

TRUSTEES OF FORBES LIBRARY
Thursday, June 18, 2026

Present: Rebekah Anderson, Lisa Downing, Ruth Francis, Fred Kass, Shelly Ruocco, Elizabeth Sheirer, Katy Wight. **Also Present:** Maxine Schmidt, observer for the Friends of Forbes Library. **Present via Zoom:** Fred Kass; Molly Moss; Lolan Sevilla; Anne Teschner; Doug Wheat, Treasurer; Jo Landers, Bookkeeper; Ben Weil, Climate Action & Project Administration (CAPA). **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 4:01 PM.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Ruth Francis made a motion to rearrange the agenda and move the contract negotiations with the Forbes Library Employee Association (FLEA) executive session to the end of the meeting. Shelly Ruocco seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Secretary's Report

Shelly Ruocco moved that the Secretary's report of May 19, 2026 be accepted and placed on file, and that the report of the Executive Session of May 19, 2026 be approved, but not placed on file. Ruth Francis seconded the motion, which was passed with Anne Teschner abstaining.

Financial Reports

Jo Landers distributed the Trustees Financial Reports for the period ending May 31, 2026 which included a Statement of Activity Comparison, Statement of Financial Position Comparison, Budget to Actual Report, HVAC Project Statement of Activity, and Coolidge Museum Redesign Statement of Activity. The Statement of Activity Comparison report shows the current year July 2025 to May 2026 compared to the prior year July 2024 to May 2025, and the amount of change. The Budget to Actual Report shows the amount budgeted for the current fiscal year, the amount spent year-to-date, and remaining amount or deficit. Ruth Francis said there wasn't anything in particular to point out and that next fiscal year we will be able to have a comparison with the prior year. Jo Landers said the library is in good shape. There are some budgeted expenses that may not be billed before the end of the fiscal year, which will show in the new year's budget and encumbered money carried forward.

In response to a question from Rebekah Anderson, Lisa Downing said that the city of Northampton is putting together an ad hoc 9-member citizen's committee to work with the city finance director to explore city finances in depth and to help answer questions about city spending and the budgeting process. The committee will have open meetings and will produce a final report. This is in light of an anticipated override vote coming next year. They are looking especially for people with financial backgrounds.

Rebekah Anderson made a motion to approve the May Financial Reports and place them on file. Shelly Ruocco seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Further Geothermal Exploration

Lisa Downing introduced Ben Weil from the city's Climate Action & Project Administration (CAPA) office, who presented a potential course of action for pursuing geothermal heating and cooling for Forbes Library.

Ben Weil described the library's previous heating and cooling system and the changes made during the soon to be completed HVAC project. The new equipment just installed is capable of being connected to a geothermal ground loop system for both heating and cooling. He is currently overseeing the geothermal project at Northampton High School, and presented a potential cost neutral path forward where Forbes could install a geothermal ground loop under the parking lot. The scenario he envisions is based on the library's current energy budget of about \$47,000. Annual savings from geothermal could be about \$11,750. After tax credits and incentives, a total project cost of \$1.7 million could result in a cost to the library of \$329,000. If the contractor is willing to finance the project and guarantee anticipated savings, the annual \$11,750 in savings would be paid to the contractor on a monthly basis for a period of 20 years, resulting in a budget neutral solution. The city might be able to help with the financing, and possibly pay it down sooner.

The first step in the process is writing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to generate statements of qualifications from contractors. That needs to go through an approval process, and then the project would go out bid in early September. Bids would be due by about mid-October, at which point the trustees will have concrete numbers on which to base a decision to move forward or not. If approved by the trustees, design work would happen in November and December and work would begin in January. There could be cost savings in the mobilization of equipment if the same sub-contractor is used as is working on the NHS project. The project could also be delayed if the trustees were not ready to move forward at this time, but the federal tax credits expire in 2032 after which costs will go up dramatically. There would be no cost to the library in writing and submitting the RFQ, and no commitment until the trustees vote to approve a proposal in October. Possible scenarios include a "break fee," which could be \$75,00 or so. If you engage, you have to be prepared to pay that break fee if you are not satisfied with what they proposed. The contract would include a guaranteed savings. If less than projected, they will owe Forbes the difference for the period of the contract.

Anne Teschner said the Finance Committee should be involved in the discussion. Fred Kass added that the Building & Grounds Committee should also be involved. Ben Weil said he has experience writing the RFQ for the NHS project and would tailor this one specifically to the library's needs and to obtain the lowest possible cost. He would work with whoever the trustees feel should be on the committee to dial in the specifications.

Katy Wight said the trustees were being asked today to vote to move forward with the RFQ, not to approve the final project. When asked about the impact on library operations during construction, Ben Weil said the project would take up about half of the parking lot, which would then need to be restored. Katy Wight said this would also be an opportunity to fix some other issues with the parking lot. She said that a test well has already been drilled, which will result in additional cost savings. Lisa Downing said that she is in favor of moving forward with the RFQ, and the trustees can then make an informed decision once the numbers and parameters of the contract are known.

Further Geothermal Exploration (continued)

Shelly Ruocco made a motion to move forward with creating a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for geothermal heating and cooling at Forbes Library. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously, with Rebekah Anderson, Ruth Francis, Fred Kass, Shelly Ruocco, Lolan Sevilla, and Katy Wight voting in favor, and Anne Teschner abstaining.

Gifts, Donations, and Bequests, etc.

Lisa Downing reported that \$1,650.90 in undesignated gifts was received in the previous month. The following designated gifts were received since the last trustees' meeting: \$540.45 for the Coolidge Fund, \$100 for the Children's Renovation project, and \$50 for the Adult Programming Fund. She said it is a quiet time of year with no current "asks." A Coolidge appeal will be going out later this summer.

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

An update on fundraising was provided: Coolidge funding budgeted \$50,000, received \$32,369; Children's Renovation Project budgeted \$50,000, received \$39,368; Annual Appeal budgeted \$50,000, received \$89,951; Library Giving Day budgeted \$30,000, received \$45,884; Other budgeted \$67,100, received \$36,078.

Molly Moss said there were three outstanding bequests the library was awaiting.

Ruth Francis made a motion to accept 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 Thursday, July 16 at 4:00 PM. The trustees scheduled the following meetings for the remainder of the year: 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, September 2, 2026 at 6:30 PM. Anne Teschner will attend on behalf of the trustees.

Department Report

None this month.

Comprehensive FY 2027 Budget

Molly Moss presented the FY 2027 budget to the trustees for their approval. It has the unanimous endorsement of the Finance Committee. The focus has been on implementing the salary increase recommendations that came out of the classification and compensation study. She reviewed highlights and changes to the budget from last year. Changes include increasing the income from the city appropriation as approved by the city council. The amount for donations was reduced, as no capital projects are anticipated for this fiscal year. She said that Advertising and Marketing looks large, but that is mostly in-kind expenditures. Utilities are decreasing due to a better electricity rate being negotiated by the city and the LED lighting project being paid off. Insurance is going up. The biggest increase is in Personnel, due to the implementation of the new compensation plan.

Comprehensive FY 2027 Budget (continued)

Ruth Francis made a motion to approve the FY2027 budget as recommended by the Finance Committee. Shelly Ruocco seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously, with Rebekah Anderson, Ruth Francis, Fred Kass, Shelly Ruocco, Lolan Sevilla, Anne Teschner, and Katy Wight all voting in favor.

Doug Wheat said that he wanted to acknowledge all the hard work put in by Molly Moss and Lisa Downing to prepare this budget, as well as all the work done by Jo Landers in setting up the library's bookkeeping system to be able to track the budget.

Administrative Report

Lisa Downing reported that the ceremony for Debin Bruce and J.R. Greene was lovely and both were honored to receive the Trustees Award. J.R. picked out a photographic print of the plaque outside the Coolidge Museum and Debin declined a print and instead received a certificate of recognition from the mayor's office. Folk duo Tracy Grammer and Jim Henry played a great set in front of a full audience in the Coolidge Museum.

Forbes hosted two end of year ceremonies for the Center for New Americans on the outdoor stage and lawn this month. Forbes has done this in past years but wasn't able to last year because of the stage construction. It was very fortunate to have beautiful weather for both events and the director Laurie Millman wrote, "It was really perfect. There is so much ugliness in the world right now, especially with respect to the people we support. It is such a necessary breath of fresh air to have these moments of joy. Thank you again for facilitating them!"

Forbes had to close early due to heat and the current lack of air conditioning. Procedures were modeled on the Springfield City Library which doesn't have air conditioning in part of the main branch. Once the heat index hit 85 on the second floor, staff were scheduled for shorter shifts and other arrangements were made to improve safety and comfort. Once the heat index hit 90, the second floor was closed. Due to several record-breaking days of heat, the whole building was closed at 1:00 PM on Friday, June 12 and Saturday, June 13. The new chillers are now in the building and should be operational by mid-July. In the meantime, the library is using de-humidifiers and a temporary air conditioner in the basement. In response to a question from Ruth Francis, Molly Moss said that all employees were paid for the time they were scheduled to work, even if the building was closed.

Ben Weil, from the city's Climate Action Project Administration office came to talk to Forbes about possible approaches for adding EV charging stations to the back parking lot and while he was here he shared a possible approach to geothermal heating and cooling for Forbes Library. In response to a question from Shelly Ruocco, Lisa Downing said that the EV charging stations will need to wait until a decision is made about the geothermal. In response to a question about parking, she said that if the library's meters were connected to the city's parking app, then the costs would need to go up.

Now that the city's budget has been approved, a search has been launched for a full time Technical Services Library Assistant to fill the position left vacant when Kathy Mizula retired in February. So far, over 50 applications have been received. Lisa Downing and Molly Moss are looking forward to filling this position, and are very thankful to all the staff who have

Administrative Report (continued)

enabled Forbes to continue getting books onto the shelves while short staffed.

Local legend, Jane Yolen passed away this month. She published 450 books during her lifetime and was a champion for children's literature and libraries. She will be dearly missed.

Charles Ammi Cutter was recognized in the latest issue of Library Journal for presenting a paper at the first American Library Association conference in which he writes, "Perhaps those who are present now may think it is not worthwhile to come from a considerable distance and meet in such an assembly as this, and listen to papers which might elsewhere be read... There is something in this, but I have always been of the opinion that the great good that comes from these library conventions is not in listening to papers. It is a great deal more in listening to the discussions which follow the papers, and more even than that in the little private conferences which are going on all the time on the street cars... and elsewhere in which the librarian privately gives his experience, his difficulties, and the way in which he has overcome them. That is what makes these conventions important." The library administration agrees with Cutter and continues to invest in funding for staff to attend professional development opportunities. They are very grateful to the trustees and the Friends for their support and encouragement in this area.

Lisa Downing and Molly Moss are so excited about this year's summer reading theme, "Find a Home in Books" with materials featuring original artwork by Pam Acosta. The program begins on Saturday with a kickoff party and the events, prizes, and fun for readers of all ages will continue all summer long. All are encouraged to sign up and encourage family and friends to participate - it's easy and free!

Lisa Downing announced a new chrome book lending program which will be made public in July. Patrons will be able to borrow laptops for a period of 2 or 3 hours for use in the library. The program will be closely monitored and changes made as needed.

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

Communications

There were no communications this month.

Discussion Topic: Supporting Fundraising at Forbes

Lisa Downing said that fundraising is so much more than asking people for money. There are many ways to support the library's fundraising efforts. She distributed a Board Fundraising Menu that was found at a workshop and was adapted for Forbes. It includes about 30 different ways the trustees can support fundraising efforts at Forbes. She reviewed the menu and then opened it up for the trustees' discussion, questions, and feedback. Specifically, the trustees were asked to think about additional information, training, or resources that would support their involvement. The plan is to ask board members to fill out the menu in the fall and then again when new trustees join the board.

Discussion Topic: Supporting Fundraising at Forbes (continued)

The trustees said this was very helpful and included things they hadn't thought of. Molly Moss said it will be very useful when a particular need arises. Lisa Downing said it will be used as a basis of a google form that will be sent to the trustees to fill out in the fall.

Building & Grounds Projects Updates

Lisa Downing reported that Tighe and Bond has been onsite doing some surveying in preparation for the RFP for the patio renovation. The project will be going out to bid later this month or early next month.

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings

Friends of Forbes - Shelly Ruocco attended the June 3 meeting of the Friends of Forbes and reported that there was much final planning for the Garden Tour with some first outreach to sponsors for the Artisan Fair already in play. Bingo was a success, making just over \$1,000.00. The Friends newsletter went out, and they received much positive feedback about the many interesting and informative articles. Their endowment stands at approximately \$675,000 and an anonymous donation of \$5,000 was announced. They approved two funding requests: assisting with Molly Moss's leadership course and mini-grants for staff to receive funding for pilot projects. Rebekah Anderson asked if the Friends are still seeking new members and Maxine Schmidt said she believes so and that she should reach out to JoEllen MacKenzie in a few weeks. Lisa Downing said that preliminary numbers show that the Friends raised about \$22,000 from the garden tour.

Building and Grounds Committee - Katy Wight reported that the chillers were finally brought in through the Children's Department entrance (after not fitting down the back steps). The extra expense for this is being split 4 ways (library/city, general contractor, subcontractors). Air conditioning for most of the building should be available mid-June, but the project is still waiting for one more piece of equipment so the basement floor will be later. The front patio repair should be happening soon (using city funding). Options for repairing the front doors are still being worked out, as it doesn't seem likely there will be leftover funds from the HVAC project. Plans for plantings around the outdoor stage are moving forward. It may be too late to plant now, so most things will go in in the fall. The committee met with CAPA director Ben Weil to discuss putting EV chargers in the parking lot. He presented a few options and surprised them at that meeting by saying it may be time to get bids for setting up a geothermal system. The costs may be lower if it can be timed with a large geothermal project happening at NHS over the next year, as the contractor will have all of their equipment deployed to the city already.

Coolidge Standing Committee - Lisa Downing reported that the panel about Narcotics Farms, Coolidge's last act as President, was excellent and included speakers presenting current best practices for substance abuse disorder. There was a good showing of support for the Coolidge lighting CPA application at City Council and the second vote will take place soon. Sarah Tanner presented the findings of the data gathering done in May for planning purposes and the findings were clear and a summary was distributed to the trustees. Awareness of the museum needs to be increased, along with work on board recruitment and development, and continued fundraising, but it was decided to hold off on a capital campaign for now since they aren't quite ready. Lisa Downing said that the survey had a good response rate and that she would send the data to the trustees. The findings were pretty consistent

Reports from Subcommittees and Other Meetings (continued)

across groups and data collection methods. Anne Teschner said this might be a moment to capitalize on the interest in presidential libraries. Fred Kass said that this is a contentious moment in Northampton politics and more work needs to be done to explain the project to the community before launching a campaign.

Development Committee - Shelly Ruocco and Lolan Sevilla reported that their next meeting is July 9 at 4:30 PM.

Finance Committee - Ruth Francis reported that they held a special meeting on Friday, June 5 to review the Investment Policy Statement (IPS). The discussion included whether the committee thought investing in private markets could be beneficial to the overall investment portfolio and whether the asset allocation should be changed. It was agreed that private markets will be allowed, and they will bring the conversation to the next full committee meeting. They met again on Wednesday, June 10 and continued the IPS conversation. Everyone agreed that a draft of the updated policy would be circulated for the committee to review and edit. They plan to do a training session on the new policy for the trustees at the September board meeting. They also acknowledged the need to work with Bartholomew & Co. on crafting language regarding private markets and that the IPS continues to align with a 65/35 portfolio. All agreed that the IPS will be brought to the September trustees' meeting and will offer an educational session on the IPS. Bartholomew & Co. has been invited to this meeting to speak about private markets. Other business discussed was the library budget for the fiscal year beginning on July 1, which was unanimously endorsed by the committee. The library will need to pay the city soon for the HVAC obligation. The majority of funds can be taken from the money market account. She said the library's endowment portfolio at Bartholomew & Co. is down .58% this month and up 5.01% year to date. The S&P is down 2% for the month, and up 9% for the year. This shows the library has a well-diversified portfolio. Doug Wheat said he would distribute a full year summary at the July meeting. Their next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 8 at 11:00 AM.

Personnel Committee - Shelly Ruocco reported that they met again with the FLEA bargaining unit as they work to come to an agreement on a new contract.

Racial and Social Justice Advisory Group - Lisa Downing reported that their next meeting is September 28 at 4:00 PM.

Other Business

Business Community Outreach - Rebekah Anderson reported that she is regularly attending Chamber of Commerce and monthly Economic Development Council meetings. She asked about having a business card to hand out at these meetings and Lisa Downing said she would provide her with some. She said that tourism is very important to Northampton, and the Coolidge Museum could provide a destination to attract more people. She has been reading a book on the role of libraries in supporting small businesses, and suggested having programming on topics of interest to the business community.

Contract Negotiations with FLEA

At 5:44 PM, Rebekah Anderson 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. Ruth Francis seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously, with Rebekah Anderson, Ruth Francis, Fred Kass,

Contract Negotiations with FLEA (continued)

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. Maxine Schmidt, Doug Wheat, and Jo Landers left the meeting at 5:44 PM. Rebekah Anderson, Lisa Downing, Ruth Francis, 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 6:08 PM, Ruth Francis moved to end the executive session. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously, with Rebekah Anderson, Ruth Francis, Fred Kass, Shelly Ruocco, Lolan Sevilla, Anne Teschner, and Katy Wight all voting in favor.

At 6:08 PM, Ruth Francis moved to adjourn the meeting. Rebekah Anderson seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 PM.