that would be the maximum and it might come in lower.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the auditor's report as presented verbally by Mr. Purcell and Mr. Nickolaison. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

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Mr. Purcell said that he would issue the management letter dated today and send it along with the Form PC and engagement letter for next year's audit.

FY 2021 Auditor's Report (continued)

Mr. Purcell and Mr. Nickolaison left the meeting at 4:08 PM.

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Mr. Pascucci said that he thought the price increase was not surprising given the changes in accounting standards and the need for a longer form. He said he was a bit behind on the accounting standards for non-profits, but that he planned to renew his licenses in the second half of the year.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Wight moved that the Secretary's report of April 26, 2022 be accepted and placed on file. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report of April 30, 2022 was distributed to the trustees. The General Aid Fund had positive net activity for the month of \$30,196 and closed with a balance of \$71,876. The Book & Media Fund had negative net activity of \$1,648 and closed with a balance of \$12,029. The Doland Reference Room Fund had positive net activity of \$2,276 and closed with a balance of \$460. The Halberstadt Technology Fund had negative net activity of \$3,299 and closed with a deficit of \$764. The Morin Fund had positive net activity of \$7,545 and closed with a balance of \$87,146. The Outreach Fund had positive net activity of \$1,031 and closed with a balance of \$8,014. The Staff Development Fund had negative net activity of \$1,227 and closed with a balance of \$750. The balance in the endowment as of April 30, 2022 was \$6,107,917.57.

Ms. Downing said that the report is still showing a surplus in the General Aid Fund, but that it would be reduced by the end of the fiscal year with at least \$10,000 due in Labor & Repairs. She said it would be good to have any remaining cushion left going into next fiscal year, which could be put towards personnel costs due to absences related to COVID. Next month there will likely be some transfers needed to close out the fiscal year. Ms. Moss said that the Book & Media Fund will close the fiscal year where it should be and that more had to be spent than originally budgeted because Forbes was not eligible for a waiver. Along with Lilly Library, Forbes was short 3 hours of unduplicated open hours per week. With the waiver, the Book & Media Budget must be 12% of the library budget and without the waiver it needs to be 13%, which amounts to about \$13,000. Ms. Moss said that the savings in the Book & Media budget would be eaten up by increased personnel costs to staff the additional open hours. Mr. Carrier asked Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss to look into the schedule again to see if there is some way the additional 3 hours can be added to reduce the pressure on the Book & Media Fund. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing said that she will follow-up again with the city to see if the library can be reimbursed for any funds spent on COVID relief.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report of April 30, 2022 and place it on file. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, 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: \$111.35 to the Morin Fund from several small donations; and \$377.25 to the Morin Fund from Library Giving Day.

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

The following designated gifts were received since the last trustees' meeting: \$200 to the Lyman Special Collections Endowment Fund.

The following donations were received since the last trustees' meeting: an untitled painting by Jose Adastra donated by Jose Adastra; and a collection of hundreds of rare and unique bound items, ephemera, photographs and objects on varied local history topics from the 18th century to 2004 donated by David P. Stevens.

There were no receipts from sales/rents this month.

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

Financial Report

There was no financial report this month.

Department Report

There was no department report this month.

Friends of Forbes

Ms. Prabhaker attended the May 4 meeting of the Friends of Forbes and reported that the representatives from Bartholomew Inc. gave a report on the Friends' endowment. It's been a difficult market and the portfolio is down about 11% for the fiscal year. There are many different things affecting the market on a day to day basis. They reminded the Friends that this is a long-term portfolio and we may be entering a recessionary time. They emphasized that there is no exposure to Russia and that the management is all about rebalancing and making very small changes. The Treasurer reported that it has been tricky to keep track of the Director's discretionary fund now that it is kept in the Bartholomew account, but it is being tracked with a spreadsheet. The Membership Committee is getting the newsletter ready to go out soon, a little earlier this year. The Special Events committee is planning for an Artisan's Fair on Sunday, October 2, from 10-3. Many volunteers will be needed for this event and sponsorships are being sought. Planning for the Garden Tour on Saturday, June 11 is going well, and tickets are on sale in the lobby. Ms. Downing gave updates on library news including that the annual high school art show has returned this year. The Friends were receptive to a request for funding for a consultant for strategic planning.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to approve the Friends of Forbes report and place it on file. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Administrative Report

Ms. Downing reported that the Trustees Award to honor Marjorie Hess this past Saturday was a lovely affair. Ms. Hess's acceptance speech was moving in its impassioned retelling of libraries' role in defending freedom of speech. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss thanked Jennie Lamour, Jason Petcen, Steven Stover, Dylan Gaffney, and Mark Toczydlowski for their help during the event.

Tickets for the garden tour and the raffle are now on sale at the library. The tour will take place on Saturday, June 11 this year.

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Administrative Report (continued)

There will be a public gathering to celebrate Brian Tabor's retirement on Tuesday, July 19 at 2 PM. There will be cake and drinks and a brief program. The trustees were invited to attend.

In April 2020 community members were invited to share their thoughts and a snapshot of their daily life during the early days of the pandemic. Dylan Gaffney has reached out to those that participated to ask them to share an update now two years later. This is part of an ongoing effort to continue to collect histories for future researchers.

The following comment was received that reflects on the strength and diversity of book displays in the Children's and Young Adult Department:

*Hi Sarah, I wanted to commend you for the book displays in the past few months. I always walk away with at least one of the books from the monthly displays (and of course, the new book section). I also love how you pull such an array of books. Today I walked away with Wallpaper, the gorgeous nearly-wordless picture book by Thao Lam, which I've never encountered before. Absolutely stunning. I introduce so much of it to my students, but I also enjoy many items on my own time. Also, with books almost solely from Forbes, my students researched and put together slideshows of Black Changemakers of their choosing. Oh - and we've been loving the Elise Gravel books as part of our decomposers science unit. I'm obsessed with her stuff. (You had her 'Bug Club' book on display as part of your April Showers/May Flowers display, and I immediately grabbed it!) At any rate, thanks. You and your staff rock! -Kieran --
Kieran Slattery Fifth Grade Teacher Jackson Street School Pronouns:
he/him*

Northampton High School students in Ms. Martindell's graphic design class designed Forbes Library themed mugs that are for sale at the library for \$14 each or online for \$10.99 plus shipping. Jacob Boudreau, Arlo Green, and Emmet Blanchette submitted winning designs in a student competition this spring. The Northampton High School Student Art Exhibit is on view in the Hosmer Gallery now through the end of the month.

This month Jason Petcen celebrated his 30th anniversary at the library having started at Forbes as a teenager. Ms. Downing said that he brings such a depth of knowledge about the building which he cares for so deeply.

The HVAC system in the Hampshire Room stopped working and repair was initiated in consultation with Central Services. Unfortunately the problem was bigger than originally thought and a part was needed which was installed today. Hopefully, the problem is fixed, especially in light of the predicted high temperatures for this upcoming weekend.

Forbes is participating in a city wide effort called "No Mow May" that encourages waiting until June to start mowing to allow flowering plants that support pollinators a chance to bloom. Forbes will hold off on mowing the front of the East lawn until June.

Covid Safety Update

Ms. Downing reported that cases have continued to climb in Northampton and surrounding communities and Hampshire County is now in the next to highest category of community level of covid as defined by the CDC.

Mr. Twarog moved that the Administrative Report including the COVID Safety

Covid Safety Update (continued)

Update be accepted and placed on file. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, June 16 at 4:00 PM. Mr. Twarog will be on vacation and will try to attend remotely. Ms. Moss will also be away. The following meetings for the rest of 2022 were previously scheduled: Thursday, July 21 at 4 PM; Thursday, September 22, at 4 PM; Thursday, October 20 at 3:45 PM; Thursday, November 17 at 4 PM; Tuesday, December 20 at 4 PM.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held via Zoom on Wednesday, June 1 at 6:30 PM. Mr. Carrier will attend on behalf of the trustees.

Communications

There were no communications this month.

Discussion Topic

There was no discussion topic this month.

Treasurer Appointment

Ms. Downing reported that the search committee for the treasurer position recommends the appointment of David Pascucci to succeed Cheri Buckhout as the library's treasurer effective around June 1 and seeks the board's approval of this recommendation. Mr. Pascucci is retired from a career in public accounting including a well-respected Northampton based firm bearing his name. He has been working with Ms. Buckhout to learn Forbes' practices and needs and she has agreed to stay on in an advisory capacity for the next few months. The trustees continue to be incredibly grateful to Ms. Buckhout for her time and expertise through this transition process.

Mr. Pascucci said it is an honor and a privilege to be working for Forbes. He said that he anticipates working closely with Ms. Buckhout during the month of June on an hourly basis and anticipates his appointment as Treasurer to begin on July 1 at the beginning of the new fiscal year, at which point he will start receiving an annual stipend between \$7,000 and \$9,000 the exact amount to be confirmed by Ms. Moss.

Ms. Bruce noted that the documentation from the auditor noted that there were 8 voting members on the Forbes Library board, which is incorrect as there are only 5 trustees who are the only voting members. Mr. Pascucci will correct this with the auditors.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to appoint David Pascucci as Treasurer effective July 1. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

The trustees welcomed Mr. Pascucci aboard and he left the meeting at 4:40 PM.

Strategic Planning Consultant

Ms. Downing reported that it has been five years since the last strategic plan was developed and much has changed in that time for many people both as individuals and as a community. In thinking about how to be supported by a

Strategic Planning Consultant (continued)

consultant, the Strategic Planning Committee honed in on work in defining, developing, and launching a new brand identity. Brand identity is how people think about Forbes Library. Through brand identity work, current perceptions can be understood and then used to shape a stronger brand that is aligned with Forbes' mission, vision, values, and strategic goals. The committee would like to work with Seth Gregory who specializes in brand identity work for nonprofits including Safe Passage and Grow Food Northampton. His fee is \$16,000 and Ms. Downing is confident that the payback to Forbes will be priceless and the longevity of the brand identity work will be ten or more years. The Friends have agreed to pay for half of the fee and Ms. Downing proposed the other half to be paid from the Morin Fund.

In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Wight said that the consultant's work on the branding identity will go alongside the other strategic planning work that will be similar to what was done last time. She said that the strategic plan is more about creating action items, while the consultant will work on branding. Ms. Downing said that this work will help craft the survey questions and get the library further in gathering data and honing its messages. She said the branding will include sub-branding for the Coolidge Library & Museum, Children's Department, and the Friends of Forbes. Mr. Carrier encouraged the committee to craft a strategic plan that will take the library forward without overwhelming staff. The MBLC will need to approve the strategic plan.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the plan to create a branding identity in conjunction with the strategic plan and to hire Seth Gregory as a consultant for \$16,000, with \$8,000 coming from the Friends and \$8,000 from the Morin Fund. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

MadWimmin Bookstore Diorama

Ms. Downing reported that the MadWimmin Diorama by Judith Abraham in the entrance of the gallery has been on display at Forbes since 2016 and Faith Kaufmann and she would like to make it part of the library's permanent collection. The literary and cultural significance of MadWimmin Bookstore is tied to twentieth century Northampton history and evolution as a welcoming magnet to the LGBTQ+ community to this day. Ms. Abraham has accompanying material documenting the lesbian community in 1970s and 1980s Northampton, the first Pride march, and local feminist bookstores of the time. This piece is perennially popular with visitors and fits within the scope of the Special Collections policy. The diorama costs \$3,500 and the trustees were asked to approve purchasing it from the Morin Fund.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to purchase the MadWimmin Bookstore diorama by Judith Abraham for \$3,500 to be paid from the Morin Fund. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Mr. Carrier asked Ms. Downing to thank Faith Kaufmann for suggesting the purchase of the diorama.

Non-Resident Use Policy

Ms. Downing said that in light of the issues that Huntington is having with their library budget this year, she would like to strengthen the library's policy regarding patrons from non-certified communities to not allow

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Non-Resident Use Policy (continued)

circulation to them. She distributed copies of the current and revised policies. The current non-certified municipalities & libraries are Alford, Monroe, New Ashford and Savoy. In the past, people from non-certified communities could purchase library cards for an annual fee, the same that is charged to people from out-of-state. However, this practice has the detrimental effect of incentivizing libraries in communities with budget issues to drastically cut or eliminate their local libraries' budgets and encourage their residents to use public libraries in other neighboring towns instead. Ms. Downing said that agreements between libraries in neighboring towns should be reciprocal and allowing residents in non-certified communities is bad for all libraries concerned. She said that forcing seniors on fixed incomes and families with children to travel long distances to use a library is harmful and is not a good precedent to set. This is an issue being taken on by the Western Massachusetts Library Advocates (WMLA), of which she is president. The trustees agreed that while it is sad to take this privilege away, it is necessary in order to provide library access for all.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to approve the new Non-Resident Use Policy as proposed by Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Mask Policy

Ms. Downing said that in light of the rising cases and in anticipation of the possibility of the community entering the highest level of transmission as defined by the state's health department, she requested that the trustees approve reinstating Forbes' mask mandate policy if Hampshire County enters "red" and approve it being removed when the county leaves "red". This will give the library the ability to react to the covid situation without needing to call a special trustees meeting. Ms. Downing distributed information about how the CDC measures the COVID-19 virus levels. She distributed a draft policy to the trustees for approval.

The trustees discussed the proposed policy and what the trigger should be to cause the mask mandate to go back into effect. Mr. Carrier asked if there was any consultation or coordination with the Northampton Board of Public Health. He said he would prefer if Forbes was not an outlier on its mask policy with other city institutions. Ms. Downing said the public health board generally meets on Thursdays and might do something, but that some city offices and businesses are creating their own mandates, for instance the Northampton Public Schools have reinstated their mask mandate. She pointed out that several patrons have said they are uncomfortable coming into the building without the mask mandate. Mr. Twarog said that he thinks it will be confusing to the public if one week there is a mask mandate and the next week there isn't based solely on the CDC's red, yellow, or green threat level. He would prefer that it be reinstated for a specified period of time. The trustees discussed how to communicate the mask requirement via a sign on the library door, the weekly newsletter, and the library website. Ms. Moss said that the library would provide masks and also continue to serve people who refuse to wear one by bringing materials out to them or serving them online.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the updated Mask Policy as proposed by Ms. Downing. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, and Ms. Wight voting in favor, and Mr. Twarog abstaining.

FY2023 Book & Media Budget

Ms. Moss said that the state mandated Materials Expenditure Requirement (MAR) for FY23 is a number equivalent to 13% of the library's municipal appropriation or \$192,104 (provisionally). Last year Forbes budgeted for 12% (\$171,958) planning to take advantage of a waiver, which is no longer available this year. Ms. Moss distributed the proposed FY23 Book & Media Income and FY23 Book & Media Expenditures. The endowment fund amounts are just over/under 3.5% twenty trailing quarters as of December 31, 2021. The twenty trailing quarters as of March 31, 2022 were also reviewed and the amounts in a few funds were decreased accordingly, but none increased even though that was possible. New this year as sources of income are the Gertrude Smith Fund and the David Shearer Fund. This year the eligible tech expenses will be used to replace several broken computers in reference. The changes to the expenditures for FY23 include purchasing and/or funding hotspots to continue this popular and essential program after the MBLC statewide program ends at the end of September. Forbes continues to share the expense of Kanopy, the streaming media platform, with Lilly Library. The trustees were asked to approve the Book and Media budget, contingent on the Mayor's recommended city budget being approved by the city council.

Ms. Moss said that the new book funds - Gertrude Smith, David Shearer, and Marie Hershkovitz - made it much easier to create the budget this year, and the Friends are giving more this year as well. She reduced the anticipated amount from the Garvey fund due to the decline in money collected from the parking meters. Expenditures have gone up across the board as well as changes in spending patterns which have increased more in some areas. Mr. Carrier asked Ms. Moss to work with the treasurer on cleaning up and/or removing any categories that are no longer needed on the report such as library fines and card replacements if it makes sense to do so.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the FY23 Book & Media Budget as presented by Ms. Moss, contingent on the Mayor's recommended city budget being approved. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Strategic Planning Update

Ms. Downing reported that the committee held its first meeting and divided into initial working groups to focus on data collection: survey, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups. Jonathan Wynn who serves on the Racial and Social Justice Focus Group and is the chair of the Sociology Department at UMASS Amherst has agreed to help write the survey, a generous act that he also did for the last plan.

Library Use Statistics

Ms. Moss reported that in-house circulations have reached pre-COVID April 2019 levels, while Overdrive circulations continue to grow, with April 2022 nearly double the number of transactions from April 2019. Total circulation is up 3.6% from April 2019, with e-materials accounting for 17.6% of that total. Door counts remain steady, hovering around 3,000 per week, about 25% lower than spring 2019 levels.

Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings

Development Committee - Mr. Carrier reported that the Development Committee set goals and reviewed Library Giving Day results which were very impressive. He distributed a chart showing fundraising totals for the past few years as

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Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings (continued)

well as a list of the 2022 Development Committee Goals. He said these goals were general directions goals and not specific to this year.

BIPOC Art Committee - Mr. Carrier said the committee is getting closer to wrapping up its work and that the newly purchased items would be displayed to the trustees at an upcoming meeting. In response to a question from Ms. Bruce, Ms. Moss said that Forbes is applying for an LSTA grant to photograph newly acquired works so they can be added to the website. Ms. Downing said that works of art were covered under the library's contents insurance which she reviews annually.

FLEA Contract Negotiations: Executive Session

At 5:28 PM, Ms. Wight moved that the trustees go into executive session to discuss contract negotiations with the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA) because negotiation in open session would be detrimental to the library's bargaining position. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously, with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. The trustees invited Ms. Downing, Ms. Moss and Ms. Sheirer to remain as guests at the executive session. Ms. Fraser left the meeting at 5:28 PM and Zoom was turned off. Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Downing, Ms. Moss, Ms. Prabhaker, Ms. Sheirer, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight were present during the executive session.

At 5:35 PM, Ms. Prabhaker moved that the executive session be ended and the regular meeting reconvened. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously, with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Other Business

There was no other business.

At 5:35 PM Ms. Bruce moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 PM.