

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Thursday, November 21, 2024

Present: Ms. Rebekah Anderson, Ms. Debin Bruce, Mr. Russell Carrier, Ms. Lisa Downing, Ms. Ruth Francis, Ms. Molly Moss, Ms. Shelly Ruocco, Ms. Elizabeth Sheirer, Ms. Katy Wight. **Also Present:** JoEllen MacKenzie, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library; Dr. Jenny Horowitz. **Present via Zoom:** Ms. Anne Teschner; Ms. Jo Landers, Bookkeeper. **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 4:03 PM.

Public Comments

Dr. Jenny Horowitz, MD, thanked the trustees for allowing her to speak. She asked the trustees to reconsider the parking policy. She is a pediatrician and parent of a toddler. She said it is cumbersome to carry quarters for the parking meters and that it is a deterrent and a hardship for some, including many of her patients. Mr. Carrier said that while the trustees do not always respond to public comments, he wanted to give some history and context to the decision to charge for parking. He said that prior to charging for parking, the lot was often full with Smith College employees or others who would park there all day to go downtown or even take a bus to Amherst, which prevented Forbes patrons from being able to use the lot to visit the library. He also said that the quarters collected from the parking meters go towards the Book & Media Fund, which the city does not support financially, and must be covered by the library. The Book & Media budget must equal at least 13% of the city appropriation in order for Forbes to be eligible for state aid. Currently it is about \$200,000, but goes up every year. He welcomed Dr. Horowitz to continue to use the library and encouraged her to become more involved.

Dr. Horowitz left the meeting at 4:07 PM.

After she left the trustees discussed signage. There is currently signage in the lot, but there were suggestions about adding wording that the machines can only take change and not electronic payments, and to see the Circulation Desk if you need help with change. Ms. Moss said that staff at the circulation desk will provide quarters when requested. She said that Forbes does not use Park Mobile because it would require raising the parking rates, which did not go up when the city raised their rates. The agreement with the city is that Forbes keeps the monies collected from the parking meters, and the city keeps the funds from tickets. Mr. Carrier said that this was one of the only sources of income for the Book & Media Fund since the elimination of fines. Mr. Carrier asked the Administrative team to bring back any recommended changes to signage at the next meeting.

Communications

The library received a handwritten note from a second grader thanking them for all they do to help kids "learn to read, draw, and be creative."

Ms. Downing received an email from Dr. Jenny Horowitz about the library's parking meters.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Wight moved that the Secretary's report of October 24, 2024 be accepted and placed on file with a few minor corrections. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Bills & Warrants

The trustees signed the warrant dated November 21, 2024.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Landers presented the November reports which included: Stage Fund lifetime income and expense, Profit & Loss with prior year comparison, Profit & Loss 4-year Report, and Balance Sheet with prior year comparison. The Stage Fund report identified about \$2,000 in previously not identified donations to go toward the Performance Stage. Some of the funds were sent to the endowment at Bartholomew Inc. Therefore, the trustees may need to release funds from the principal of one or more trustee-designated funds to restore monies that should be set aside for the performance stage. She recommended putting the performance stage funds into a high-yield savings account. The Profit & Loss with prior year comparison and 4-year report shows some inconsistencies in how funds from the city were recorded and how surpluses and deficits were recorded. The Balance Sheet shows that overall assets are \$1 million higher than a year ago, mainly due to the increase in the value of the endowment at Bartholomew. The net income figures include unrealized gains. The value of the endowment on October 31, 2024 was \$6,868,852.30.

The trustees discussed the reports and asked clarifying questions. Ms. Moss said that next she will be auditing the funds sent to Bartholomew Inc. to see if they match the decisions made by the trustees at their meetings. Mr. Carrier said he hoped the trustees would know by the next meeting, how much had been raised, how much used, and the amount remaining. The Finance Committee will take up the issue of whether the Performance Stage funds should be kept in a separate account, which would make them easier to track. In response to a question from Ms. Teschner about the total budget for the performance stage, Ms. Moss said that some of the funds for the project are in the form of reimbursable grants and earmarks. The library has not received those funds, but can submit for reimbursement once expenses are incurred. Ms. Landers said it would be possible to create a budget for the project that shows those funds which have not yet been received. Ms. Downing said the architectural design cost is known, but the construction cost is still approximate.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the October Bookkeeper's Report and place it on file. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Ms. Landers said that the library does not currently have a total budget that reflects all the sources of income and expenses. Ms. Downing said the current budgeting process reflects about 80% of the library's total budget focusing on the city appropriations. Mr. Carrier said that it is very important to be able to give an accounting to the city at the end of every fiscal year of how the city funds were spent. A total budget would include fundraising and grants in addition to other sources of income not from the city.

Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.

Ms. Downing reported that undesignated gifts totaling \$15,709.47, including a \$5,000 gift from anonymous, were received from multiple donors in October. The following designated gifts were received: \$556 to the Coolidge Fund, \$200 to the Coolidge Renovation Fund, and \$300 to the Lyman Special Collections Fund.

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

Mr. Carrier said that with the new gifts and donations process the trustees no longer need to approve the director's recommendations as to where the funds should be allocated. Undesignated gifts will now go to unrestricted funds. The trustees will now vote to accept the gifts report and place it on file. Since there is no more Morin Fund, Mr. Carrier asked if the undesignated funds are being tracked so that the trustees can have a sense of how much has been received, how much has been committed, and how much remains. Ms. Moss said they are working towards that.

Ms. Wight made a motion to accept and place on file the Gifts, Donations, and Bequests report. Ms. Francis seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Thursday, December 19 at 4:00 PM. The trustees scheduled the January 2025 meeting for Thursday, January 23 at 4 PM.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held on Wednesday, December 4, 2024 at 6:30 PM. Ms. Francis will attend on behalf of the trustees.

Social Media Policy

Ms. Moss reported that as outlined in the library's strategic plan, policies are continuing to be reviewed with a lens toward patron privacy and intellectual freedom. The Leadership Team reviewed and updated the Social Networking Policy, renaming it to the Social Media Policy, and a red-lined version was distributed to the trustees. She said it had last been updated in 2012, a lot has changed since then, and the new policy has been simplified. Mr. Carrier asked if it needed to be reviewed by the library's attorneys and Ms. Moss said that she didn't think so as much had been learned from the last policy review with the attorneys. She said the language matches that of the city's policy and is more generic. It can be reviewed again at some point in the future if it becomes necessary. The plan is to review all of the policies on a more regular rotating schedule, and the next one to be reviewed is the Collection Development Policy.

Ms. Wight made a motion to approve the revised Social Media Policy as presented by Ms. Moss. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Staff Appreciation

Ms. Downing reported the library staff continue to be exceptional and for the past couple of years they have been given an end-of-year appreciation gift of a \$50 Downtown Northampton Gift card. She proposed that it be done again this year using undesignated funds. They will be given to everyone on payroll which

Staff Appreciation (continued)

is just about 50 people at this time for a total cost of \$2,500. Ms. Landers said the gift cards should be treated as cash and run through payroll.

Ms. Teschner made a motion to approve \$2,500 from undesignated funds for the purchase of Downtown Northampton gift cards for library staff. Ms. Francis seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Donor & Volunteer Appreciation

Ms. Downing reported that the Development Committee along with the Friends of Forbes and members of the staff and trustees have begun planning for the second annual appreciation event scheduled for March 2, 2025. Last year there were about 80 people and a budget of \$2,500 which was cost-shared with the Friends. Due to inflation and an anticipated increase in attendance, the committee seeks a budget of \$3,000. The trustees were asked to approve \$1,500 from unrestricted funds and Ms. Downing will ask the same of the Friends.

Ms. Francis made a motion to approve \$1,500 from unrestricted funds for the Donor & Volunteer Appreciation event. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

BUILT Grant Match

Ms. Downing reported that Ben Weil from the Climate Action & Project Administration (CAPA) asked if Forbes would commit \$20,000 towards a match for a \$100,000 state grant that Forbes is applying for to offset the costs of an \$840,000 HVAC upgrade for the ground floor. Ms. Downing asked for the board's endorsement of this match. This project is currently on the city's capital improvements list to be done in FY2026 which is earlier than it first appeared. Mr. Weil is pushing for it to be moved to FY2026 because it needs to be done before the city can move forward with exploring geothermal, and before moving ahead with the children's renovation project. Ms. Downing said that timing is a critical piece of this request because of several grants, in addition to the one Forbes is applying for, and some money that he thinks can be freed up through rearranging the priority of some of the projects on the proposed capital improvements list if Forbes is able to move forward with this now. Forbes' contribution is theoretical until the grant comes through but has the potential to unlock the key towards an investment of hundreds of thousands of dollars in the library. The grant was submitted by the November 12th deadline and the trustees were asked to retroactively approve a letter committing the library to \$20,000 in unrestricted funds that will only be needed if the grant is received.

Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve \$20,000 of unrestricted funds towards a match for a \$100,000 state grant towards the cost of an HVAC upgrade. Ms. Francis seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

FY2025 Strategic Action Plan

Ms. Moss reported that an action plan update is due to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) by December 1 for Forbes to continue to be eligible for MBLC grants. This plan represents year two of the library's strategic plan

FY2025 Strategic Plan (continued)

and represents actions to take in fulfilling the three goal areas: well-being, awareness, and inspiration. The plan was distributed to the trustees, and they were asked to discuss and approve it. Ms. Downing reviewed the items on the action plan, some of which involve funding. Actions include replacing the HVAC system to move away from steam to hot water, laying the groundwork for the possibility of geothermal; renovating the young adult room and adding a new youth programming room; renovating the community room to improve lighting, sounds, and appearance; and replacing soft seating for patrons throughout the building. Other actions include programming for the new performance stage to create highly visible events with community partners; increasing cardholders in Northampton housing authority properties; regularly offering tours to education and social service providers in the community; renovating the CCPLM; utilizing the functionality of the Aspen discovery layer to further promote and solicit feedback; increasing the staff development budget to support access to more learning opportunities; encouraging staff to apply for learning grants from MLS; promoting access to the newly digitized Judd Manuscript Collection; digitizing additional local history collections through MA state digitization project; and continuing to celebrate anniversaries of milestones in Coolidge history. Ms. Downing clarified that the trustees are being asked to approve the intent to do these things, not the actual funding of them. Mr. Carrier said that he hoped that if a professional development opportunity came along that was clearly beneficial that the trustees would look for ways to fund it. Mr. Carrier thanked Ms. Wight for her work on the strategic plan.

Ms. Anderson made a motion to approve the strategic plan update. Ms. Wight seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Department Report

There was no department report this month.

Friends of Forbes

Ms. Ruocco attended the Friends of Forbes meeting on November 6 and reported that the value in their accounts is a little over \$630,000. As per a city mandate, all investments are fossil fuel free. The account was opened in 2019 and has performed at a 6.76% rate. The Friends spent \$25,000 in FY24. The Artisan Fair brought in a total of about \$7,000 with \$237 in expenses. The Library Tour (bus trip to NYC) will take in \$6,000 and after expenses will clear \$2,000. Garden Tour planning has begun and they are looking for 3 new sponsors. Ms. Downing gave updates on bathrooms, HVAC, the stage and upcoming programming. There was discussion to recognize Kay Burnett with a bookplate or her name on the Nook, to consider a popcorn machine purchase in the spring, and to purchase chairs for the Hosmer Gallery. They decided to have on the NYC Library Tour bus envelopes and information to promote the Coolidge Room, in hopes of donations. In response to a question, Ms. MacKenzie said that the wine tasting brought in about \$15,000. Ms. Ruocco said she would send a corrected version of her report to the trustees.

Administrative Report

Ms. Downing reported that this month several of the library's teams went on their development outings including the Leadership Team. They went for lunch at the River Valley Co-Op and then explored Art in the Orchard. These outings are so greatly appreciated. Ms. Downing thanked the trustees for supporting them.

Administrative Report (continued)

Elise Bernier-Feeley and Dylan Gaffney were recognized by the Betty Allen Chapter of the DAR for their outstanding service to the community in their roles in the Hampshire Room at the Forbes Library. Ms. Bernier-Feeley and Mr. Gaffney have supported a number of research projects over the years including a veteran's grave identification project. Forbes is so proud of both of them and congratulate them on this well-deserved recognition.

The Friends sponsored bus trip to the Morgan Library and Museum earlier this month was a great success. The library did not disappoint and the special exhibit about the first librarian was outstanding. The Friends are already planning their next trip.

Priya Charry and Mary Biddle visited a class at the Center for New Americans (CNA) and then walked up to the library and provided a tour. One of the instructors wrote to thank them and said, "This was one of the best visits I have had to Forbes in all the dozen years I have been teaching at CNA. Thank you to everyone there!!" Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss are so grateful to be in partnership with CNA and for the outstanding community engagement work that Ms. Charry and Ms. Biddle are doing.

The second grade classes from Jackson Street School came to visit this month. One of the stops is Ms. Downing's office where she shows off the vault, the chandelier, and the water closet and shares more about the history of the library. The students proudly show off their library cards and look forward most to seeing Paco and getting to borrow a book to take with them. Sarah Johnson and her staff have strengthened Forbes' relationship with the schools for which all are so grateful. Speaking of youth services, one of the young patrons wrote a note to the staff that includes, "thank you Forbes for helping kids learn to read, draw, to be creative. Thank you for making kids dream come true."

Interviews for the Adult Services: Arts and Music Specialist position are wrapping up and it is hoped an announcement will be made soon.

Ms. Bruce moved that the Administrative Report be accepted and placed on file. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, Ms. Teschner, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor.

Building Updates

Ms. Downing reported that the bathroom project is coming along. The ventilation has been installed and finish work is in progress for the children's, mezzanine, and second floors. Once those are reopened Keiter will move to the first floor and install the water bottle filling stations. There is a broken part in the special collections HVAC system affecting the Hampshire Room so that it isn't receiving heating or cooling. Central Services has initiated the part replacement and it is hoped that it will be repaired soon.

Ms. Bruce and the architect for the stage project marked off a possible footprint on the west lawn. It is expected there will be some designs to review soon. Both the HVAC portion and the children's renovation project are currently in the city's Capital Improvement Plan for FY2026. Ms. Downing has been invited to briefly present the project alongside CAPA and Central Services.

Annual Statistical Report

Ms. Moss discussed the Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) which is available online. The following charts give a snapshot of some of the data that is included in the report. The library is not yet back at pre-COVID levels for door count, but has surpassed pre-COVID levels for circulation, with e-book and e-audio circulation continuing to increase. In CW MARS, Forbes is:

2nd for circulation (Lilly is in parentheses after the Forbes number):

Worcester	591,362
Northampton	363,348 (121,756 → 485,104)
Shrewsbury	346,783
Amherst	325,746
Springfield	245,086

3rd for item count (as of 7/1/24):

Worcester	655,971
Springfield	502,954
Northampton	173,880 (30,719 → 204,599)
Pittsfield	155,032
State Library of Mas	149,253

3rd for e-book circulation (3 year average), but 2nd if you include Lilly:

Worcester	143,323
Amherst	78,526
Northampton	75,286 (36,352 → 111,638)
Shrewsbury	70,031
Springfield	55,497

In response to a question from Ms. Anderson, Ms. Downing said that these figures will be used for an impact report that will be shared with the mayor and the city council. The report can also be used with donors. Ms. Bruce acknowledged the work Ms. Moss puts into compiling the statistics and generating the report.

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings

Ms. Downing said that she will list all the subcommittees on the agenda each month, and they can say whether they met and have anything to report.

Building & Grounds - Ms. Bruce reported that a painted line has been put on the children' department steps for safety.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Ms. Wight reported that the RFP went out for designers with proposals due on November 15. Ms. Downing said that seven proposals have been received, with two from women-owned companies, and one from a native American owned company. There were six site visits. The proposals have not been analyzed yet but it looks like they range from \$30,000 to \$70,000. Ms. Wight plans to bring recommendations to the Coolidge Committee on December 12, and then to the trustees on December 19. Mr. Carrier said that the overall cost for the exhibit space renovation is expected to be about \$300,000. Ms. Wight said that so far about \$86,000 has been raised. Ms. Downing will add all the trustees to the email distribution list for the Coolidge newsletter. Mr. Carrier said that the CCPLM is at a crossroads and that soon the trustees will vote on what the project will look like. He said if the low bid for design work isn't what the Exhibits

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings (continued)

Committee feels is necessary, he hopes that the board can come up with additional funds. The harder part will be raising the \$300,000 for the construction costs and will likely require a capital campaign. This may be difficult due to the nature of the content and the desire to present a balanced approach. It could involve approaching conservative donors, grant writing, and state and federal earmarks. He said that Forbes has an obligation to maintain and properly care for all of its special collections, of which the Coolidge collection is the largest. Even with this project, the library may never be able to do all that is necessary in terms of expanding open hours and hiring new staff. The trustees discussed ideas for grant writing and seeking advice from other institutions.

Development Committee - Ms. Anderson said that they did not meet this month.

Finance Committee - Ms. Francis said that they are meeting in December. They have had discussions with a potential treasurer, who may attend next month's meeting.

Personnel Committee - Ms. Ruocco said that they did not meet this month.

Racial & Social Justice Advisory Group - Ms. Teschner said that they are in the formative stage and distributed a summary of their meeting on November 18. A draft outreach brochure developed by staff was presented to the committee. The group is reviewing the draft and will get feedback to Ms. Downing by November 25. The brochure will be used at various in-person outreach efforts to be determined. A PEN America article on Project 2025 and its potential impact on education and libraries was distributed to committee members. They will continue to monitor that effort and the incoming administration's action. The bulk of the meeting was dedicated to a presentation by Reverend Andrea Ayvazian who is the founder and director of Truth School and has been doing anti-racism work for the past 25 years. She shared that from her experience and training this type of work is built on relationships and creating an environment where people feel safe and respected. It needs to be clear what people are being asked to do and what is expected of them as well as what will be provided. Examples of what might be provided are stipends, tech support, feedback, and receptive audiences. Some suggested follow-up actions include: get feedback (fishbowls, focus groups, etc.) from diverse communities; be more clear that social justice is a core value; put together a summary of accomplishments as a jumping off point for future planning and include a sense of that in promotional materials for the advisory group; be clear about what the committee is offering and providing; consider having committee contracts - what participants agree to do and what the library will provide and have people sign off; survey communities of color and other diverse audiences; and featuring programs led by diverse people. The next meeting is scheduled for March 2 at 4 PM.

Discussion Topic: Violence and Abuse Towards Libraries

Ms. Downing distributed copies of an article from the New York Times, "Librarians Face a Crisis of Violence and Abuse." The article states, "librarians around the country are struggling to reconcile their desire to serve their communities with their need for self-preservation, especially as libraries have become hubs for social services and battlegrounds for the culture wars. Staffers say that the job's stressors are leading to burnout and psychological trauma, necessitating a fresh approach to protecting

Discussion Topic: Violence and Abuse Towards Libraries (continued)

workers' mental health." This article centered around the experience of urban librarians but library staff everywhere including here at Forbes are affected.

Ms. Moss and Ms. Downing, along with the Leadership Team, have given these concerns a great deal of thought. Their approaches to support and protect staff include having a comprehensive safety plan that is periodically reviewed and staff are provided training on. They strive to keep desk shifts to a reasonable length, assure there is adequate coverage in the building, and have a member of the Leadership Team on site during all open hours. They continue to build relationships with social service providers and remain connected and aware of what is going on in the community. They check in with staff on a regular basis and provide new staff with a mentor to lean on. They try to create opportunities for enjoyment and ease for staff by providing things like team development outings, regular birthday celebrations, and wellness breaks. None of these solve the problem and of course there is more to be done. There should be continued focus on providing as much support as possible for staff through adequate staffing, competitive salaries, employee benefits, professional development, and employee recognition and appreciation. Additionally, there should be ways to have access to professional social services both to support staff and ideally to directly serve patrons. A trend in many libraries is bringing a social worker on staff. This feels out of reach for Forbes due to the limited staffing budget but is worth continuing to discuss. This is an initiative that the state is coordinating discussions around. Ms. Downing invited the trustees to ask her and Ms. Moss questions and to help them continue to find ways to make Forbes an excellent place to be and work.

Ms. Downing and Ms. Moss said that this takes a psychological toll on library staff and staff have requested a private area in the library where they can go to regroup after difficult encounters. Ms. Moss said that overall there's a feeling that civility has decreased. The Northampton Community of Care is only open until 4 PM on weekdays and is closed on weekends, and it's not clear what effect the proposed Community Resilience Hub will have on Forbes. Mr. Carrier said that he has been impressed with Ms. Downing's judgement in difficult situations and striking the right balance in doing what's right for both the individual and the library. The trustees recognized the challenges and discussed de-escalation training. Ms. Francis asked what more the trustees can do to support staff in addition to setting up a privacy room. Ms. Moss said more money for staffing, both higher wages and increased redundancy would help. Mr. Carrier said the trustees can and do advocate for the staff, but it comes down to the city budget which is controlled by the mayor.

Other Business

Mr. Carrier read the following prepared statement and requested that it be included in the minutes.

To be honest, a few months ago, I never dreamed I would be making a statement on this topic at this time, but as the saying goes, humans plan and life happens. So here we are. Shortly after our October trustees meeting, I received an email from a concerned board member. Within the message were a number of comments, requests, and suggestions that I would like to briefly share with you as well as my own thoughts about each one of them. First, this trustee mentioned a number of areas

where during the past few years, with the help of many other folks I want to acknowledge, I had successfully helped to lead the library to where it is today. This board member believes it was now time to begin a transition period for the library. The trustee notified me that they planned to nominate Katy for president of the board this coming January. The board member further suggested I use my remaining year on the board as a transition period to provide any counsel that might be needed. Finally, they added, if their timeline didn't suit me, they would wait until the following January to implement their plan. As you know, I have been president of this board for many years. In fact, I have known approximately sixty percent of all the trustees who have served on this board since the library was founded by Charles Forbes. It has been the honor of my life to hold this position. However, I have always had a secret that I would like to share with you. Growing up, Northampton was a much different community than it is now. It was an overwhelmingly working class city. I came from the lower rung of that working class; my parents having left school prematurely during the Great Depression, only had an elementary school education. Times were tough. Growing up, there were no books in our house, but Lilly and later Forbes libraries played an important role in my life. This might surprise some, but because of that background, I never quite felt like I belonged on this board let alone be the president. In the Northampton of my youth, Forbes Library was a very prestigious local institution and only prominent citizens aspired to be a library trustee back then. Complicating all of that, the vast majority of the trustees I have had the pleasure to work with and learn a great deal from were so much more accomplished, better educated, and more cosmopolitan than I was or ever could hope to be. In any case, as some of you know I have held this post since the first meeting I attended as a trustee. What you might not know is I did not seek the position at that time because, quite frankly, I didn't think I had enough experience. That was true enough back then, though I can assure you the responsibilities and expectations of the position have grown exponentially since that time. In any case, I walked in to that first meeting planning to nominate one of the two long-time female trustees. There were only three trustees back then. However, they had other plans and despite my concerns would not change their minds. Since then I have worked tirelessly, with a lot of many other talented people, to turn Forbes around and make it what it is today. As Lisa knows, I usually find the day of the trustee meeting the high point of most months and I can guarantee you that no one enjoys these meetings more than I do. I can also assure you it is not because I don't have a full and rewarding life outside of this library. Over the years, I often asked if someone else would like to take on the many responsibilities and duties inherent in this position. Each time folks looked down, looked the other way, shuffled their papers and in the end, there were no takers. Because of that response, I stopped asking that question at the January meetings. Perhaps that was a big mistake on my part. If so, I apologize for my poor judgment. After considerable thought during the last month, actually more than any of you will ever know, as well as consulting with my family and a number of close friends, I have finally decided how I should respond to the board member's email. Interestingly, all those who I consulted with urged me to respond in quite a different direction than I landed on. So, where I am on this right now? The answer is quite simple. I can no longer serve as president of this board because I do not have the

unanimous support of the board members which I believe is imperative to do this job properly. So, I have decided to step down from the presidency of the board effective immediately upon the adjournment of this trustee meeting. I believe my decision is not only right for me, but in the best interest for the library I have worked so hard to transform. So what immediate impact does this decision have? First, Katy, according to our bylaws, and in her role as vice president immediately assumes the duties in the president's absence. You can't lose with Katy if you decide to formally elevate her to this position. I have worked with her for almost nine years now. She has the educational background, administrative experience, people skills, and most importantly the bold vision to lead this library through its next chapter. I assume you can then select a new leadership team for the board at a special or regular meeting any time before or at the required January 2025 organizational meeting. Second, also according to the bylaws, because I will no longer be the board president, I will also no longer be a member of the Coolidge Museum Committee. In my case, it also includes serving as a member of the exhibits subcommittee and chairing the development subcommittee. While I have done my best over the past few years to try to reinvigorate the museum advisory committee and try to take the museum itself to the next level, I must say that for a number of reasons, I have found it both a frustrating and pretty thankless task. Clearly, it has been the least rewarding aspect of being president of the board so I won't miss that piece of the job at all. Thirdly, I hope to finish out my current term as trustee and remain a member of both the finance and personnel subcommittees, where like in this venue, I will work in the future to do my best to limit my voice to better fit my new role. And finally, I have always believed that no person is indispensable to any institution. I also never wanted to be that person who some folks were just waiting for them to leave and they had no clue themselves. So, even though I would have liked to have gotten through the holidays and waited until early next year when traditionally these announcements are made, I now realize I was mistaken. I had felt that my continued presence would be useful given how new a majority of the current trustees are. Further, there are a number of exciting and important projects I had hoped to work on if I continued on the board for another term. In conclusion, I want you to know that I do not plan to run for one last term on the board as I had originally expected to do.

At 5:56 PM Ms. Francis moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Ruocco seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously with Ms. Anderson, Ms. Bruce, Mr. Carrier, Ms. Francis, Ms. Ruocco, and Ms. Wight all voting in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 5:56 PM.