

**TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY**  
**Thursday, January 19, 2023**

**Present:** Ms. Debin Bruce, Ms. Lisa Downing, Ms. Molly Moss, Ms. Emily Prabhaker, Ms. Elizabeth Sheirer, Mr. Joseph Twarog, Ms. Katy Wight. **Also Present:** Faith Kaufmann, Arts and Music Librarian and representative of the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA); Scott Monroe, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library. **Present via Zoom:** Mr. Russell Carrier; Mr. Brian Jamros and Kathleen Glowacki, representatives of Bartholomew Inc. **Absent:** Ms. 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 3:47 PM.

**Bills & Warrants**

The trustees signed the warrant dated January 19, 2023.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**Bartholomew Inc. Quarterly Report**

Mr. Jamros and Ms. Glowacki presented a review of the endowment portfolio. The balance as of January 17, 2023 was \$5,997,395.67. Ms. Glowacki said the portfolio is a 50/50 mix of equity and bonds with a small portion in alternatives. So far this month, the value of the portfolio is up 4%, though this is a very short time frame and not very meaningful. The portfolio has earned an annualized return of 6.3% since inception after fees, and gained about \$3.6 million. 2022 was a bad year due to inflation, the war in Ukraine and concerns about the global economy. Inflation has started to soften and the labor market is strong. The Federal Reserve will continue to raise interest rates, but more slowly. Concerns about the debt ceiling and the possibility of the U.S. defaulting on its debt, along with continued impacts from the war in Ukraine and inflation continue to cause volatility and could cause a soft recession. The Forbes portfolio has done well compared to benchmarks and has not suffered from the lack of investments in fossil fuel companies. Ms. Glowacki said that no major changes are expected, though they are planning to gradually increase the exposure to alternatives from 10% to 15%. The alternatives in the portfolio, while representing a small proportion, have done relatively well. They are also planning a shift in domestic bonds and will sell some of the lower quality investments. Treasuries are paying almost 4% and are attractive compared to everything else. They don't foresee any other major changes but will make some minor tweaks moving forward.

Mr. Carrier said that the trustees have talked about Bartholomew's recommendation to move operating accounts into Treasuries, and said they would follow up on that recommendation once the Treasurer is in place. The trustees would need to approve the recommendation at an upcoming meeting. Mr. Jamros said to feel free to contact them about that or anything else when ready. In response to a question from Mr. Twarog about the debt ceiling, Ms. Glowacki said that it is purely political and believes that some resolution will occur before the U.S. would default on its obligations. Mr. Jamros said it was good that Forbes implemented the 20 trailing quarters policy to smooth out the annual distribution from the endowment. Ms. Downing said she would

**Bartholomew Inc. Quarterly Report** (continued)

ask for a distribution recommendation for FY2024 in March when she is working on the budget.

The trustees thanked Mr. Jamros and Ms. Glowacki and they left the meeting at 4:12 PM.

**Secretary's Report**

Ms. Bruce moved that the Secretary's report of December 20, 2022 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.

The FY2022 contact list for the trustees and state and local legislators was distributed. The trustees were asked to let Ms. Downing and Ms. Sheirer know if there were any changes to their contact information.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to release the executive sessions meeting notes of May 19, June 16, July 21, September 22, and October 20, 2022. 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**

Ms. Downing said that Ms. Buckhout is doing the library a great favor by filling in as interim Treasurer. She presented the Treasurer's Report for the month ending December 31, 2022 prepared by Ms. Buckhout. The General Aid Fund had negative net activity for the month of \$72,143 and has a deficit of \$13,067. This will be reduced by the funds from the city that have just been received. The Book & Media Fund had negative net activity of \$10,965 and has a balance of \$8,034. The Commonwealth Places Program Grant fund closed with positive net activity of \$2,490 and has the same as a balance. The Externally Financed Transactions Fund had positive net activity of \$2,268. The Halberstadt Technology Fund had positive net activity of \$4,000 and has a balance of \$13,883. The Lyman Special Collection Fund had negative net activity of \$1,536 and has a balance of \$3,153. The Marie Herskowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund had positive net activity of \$2,445 and has a balance of \$2,445 which will be transferred to the endowment in January. The Morin Fund had positive net activity of \$12,404 and has a balance of \$96,588. The Outreach Fund had negative net activity of \$579 and has a balance of \$8,080. The Programming Fund - Adult had positive net activity of \$3,000 and has a balance of \$7,377. The Staff Development Fund had negative net activity of \$682 and has a balance of \$3,184. The Watson Copier Fund had negative net activity of \$562 and has a balance of \$2,218.

Ms. Downing said that half way through the fiscal year there are no big surprises, although there is still some clean up to do. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier about the small surplus at this time of year, Ms. Downing said she will be looking at all of the numbers when she builds the budget for FY2024. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, she said she has not yet received any instruction from the mayor's office about the FY2024 budget, and will reach out soon.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for the month ending December 31, 2022 and place it on file. 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.

**Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.**

Ms. Downing submitted a list of undesignated gifts received from multiple donors since the last trustees' meeting with \$10,715.85 going to the Morin Fund; \$3,000 to Adult Programming; \$525 to the Lyman Special Collections Endowment Fund, and \$50 to the Lyman Special Collections Fund.

The following designated gifts were received since the last trustees' meeting: \$2,500 to the Marie Hershkowitz Memorial Children's Book Fund; \$800 to Children's Programming; and \$24.95 to the Rosamond Chester Coolidge Fund.

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

**Garvey Fund Transfer**

Ms. Downing reported that an incomplete fund transfer was discovered from July 2021. In May 2021, the board approved the move of "other income" out of the General Aid Fund into the Garvey endowment fund. In July 2021, they voted to put it back in the operating account. The transfer to the endowment happened, but the return of the funds to the General Aid Fund in the operating account never happened. The funds were Payroll Protection Program funds that were to be used for additional personnel. Ms. Buckhout will make the distribution as previously approved by the trustees.

**Financial Report**

There was no financial report this month.

**Department Report**

There was no department report this month.

**Friends of Forbes**

Mr. Twarog attended the January meeting of the Friends of Forbes and reported that their annual membership mailing went out with their newsletter in December. There was some confusion, and the goal is to have it visibly distinct in color and shape from the trustees' annual appeal. They are planning a "Trivia" night and are reviewing the calendar for a possible date. The first planning meeting for the annual garden tour is set for January 23 and they are looking for sponsors. Fundraising for 2023 includes two anchor events, the Garden Tour and Artisan's Fair. Other event and fundraising ideas include something for Valentines' Day, possible raffle between big events, possible coffee sales, a day trip to the J.P. Morgan Library in NYC, and selling Forbes new hats.

Ms. Prabhaker made a motion to approve the Friends of Forbes report and place it on file with minor corrections. 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. Downing introduced Scott Monroe, the treasurer for the Friends of Forbes Library, who was observing the meeting for the Friends. He said that usually he has a scheduling conflict but was happy to be here this month and always interested in what the representatives from Bartholomew have to say.

### **Administrative Report**

Ms. Downing reported that David Barclay will be creating an ice sculpture in front of the library again this year in conjunction with the Downtown Northampton Association's ice art festival on Friday, January 21st.

Historic Northampton released their Slavery Research Project, <https://www.historicnorthampton.org/slavery-research-project.html> this month. Dylan Gaffney and Elise Feeley supported researchers in their work to identify those who were enslaved in Northampton and to learn as much as possible about their lives and the lives of their children.

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners have released their Legislative Agenda, "Ensuring Your Right to Read". It requests funding increases for each of the state funding lines with additional increases for the line that support the CW MARS network and the state's two "talking book" libraries to support readers with visual impairments and other disabilities that cause reading traditional print books to be inaccessible. It is hoped that the trustees will review the agenda and be in contact with Senator Comerford and Representative Sabadosa to advocate for fully funding these line items. Trustees can further engage by participating in Library Legislative Day either virtually on Wednesday, March 1 at or in person at the State House on Wednesday, March 15. Western MA Library Advocates will be sponsoring a bus to Boston for that event. More information will be shared by email as it is received.

It has been learned that the low hanging wire over the west lawn is for Smith College. Ms. Downing has been in touch with Forbes' new college liaison, Julia Yager, to discuss relocating those wires.

Word is being awaited on the ARPA grant application that was submitted to fund the construction of a performance stage. It is expected to hear more by the end of the month. Ms. Downing and Ms. Bruce met with Berkshire Design about having them create a design in conjunction with an architect for the stage using the seed grant and matching funds that have been received.

The reception for the new artworks in the library's permanent collection purchased through the BIPOC art fund as well as a donation of a painting of Sojourner Truth by Richard Yarde by the Sojourner Truth Memorial Committee is on Saturday, February 4 at 2 PM. The program is being finalized and will include a welcome by Mr. Carrier, a brief talk about Richard Yarde, an opportunity to meet some of the artists, and a reception with food and wine.

### **Covid Safety Update**

Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss reported that they are continuing to watch cases increase. Hampshire County is one of only a few counties in the commonwealth that isn't categorized as a high transmission rate. It is hoped that it continues to stay that way.

Ms. Prabhaker moved that the Administrative Report including the COVID Safety Update 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.

### **Next Meetings**

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Tuesday, February 21 at 4 PM. The trustees scheduled the following meetings for the remainder of 2023: Thursday, March 23; Wednesday, April 26; Thursday, May 25; Thursday, June 22; Thursday, July 20; Thursday, September 21; Thursday, October 19; Thursday, November 16; and Thursday, December 21. Meetings will convene at 4

**Next Meetings** (continued)

PM, unless the representatives of Bartholomew Inc. 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 on Wednesday, February 1 at 6:30 PM. It will be a hybrid in-person and virtual Zoom meeting. Ms. Prabhaker will attend on behalf of the trustees.

**Communications**

Ms. Downing received a notice of FY2023 State Aid to Public Libraries Certified Municipalities and Initial Awards. Northampton will receive \$40,047.67 to be divided between Forbes and Lilly Libraries with Forbes receiving 80% and Lilly Library 20%. Ms. Moss said the second payment will arrive in March and it is not possible to predict how much that will be.

**Discussion Topic**

There was no discussion topic this month.

**Election of Officers**

Ms. Wight nominated Mr. Carrier for President. Mr. Twarog seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Bruce nominated Ms. Wight for Vice President. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Appointment of Secretary and Treasurer**

Ms. Wight made a motion to appoint Elizabeth Sheirer as Secretary and Cheri Buckhout as Treasurer. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Buckhout will serve as Treasurer until the new Treasurer, Kyle Hamilton, is ready to take on the position.

**Director's Evaluation**

The Trustees were asked to review and evaluate the director for the time period of 2021-2022. Ms. Moss gathered feedback from board members and from the staff of the leadership and administrative teams. This information was distributed to the trustees along with the compiled information. Ms. Bruce thanked Ms. Moss for her work on this. Ms. Downing received a majority of the highest ratings in all areas. Mr. Carrier said that for many years the trustees would go into executive session to arrive at a consensus ranking for each question, but that there really is no reason to do that. He said that Ms. Downing is outstanding in all areas and hopes she'll stay until she retires. Ms. Wight said that much of the work is spread to the leadership team and they do an amazing job as well.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the Director's Evaluation. Ms. Prabhaker seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Downing thanked the trustees for going through the evaluation process and for their comments and support. She thanked Ms. Moss as her righthand person, and the awesome work of the leadership team. Three of her six years as Director have been during the pandemic, which has been disruptive and

**Director's Evaluation** (continued)

challenging, but she is committed to keeping the library moving forward with a positive impact on the community. She said she will look closely at the specific comments and follow up on areas that need attention.

**Trustees Award**

Ms. Downing asked the Trustees to discuss potential recipients for the Gertrude P. Smith Trustees Award. The award honors a community member or members who have given exceptional volunteer service or have made another significant contribution to Forbes Library and is named after the first recipient who is responsible for starting the Friends of Forbes Library.

Ms. Downing said that Serena Smith was approached for her role as Vice President of the Friends and for organizing the annual wine tasting fundraiser for so many years. She was highly involved in communications and recruitment and is a really great friend to the library. While she is clearly worthy, she does not want the recognition. Ms. Downing asked that the minutes reflect her and the trustees' appreciation for all that Ms. Smith has done, and hopes she will stay in touch. Mr. Carrier said that Ms. Smith is a perfect example of what makes the library so great.

**Pre-approval of Bills**

Ms. Downing said that due to the timing of the monthly warrant, there is often at least one routine bill that is paid late that results in a late fee for the library. She is seeking permission to pay bills in advance of the monthly warrant of up to \$1,500 that would otherwise incur a late fee if held until the next month's trustees meeting. The bill would still be added to the warrant for the trustees official approval.

In response to questions from the trustees, Ms. Downing said this is happening every month with Staples, but happens occasionally with other vendors. The library shops around amongst vendors for the lowest price when purchasing, therefore she would like the pre-approval to apply to any vendor.

Mr. Twarog made a motion to authorize payment of bills in advance of the monthly warrant of up to \$1,500 that would otherwise incur a late fee if held until the next month's trustees meeting. The bill would still be added to the warrant for the trustees official approval. Ms. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**William Trost Richards Painting**

Ms. Downing reported that Peter Rowe, trustee from 2006-2015, bequeathed an oil painting depicting an ocean scene by William Trost Richards. He requested that the painting be added to the library's permanent collection but did not make that a condition of the gift. Faith Kaufmann has conducted some research on the artist and the work. A Google folder of information related to her research was shared with the board in advance of the meeting. William Trost Richards (June 3, 1833 - April 17, 1905) was an important American landscape artist associated with both the Hudson River School and the American Pre-Raphaelite movement. The signed 1894 oil painting's title is unclear. It is believed it was called "On the Cornwall" but the label on the back indicates that it may have been "On the Coast of Wales" although that has not been verified. Mr. Rowe and his wife purchased it from Vose Galleries in Boston in 1998 for \$32,500. Ms. Kaufmann has reached out to several auction houses asking for an appraisal and possibly to sell the item if that is what the board decides. She has heard back from the Bonhams auction house in New York who is interested in the piece and gave a

**William Trost Richards Painting** (continued)

rough estimate of \$25,000-\$35,000 (before commissions, fees, and transportation). This aligns with Ms. Kaufmann's review of Richards auction sales although admittedly she is not an expert in this area.

Ms. Downing said that while it is a beautiful painting, it doesn't fit into the scope of the library's permanent art collection, as neither the artist nor the subject of the painting has a local connection. These were parameters that were also adhered to by the BIPOC Art Committee when recently purchasing art work for the library. It is a large piece making it difficult to find an appropriate hanging location. She said that the most important thing to consider is that the trustees have a responsibility of stewardship for the library's permanent art collection and the money raised from the sale of this painting could help fulfill that responsibility. It is therefore her recommendation to the board that the painting be sold and the proceeds benefit the permanent art collection. In response to a question from Mr. Carrier, Ms. Kaufmann said if the trustees decide to sell the painting, the auction would take place in May. She said she would contact the auction house about setting a minimum price. Mr. Carrier gave additional context to the sale, saying that in the past the library has deaccessioned books and artwork that did not have a local connection to create funds to benefit the collections, such as the Cutter Book Fund and Lyman Special Collections Fund.

Ms. Wight made a motion to proceed with the sale of the William Trost Richards painting. Ms. Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Prabhaker, Mr. Twarog, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

**Report on Prior Year's Goals**

Ms. Downing said that significant progress has been made on both the trustees' and administration's goal. A summary was distributed to the trustees. She invited the trustees to review their goals and develop an updated list for 2023 that can be approved at next month's meeting. Four of the trustees' goals were achieved, completed, or implemented including "Get the library back to a fully functional state as soon as possible," "Increase both the amount raised and the number of donors annually, as well as the amount invested in the endowment," "Complete the BIPOC Art Fund purchases," and "Implement housekeeping changes to trustee appointed committees including chairing the meeting, providing a written and oral summary to the whole board, setting annual goals, and creating meeting agendas in conjunction with library staff." The following goals are in progress including "Have a new treasurer in place by mid-year," "Develop a multi-year strategic plan for the library that begins in FY24," "Increase the board size to seven and work to diversify it and staff," "Improve bathroom ventilation," "Increase the personnel hours in the Coolidge Museum and hire a consultant to redesign the permanent exhibit in the Coolidge Museum," and "Continue planning to add a bandshell to the west lawn." The funding was pushed out to FY2026 for the goal "Continue planning to renovate the young adult room, add a youth programming room, and update the HVAC system that supports the ground level."

A few of the completed goals will be removed and two new ones will be added. Ms. Prabhaker will work on wording for a goal related to social justice and Ms. Wight will work on wording for a goal related to marketing tools for the library to more widely publicize its offerings. Ms. Downing said she was excited about both of those goals.

**Report on Prior Year's Goals** (continued)

Ms. Downing said that she and Ms. Moss did not feel prepared to submit annual administration goals at this month's meeting and plan to bring the 2023 administration goals to next month's meeting for approval as well.

**Trustee Resources Page**

Ms. Downing made an annual reminder that there is a resource page for trustees and the link to access it is: <http://bit.ly/39EkVCs>

**Increasing Board Size Update**

Ms. Downing reported that Erik Carriker from the Attorney General's office confirmed that it is his intention to draft a memo for a non-judicial settlement agreement with the library regarding increasing the board size. The Lucentinis are hoping to have this memo soon and they will plan to follow up if they do not get it in the next several weeks.

**CPA Application for Bathroom Project**

Ms. Downing said that at the request of Pat McCarthy in Central Services, she is compiling an application for Community Preservation Act funding to support the bathroom renovation project. Forbes is specifically seeking funding for the ventilation work and already have funding in hand for the design of this system and for the handicap accessibility improvements. The application is due next month and Ms. Bruce is helping her write it.

**Reports on Subcommittee and Other Meetings**

Strategic Planning Committee - Ms. Wight reported that the goal is to complete data analysis work by the end of the month. They will begin working on drafting goals and writing the plan in February and hope to have the written report ready in late April. They have also met with Seth Gregory and the strategic branding work is progressing and there should be draft concepts to review soon.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Ms. Wight reported that they have been accepted into the 2022-2023 Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) and were fully funded at the small museum budget level with \$4,000 towards paying assessors to review building needs and collections needs. Julie Nelson applied specifically to review Coolidge collection storage needs in anticipation of a future renovation in this area. This is a first step most funders want to see before applying for grants to update and upgrade collections storage. She reviewed the list of assessors, contacted a few and will be interviewing and selecting them later this month. Finding assessors with experience with political papers or political collections is limited and assessors with experience with Indigenous collections are in high demand. Finding an assessor with NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) experience is a priority. Forbes' collection of items gifted to the President by Sioux leaders and members is no longer in compliance and needs to be submitted for review. Criteria and definitions have changed since Forbes collections were last submitted in the mid-1990s.

**Other Business**

There was no other business.

At 5:26 PM Ms. Prabhaker moved to adjourn the meeting. 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. The meeting was adjourned at 5:26 PM.