

**TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY**  
**Tuesday, December 20, 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. **Also Present:** Jason Petcen, representative of the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA). **Present via Zoom:** Cheri Buckhout, interim Treasurer; Sarah Johnson, Head of Children's and Young Adult Department; Laura Radwell, artist; Nicole Sibley, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library. **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 for some participants as indicated.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM.

**Bills & Warrants**

The trustees signed the warrant dated December 20, 2022.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**Secretary's Report**

Ms. Prabhaker moved that the Secretary's report of November 17, 2022 be accepted and placed on file. Ms. Bruce 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**

Ms. Buckhout presented the Treasurer's Report for the month ending November 30, 2022 prepared by Ms. Buckhout. The General Aid Fund had positive net activity for the month of \$8,359 and has a balance of \$59,490. The Book & Media Fund had negative net activity of \$2,201 and has a balance of \$20,302. The Community Engagement Fund had positive net activity of \$2,000 and has a balance of \$2,400. The Halberstadt Technology Fund had positive net activity of \$337 and has a balance of \$9,884. The Keough Family Fund had negative net activity of \$10,000 due to funds being transferred to the endowment. The Lyman Special Collection Fund had negative net activity of \$1,013 and has a balance of \$4,669. The Managing Fine and Decorative Arts Grant had zero net activity. The \$7,500 in funds was received, but to comply with accounting, revenue can only be recorded when funds are expensed. As a result, \$4,500 in revenue is reported, and \$4,500 for photography expense was recorded. The Morin Fund had positive net activity of \$3,130 and has a balance of \$78,715. The Outreach Fund had positive net activity of \$835 and has a balance of \$8,659. The Watson Copier Fund had positive net activity of \$1,007 and has a balance of \$2,780. The value of the endowment as of November 30 was \$5,890,271. Ms. Buckhout said she is reviewing transactions that occurred this fiscal year and there are likely to be some corrections. She is focusing on getting the books in shape for the next treasurer. She said that the final year-end report from last fiscal year can be sent to the city. Ms. Downing said she was very grateful to Ms. Buckhout for all her help.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending November 30, 2022 and place it on file. Ms. Bruce 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.**

Ms. Downing submitted a list of undesignated gifts received from multiple donors since the last trustees' meeting with \$7,502.10 going to the Morin Fund \$4,000 to the Halberstadt Fund; \$225 to the Lyman Special Collection Fund; and \$50 to the Aldrich Accessibility Fund. Ms. Downing said that the \$4,000 donation will be combined with \$1,000 from the Morin Fund to make a \$5,000 transfer to the Halberstadt Technology Fund in the endowment. Mr. Carrier explained that the Stahl and Halberstadt Funds were created under the previous director with undesignated bequests to establish an ongoing source of funding for technology.

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

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

Ms. Downing said that she received a phone call from an attorney in Easthampton who is settling the estate of a couple who left a bequest of \$50,000 to Forbes Library. The funds should be received in November of 2023.

**Final FY22 Report**

Ms. Downing said she is grateful to Ms. Buckhout for the final FY2022 report. The library ended the fiscal year breaking even with a small \$484 surplus. The report is ready to be sent to the city's finance director.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2022 Report and place it on file. Ms. Bruce seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to approve the First Quarter Report for FY23 and place it on file. Ms. Bruce seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Buckhout said that although there will be some changes, the first quarter report for FY23 can also be sent to the city.

**Radwell Painting Purchase**

Ms. Downing introduced Laura Radwell, an artist who lives in Northampton and has a studio in Easthampton, and whose work includes beautiful landscapes. Mr. Carrier, Ms. Kaufmann and Ms. Downing went to her studio and found a painting called "Peace of Land" that will look perfect over the fireplace in the Reading Room. The work measures 40"H x 48"W, unframed. The artist brought it to the library so that it could be seen in place. Ms. Downing recommended the purchase of "Peace of Land" for \$4,000 from the Lyman Special Collection Fund. This is a discounted rate offered to the library by the artist. The asking price is \$5,000.

Mr. Carrier said that he has been wanting to have one of Ms. Radwell's works of art here at the library for a long time. Ms. Downing said that the colors were stunning and invited Ms. Radwell to talk about her inspiration for the piece. Ms. Radwell said that she has lived in her current residence for 45 years and spends a lot of time outdoors which informs the impressions that

**Radwell Painting Purchase** (continued)

inspire her paintings. She said that her paintings over the last three years of the pandemic have become quieter and more peaceful, and act as a refuge from the anxiety and angst that surround us. She said this particular painting, with images of the river, the land, and mountain ranges, evokes an aspirational peaceful place. Mr. Carrier said the painting will look perfect above the mantle in the Reading Room, and thanked Ms. Radwell for the discounted price she offered the library. Ms. Radwell said it was a great honor for her painting to be considered for Forbes' permanent collection.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to approve purchasing "Peace of Land" by Laura Radwell for \$4,000 from the Lyman Special Collection Fund. Ms. Bruce seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Radwell expressed her gratitude to the trustees and left the meeting at 4:20 PM.

**Department Report: Children's & Young Adult Department**

Sarah Johnson reported on the activities of the Children & Young Adult Department over the last year including expanding offerings for Spanish speakers, adding new art to the walls, dramatically increasing circulation, launching new programs, and transitioning almost fully back to in-person programming and outreach. Two new Spanish speaking staff members, Pam Acosta and Julia Cornick, helped greatly to increase bilingual resources, and 30 new bilingual signs were installed throughout the department. This summer, Ms. Cornick launched a weekly bilingual toddler story time on Wednesday mornings, and Ms. Cornick and Ms. Acosta translated all of the Summer Reading print materials and take-home art kits to make them available in both English and Spanish. Three new pieces of art were acquired that will help diversify the collection. Circulation of children's and young adult materials increased by 76% over the last year due in large part to more open hours. Children's and young adult circulation has increased nearly 4% compared to January-October 2019 levels prior to the pandemic. Programming returned in-person with larger events being held outside whenever possible including the Wingmasters for a Birds of Prey presentation in July with 170 people attending. A new successful recurring program this year was "Messy Play Day" on the lawn where children could wear plastic trash bags and goggles, and make a big artistic mess. This summer also included an art exhibit and storytime with local author/illustrator Jane Dyer; a monthly teen Anime and Manga Club run by Madison Socha-Bishop; and a biweekly Magic the Gathering club led by Joshua Vrysen. Due to their popularity, nearly 1,000 free take-home activity kits for children and teens were given away since January. After limited outreach during the pandemic, schools are opening up once again and Forbes has hosted students from Four Rivers Charter School, Northampton High School, and Jackson Street School. Outreach was also done at the Northampton Festival of the Young Child, Bridge Street School Picnic, Jackson Street School's Open House, the Northampton Montessori School's Fall Festival, and at the Smith College Museum of Art reaching an estimated 950 people.

Ms. Johnson discussed the needs of the Children's and Young Adult Department. She showed a draft rendering of a renovation to the department that would create a glass window and doorway into a dedicated programming room. The furniture and space would be modular so that it could be used for multiple purposes throughout the day. It is an ambitious undertaking that will take several years. More immediate wishes include rolling flip top tables that are easy to maneuver and reconfigure throughout the day. They stack and store

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

into each other and are easy to clean. The cost is \$2,000 for four tables. She said that the library recently purchased a Nintendo Switch with 8 controllers, which are being used for a teen gaming club. A dedicated 32" TV would be a helpful addition. Finally, she said that improved lighting in the arts and crafts area outside of the community room would help make the space more welcoming. Mr. Carrier said that the facilities committee is meeting in January and will consider these requests. Mr. Carrier said the trustees greatly appreciate all of Ms. Johnson's efforts.

Ms. Johnson left the meeting at 4:30 PM.

**Friends of Forbes**

Ms. Bruce attended the Friends of Forbes meeting on December 7 and reported that Bill Breitbart resigned from the board in September and stopped by to express his thanks and to let the Friends know he enjoyed his time on the board. The Treasurer's report showed no marked changes from November as a result of limited changes to income and expenses. \$2,500 was dispersed to the Director to serve as matching money for the outdoor stage design. The membership mailing went out in mid-December. Ms. Johnson gave a report on the activities of the children's and young adult departments and requested \$3,500 in funding for 2023. New Paco T-shirts were delivered and Mary Biddle wore hers in the Hot Chocolate fun. Ms. Moss noted that she received volunteer hats for distribution. Historic pictures are being selected for a set of post cards that will be available after the holidays.

**Administrative Report**

Ms. Downing reported that Ms. Bruce and her neighbor David Barclay planted over 400 bulbs that were donated by Cedar Chest. They planted the bulbs before the snow flew. Now all can wait with anticipation for a beautiful spring showing in the front beds and the one by the back door.

The library added a telescope to its collection of circulating items. It was coordinated by the Aldrich Astronomical Society that has been placing telescopes in libraries mostly in Massachusetts for the past 8 years. The telescope will be available to borrow soon and then the library will issue a press release. Ms. Downing distributed an overview of the library telescope program that was provided by Aldrich.

Ms. Downing reported that staff received their one time ARPA funded bonuses in their December 8th paychecks.

Hats and parking passes were distributed to the trustees at this month's meeting. They can also be obtained from the Business Office. Bartholomew Inc. sent a box of chocolate that was available at the meeting.

The portrait of Grace Coolidge is back and hanging for the first time in two and a half years and looks fantastic. Williamstown Conservation Center was able to pick up the Burleigh painting for assessment at the same time, and will submit an estimate soon.

There are new sculptural lamps from Pine Box Studios in the Reading Room. These were used on a set and had been built by Weaver on the IPT staff who offered them to the library. They are so fun and brighten up the window seating area at night.

**Covid Safety Update**

Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss reported that they are watching the increase in cases of Covid and other respiratory illnesses. They are still recommending masking and as stated in the library's mask policy, will require them if the CDC transmission level goes into "high". Staff will be offered at home Covid testing kits for anyone who wants one because they will be traveling or at family gatherings during the holiday season.

Ms. Prabhaker moved that the Administrative Report including the COVID Safety 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 was scheduled for Thursday, January 19 at 3:45 PM. Ms. Buckhout will invite the representatives from Bartholomew Inc. to attend. The withdrawal rate for the next fiscal year will be decided at the January meeting. Meeting dates for the rest of 2023 will also be set at the January meeting.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held on Wednesday, January 4 at 6:30 PM. It will be a hybrid in-person and virtual Zoom meeting. Mr. Twarog will attend on behalf of the trustees.

**Communications**

There were no communications this month.

**Discussion Topic**

There was no discussion topic this month.

**Storywalk Construction**

Ms. Downing reported that the trustees approved adding a storywalk to the west lawn earlier this year and the Friends provided \$1,000 to fund building materials including plexiglass and lumber with the plan that it would be built in house. The construction turns out to be more complicated, especially with the task of creating 20 individual units to look uniform and professional. JohnCarlo Woodworking has quoted \$75 each to build them using most of the existing materials with the addition of waterproof mahogany for the frame and OSB (Oriented Strand Board, same material used for some street signs) for the backing and will provide two coats of exterior black paint. Jason Petcen and his staff will still handle installation. Ms. Downing requested \$1,500 from the Morin fund for the construction of the storywalk units. Mr. Petcen said the signs can be done in a few weeks and will be installed in the spring.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to approve funding of \$1,500 from the Morin Fund for construction of the storywalk signs by JohnCarlo Woodworking. 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.

**Treasurer Appointment**

Ms. Downing reported that the search committee unanimously recommends the appointment of Kyle Hamilton of Halifax, VT for the position of treasurer at an hourly salary of \$35. The committee is very impressed with her extensive experience including with non-profit organizations and on a limited basis with municipalities. Ms. Buckhout assisted in the interviewing and was able to assess her qualifications on the more in-depth and technical aspects of

**Treasurer Appointment** (continued)

the position and she agrees that Ms. Hamilton has what it takes to do the job successfully. Ms. Downing would like to have Ms. Hamilton work under Ms. Buckhout starting as soon as possible and then be officially appointed at the January meeting which is when this takes place annually. Ms. Downing said that the market rate for this type of position is \$35 per hour and she requested that Ms. Buckhout be paid the same amount throughout the transition. Mr. Carrier said that the library's finances have become more complicated and the job has grown significantly over the years. Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss will need to incorporate the increased expense in next year's budget.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve hiring Kyle Hamilton to begin working with Ms. Buckhout in early January, and to pay them both \$35 per hour. 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.

**Hodges Painting Framing**

Ms. Downing reported that the frame that came with Maggie Hodges' painting, "Northampton's Lights" that was acquired last month is very minimal and reduces the visual impact of the painting on the wall in the Reading Room. She requested approval to have the painting reframed from the Lyman Fund.

Ms. Downing requested approval of funding to have both the Radwell painting and the Hodges painting framed using funds from the Lyman Special Collection Fund.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to transfer \$2,000 from the Lyman Fund in the endowment to the Lyman Fund in the operating account. 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.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to frame both the Radwell and Hodges paintings from the Lyman Special Collection Fund, and if the cost is greater than the balance in the Lyman Fund, to supplement it with funds 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.

**Increasing Board Size Update**

Ms. Downing reported that Eric and Sandra Lucentini have followed up with Erik Carriker from the Attorney General's office to check in about proceeding with the non-judicial settlement agreement or if it makes sense to proceed with filing a petition in Probate Court. Attorney Carriker confirmed that his intent is to write the necessary memo. The Lucentini's have stressed the board's request to keep this moving forward in a timely way.

**Statistics**

Ms. Moss distributed selected statistics from the last few months that she compiled with help from Heather Diaz. She is planning on providing these statistics roughly quarterly and is interested in input from the trustees about what would be helpful for them to see. The top three most circulating areas of the collection are adult books, children's books and adult DVDs. She was pleased to see that the door count is continuing to increase, although it has not rebounded quite as strongly as it has in the Children's Department. There was a spike of new patrons in September. The network transfers graph shows that the collection is strong and most of the circulations are happening in-house. The graph also shows the top five most circulated titles

**Statistics** (continued)

in the last three months, including the number of times circulated. Hotspots are still in high demand, with 29 current holds.

**Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings**

Strategic Planning Committee - Ms. Wight reported that the committee is wrapping up data collection and have moved into data analysis. They are beginning to see themes emerge and hope to have an initial summary to the board early next year. They are also progressing with strategic branding work with Seth Gregory and this will kick into high gear with a series of weekly meetings during January.

**Other Business**

There was no other business.

At 4:54 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 4:54 PM.