

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Thursday, April 16, 2026

Present: Rebekah Anderson, Lisa Downing, Fred Kass, Molly Moss, Shelly Ruocco, Elizabeth Sheirer, Katy Wight. **Also Present:** Mary Biddle, Head of Borrower Services; Jason Petcen, observer for the Forbes Library Employee Association. **Present via Zoom:** Ruth Francis; Lolan Sevilla; Anne Teschner; Jo Landers, Bookkeeper; Doug Wheat, treasurer; JoEllen Mackenzie and Chris Hannon, observers for the Friends of Forbes Library. **Absent:** None.

Pursuant to the extended authorization for certain remote meeting provisions signed into law by the Governor, and now available through June 30, 2027, this meeting was available for remote participation.

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

Shelly Ruocco made a motion to rearrange the agenda and move the executive session to the end of the meeting. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Secretary's Report

Rebekah Anderson moved that the Secretary's report of March 26, 2026 be accepted and placed on file. Shelly Ruocco seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Financial Reports

The Trustees Financial Reports for the period ending March 31, 2026 were distributed to the trustees prior to the meeting. They include a Profit and Loss Comparison, Balance Sheet Comparison, Budget to Actual Report, Coolidge Museum Redesign income and expense report, and HVAC Project income and expense report. Ruth Francis said that the Finance Committee met yesterday and reviewed the reports. Due to the early timing of the trustees' meeting this month, they were not able to get the reports to the trustees any sooner. This timing issue will impact the next few months as well. Ruth Francis gave a high-level overview of the reports focusing on the Budget to Actual report. She said the numbers in red are nothing to be concerned about, and mostly just reflect where we are in the current fiscal year. Staff development is overspent, but does not have a large budget. Jo Landers said that a few changes were made this month. Donations and grants have been separated out to make it easier to monitor the library's fundraising. Also, a new line item for "additional investment income (loss)" was added to more accurately reflect the change in the value of the portfolio when factoring in the 3.5% withdrawal rate. Doug Wheat said that expenses were on track with what was budgeted, and that fundraising and donations were ahead of budget.

Anne Teschner made a motion to approve the March Financial Reports and place them on file. Shelly Ruocco seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.

Lisa Downing reported that \$5,267.94 in undesignated gifts were received in March. The following designated gifts were received since the last Trustees' meeting: \$977.25 for the Children's Renovation project, \$6,503.15 for the

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

Coolidge Fund, and \$1,100 for the Coolidge Renovation Fund. Molly Moss said that the Coolidge giving day and Library Giving Day were a little close this year, but it did not seem to negatively impact the donations.

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

An update on fundraising was provided: Coolidge funding budgeted \$50,000, received \$47,749; Children's Renovation Project budgeted \$50,000, received \$39,116; Annual Appeal budgeted \$50,000, received \$89,951; Library Giving Day budgeted \$30,000, received \$40,881; Other budgeted \$67,100, received \$32,954.

Lisa Downing said that fundraising is on an upward trend over the past 10 years after taking a hiatus after a major capital campaign in 2000. There is growth in both the dollars raised and the number of donors. She said that Molly Moss works very hard on Library Giving Day, with help from other staff. In response to a question from Fred Kass, Molly Moss said that some of the funds reported in her fundraising update were received in April, not March, and will be reported at next month's meeting. Katy Wight said that the trustees only discuss details of gifts over \$5,000. Molly Moss said that the library has a gift acceptance policy and if they see something they are concerned about they will bring it to the trustees.

Fred Kass made a motion to accept and deposit the designated and undesignated gifts as reported. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Next Meetings

The next regular meeting of the trustees is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19 at 4:00 PM. The trustees scheduled the following meetings for the remainder of the year: Thursday, June 18; Thursday, July 16; Thursday, September 24; Thursday, October 22; Thursday, November 19; Thursday, December 17; and Thursday January 21, 2027. Meetings will convene at 4:00 PM unless otherwise noted.

The next meeting of the Friends of Forbes Library will be held on Wednesday, May 6, 2026 at 6:30 PM. It will be a hybrid meeting in person and on Zoom. Fred Kass will attend on behalf of the trustees. The Friends' Annual meeting is on Thursday, April 23 at 5:30 PM.

Department Report: Borrower Services

Copies of the report prepared by Mary Biddle were distributed prior to the meeting. Mary Biddle said that the strength of the department is their delight in providing great customer service and planning and delivering successful programs. In September 2025, Outreach Delivery Services were folded into Borrower Services which is now responsible for assigning a staff of volunteers to 50 homebound patrons, managing the book box shelves, delivering books, and promoting outreach at local senior living communities. Staffing for the department also includes 10 part-time staff, work study students, and 10 Senior Tax Work Off volunteers. Programs this year included the Winter Exquisite Zine Fest and Puppet Pageant organized by Steven Stover, a twice-weekly Healthy Bones and Balance class organized by Mary Biddle, and the Volunteer/Donor event in March. Interlibrary Loan acquired a lift this year to help prevent back injuries. The Integrated Library System (Evergreen) and patron interface (Aspen) were updated in the last year improving staff experience and patron service. Team members serve on a variety of library

Department Report: Borrower Services (continued)

committees including programming, wayfinding, safety, accessibility, sustainability and the CW MARS Circulation and Resource Committee.

Katy Wight said she appreciated seeing all the bullet points of what the department does. Mary Biddle said it is important to point out that they do much more than check in and check out books. She highlighted a link to a graph that the trustees can use to view circulation figures for the past 5 years. A lot has changed in that time, with more circulation of ebooks, which are not included in those figures. She said it is reassuring to see the circulation numbers go back up after the pandemic. She said that as of December, Forbes has saved patrons over \$3 million versus having to purchase books. They are ordering an extra 500 library cards this year due to increased demand. There are 7,820 active accounts, which represents more than 50% of the adults in Northampton. There was a discussion of the lift used to bring in the Interlibrary Loan book bins. It is OSHA certified and helps prevent staff back injuries. The back stairs are still an issue, and there was discussion of how to approach finding a solution, including asking the engineering students at Smith for help. In response to a question about the Senior Tax Credit Write Off, Mary Biddle said that the deadline is December 31 and is available to income eligible residents.

When asked about department needs, Mary Biddle said that a display rack for all the brochures the library makes available to patrons for housing, food, education, legal resources, language study, etc. would be helpful. She also asked for adjustable risers for the computers at the circulation desk to free up counter space, and trays for pens and pencils, etc.

The trustees thanked Mary Biddle for her report and all the work of her department. She and Jason Petcen left the meeting at 4:42 PM.

Administrative Report

Lisa Downing reported that an expert from the Massachusetts Library System is coming to present a session about artificial intelligence and libraries during a staff meeting on Thursday, May 14 from 11-1. This program is a collaboration between Forbes Library and the Western MA Library Advocates. The trustees were invited to attend.

Library Giving Day was a huge success with over \$40,000 received from 286 donations, exceeding the \$27,500 match, and including many gifts in honor of Russell Carrier. Thank you to everyone who contributed and helped share the campaign. This was the best one yet and all are so grateful for everyone's support. In addition to monetary contributions, many comments were received from donors about the library.

Forbes is holding two grand opening events for the new Youth Programming Room during school vacation week. On Tuesday, April 21, author and illustrator Esme Shapiro, who painted the mural will read her new picture book *Ruthie*, and there will be a Ruthie-themed craft. There will also be a pizza party for teens where they can try out gaming on the new TV. Once the whole project is complete, there will be a special event for elected officials and others who made the project possible. In response to a question from Shelly Ruocco, Lisa Downing said that the library had raised enough funds to cover the cost of all the furnishings for the new room.

Administrative Report (continued)

Shelly Ruocco moved that the Administrative Report be accepted and placed on file. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Ruth Francis and Doug Wheat left the meeting at 5 PM.

Communications

There were no communications this month.

Discussion Topic: Using Google Drive

Molly Moss distributed a handout and presented an overview of using Google Drive and accessing the Trustee Resources in the shared drive. She showed multiple ways to find and organize documents. Molly Moss said that Forbes has been using Google Drive for about 10 years, and that there were some inconsistencies in how things had been set up. Lisa Downing said that some documents might have been created on past trustees' individual computers, but that going forward everything should be created and saved in Google Drive. She said that committee chairs are free to organize their folders. Shelly Ruocco said perhaps the groups should come to an agreement on best practices. She said that one of the big benefits is that documents are saved automatically in real time. Molly Moss showed how a document's history could be retrieved and restored. In response to a question from Fred Kass, Molly Moss said that the Coolidge Committee had a separate shared drive, and she would share it with him. Molly Moss suggested that the trustees could bookmark the Forbes Library Trustee Resources Google site, which has a link at the bottom to the Trustee Resources folder. In response to a question from Fred Kass, Molly Moss said she would look into turning on multi-factor authentication. Lisa Downing said to let her or Molly Moss know if they were having any problems or had any questions about Gmail or Google Drive.

Joellen Mackenzie left the meeting and Chris Hannon joined the meeting at 5:05 PM

Collection Development Policy Update

Molly Moss reported that the library's Collection Development Policy was reviewed and updated. It was last reviewed about 10 years ago. A redlined version was distributed to the trustees for discussion and feedback, and will be brought back next month for the trustees' approval. Lisa Downing said that it had been reviewed and approved by leadership and staff, and run by the Racial and Social Justice Advisory Group.

Molly Moss reviewed the changes, most of which were updates to language. Where appropriate, other policies are linked to rather than repeated. Fred Kass noted that some language comes from the Library Bill of Rights. He suggested adding "legal guardian" to the section on parental rights. Due to changes in the publishing industry, the restriction on self-published books was removed. The local author section was reworked, and they have been added to the circulating collection. Molly Moss said the procedure for objecting to library materials was updated. Only residents of Northampton, including Florence and Leeds, can make a challenge. Challenges can only be made against library materials, not programming or artwork on the walls. Items can only be challenged once every 3 years. Fred Kass noted that the link to the form needs to be updated.

Collection Development Policy Update (continued)

Katy Wight thanked everyone who worked on the updated policy. Lisa Downing said it would be cleaned up and brought back next month for the trustees' approval.

Building & Grounds Projects Updates

Lisa Downing reported that the library's patio repair project was approved for the city's FY2027 Capital Improvements Project with a budget of \$40,000. It is hoped that this project can be coordinated with the front door replacement and that the work can be completed this summer. Keiter will be coming back on site soon to complete the HVAC portion of the children's programming room/HVAC project. Work is scheduled to be wrapped up by June.

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings

Friends of Forbes - Katy Wight attended the April 1 meeting of the Friends of Forbes. The meeting started with a summary of the last trustee's meeting including an explanation of how the Coolidge exhibit will be organized, discussion of whether the Friends should also look into officer insurance, and an update on the Friends Google Drive space. Endowment investments are slightly down due to the market. They are working on their next newsletter which will include photos from the Zine Fest and the new programming room. The online application is ready for vendors for the Artisan's Fair and Nicole Sibley is getting the PDF version ready to add to the website. Lisa Downing gave a report on pre-donations for Library Giving Day, an update about the budget meeting with the mayor, FLEA negotiations, and money in the State Supplemental Budget for the Coolidge museum. They discussed upcoming events including National Library Week (April 20-24), the Friends Annual Meeting on April 23, Bingo on May 17 at 1:30, and Garden Tour on June 13.

Building and Grounds Committee - Lisa Downing reported that the committee reviewed the facilities plan and created a preliminary list of projects for FY2027 as well as a status review of FY2026 projects.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Fred Kass reported that Michael Hanke and Charles Mann from Design Division attended to give an update on their design work which was followed by a discussion about the design panel content with the committee. Lisa Downing said that they applied for an earmark which was approved by Senator Jo Commerford and Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, and now goes to Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Ed Markey for approval. There will be a public comment session at the next Community Preservation Act (CPA) committee meeting to discuss the Coolidge application. It is important for applicants to have representatives there to advocate for their projects.

Development Committee - They rescheduled their meeting to May 14 at 4:30 PM on Zoom.

Finance Committee - The Finance Committee met yesterday for a short meeting. They focused on how to make the monthly Financial Reports clearer and more useful for the trustees, and discussed the communication process with Bartholomew Inc. They have 2 meetings scheduled next month, one to review the reports and the other to discuss the investment policy.

Personnel Committee - Shelly Ruocco reported that they discussed the meeting with the Mayor on Monday, March 30, 2026, and the projections they will need to calculate to meet parameters the Mayor discussed. They then discussed the anticipated budget for the next two years, and how it might be affected by City budget changes in future years. For example, will there be an override,

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings (continued)

will it pass, and if so/not, how Forbes will be affected. They then discussed a strategy for upcoming FLEA negotiations, including how budget knowns and unknowns need to be addressed in the negotiations. In addition, they discussed a few wording changes for the contract, mostly for clarity or to update a process that has changed. In response to a question from Anne Teschner, Lisa Downing said that she, Molly Moss, Katy Wight and Shelly Ruocco attended the meeting with the mayor. The mayor meets with each city department and the library every year to discuss budget needs. She then prepares the overall city budget, which will be released this year on May 15, and voted on by the City Council at an upcoming meeting.

Racial and Social Justice Advisory Group - Lisa Downing reported that they met on April 13. Kim Gerould, Director of the David Ruggles Center for History and Education presented about the work of the Ruggles Center including an upcoming collaboration with Forbes. Lisa Downing will send details to trustees about upcoming events after today's meeting.

Contract Negotiations with FLEA

At 5:38 PM, Anne Teschner 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. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously, with Rebekah Anderson, Fred Kass, Shelly Ruocco, Lolan Sevilla, Anne Teschner, and Katy Wight all voting in favor. The trustees invited Lisa Downing, Molly Moss, and Elizabeth Sheirer to remain as guests at the executive session. Jo Landers and Chris Hannon left the meeting at 5:38 PM. Rebekah Anderson, Lisa Downing, Fred Kass, Molly Moss, Shelly Ruocco, Lolan Sevilla, Elizabeth Sheirer, Anne Teschner, and Katy Wight were present during the executive session. No votes were taken during the executive session.

At 6:05 PM, Shelly Ruocco moved to end the executive session. Fred Kass seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously, with Rebekah Anderson, Fred Kass, Shelly Ruocco, Lolan Sevilla, Anne Teschner, and Katy Wight all voting in favor.

Rebekah Anderson made a motion for the Personnel Committee to enter contract negotiations with the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA). Fred Kass seconded motion, which was passed unanimously with Rebekah Anderson, Fred Kass, Shelly Ruocco, Lolan Sevilla, Anne Teschner, and Katy Wight all voting in favor.

Other Business

There was no other business.

At 6:06 PM, Lolan Sevilla moved to adjourn the meeting. Shelly Ruocco seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 PM.