

TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Meeting of the Trustees Governance and Development Committee
Tuesday, June 27, 2017 at 8:30 a.m.
Kirstein Business Center Exchange, Central Library
700 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116

MINUTES

A meeting of the Boston Public Library Trustees Governance and Development Committee (“Committee”) was held on Tuesday, June 27, 2017, 8:30 a.m. at Boston Public Library (“BPL”), Central Library in Copley Square.

Present at the meeting were Committee Chair John Hailer and Committee members: Representative Byron Rushing, Cheryl Cronin, and President, David Leonard. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Robert Gallery was also present. Committee members Ben Bradlee and Paul LaCamera were not present.

Also present were Boston Public Library staff including Chief Financial Officer Ellen Donaghey, Director of Neighborhood Services Priscilla Foley, Chief of Collections Laura Irmscher and Clerk of the Board Pamela Carver. Senior Assistant Corporation Counsel Caroline Driscoll from the City of Boston along with members of the public.

Chair John Hailer presiding, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. He welcomed and thanked everyone for attending.

Mr. Hailer began by calling on Senior Corporation Counsel Caroline Driscoll to update the Committee on the Mayor’s home rule petition regarding increasing the Board of Trustees from nine to fifteen members. Ms. Driscoll stated that the petition will be put on the hearing docket before the Government Operations Committee of the City Council in early July before they break for summer. If the Council votes favorably, it will be sent to the State House immediately following. Representative Rushing stated that he didn’t anticipate any pushback and this matter can be voted on during informal Session when it comes up to the General Court.

Mr. Hailer added that advisement on the appointment of the six new members to the board will be the next process for the committee. Mr. Leonard announced that Priscilla Douglas was appointed to fill the empty ninth slot on the Board to replace Carol Fulp and would be sworn in later that same day. Mr. Rushing suggested that the Committee set up a meeting with Mayor Walsh to discuss the Committee’s role with assisting in the selection process with their recommendations. He asked that this be done simultaneously with their philanthropic discussions.

Mr. Hailer stated that the six new seats can have a major impact on the Boston Public Library and agreed with Representative Rushing, that one goal is for the Committee to make concrete recommendations to the Chair of the Board, President of the Library, and to the Mayor as well.

Mr. Hailer moved onto the third item on the agenda of Trustee Meeting Content. Mr. Leonard stated that in addition to the contractual and general oversight responsibilities that the Board has,

were two strategic items that have come up at recent meetings, and that require staff involvement. Therefore, he compiled a list of ten suggested topic areas for the Board of Trustees schedule in the upcoming year:

1. Philanthropic Strategy & Strategic Communications Messaging (Sept)
2. Special Collections (Sept)
3. Systemwide Programming & WGBH Relationship (Nov)
4. Strategies & Services for underserved populations and patrons in crisis (Nov)
5. Branch and Capital Improvement Projects (Jan 2018)
6. Annual Affiliate Reports (Jan)
7. Annual Budget Submission (March)
8. Youth Services Strategy (March)
9. Technology, Digital Services & Innovation (May)
10. Philanthropic Strategy & Strategic Communications Messaging (May)

Mr. Leonard suggested having two topics per meeting for discussion to allow more thoughtful conversations and depth into each topic. Mr. Leonard asked the Committee for their feedback in regards to the list (see above) and if they thought this is the right approach. Mr. Gallery agreed with Mr. Leonard's suggestion of only having a couple of topics at each meeting to allow the trustees to go deeper and longer into things. Mr. Hailer expressed that Strategies and Services for underserved populations and patrons in crisis should be a priority for the Board. Mr. Hailer mentioned reading news article regarding the increase of opioid addictions and how it is affecting libraries in other parts of the country. He stated that the trustees do not usually talk about these types of issues, but feels it is an extremely concerning situation and should be discussed at least once a year. He added that the immediate concern is for the BPL's service staff and librarians as this matter impacts the dynamic of the library, especially at the branches. Ms. Cronin agreed and added that the role of libraries has evolved in the community and is much more complicated today and deserves to be discussed. Ms. Cronin also stated she thought having deeper conversations at the Board meetings is extremely valuable in front of community members and stakeholders from a governance perspective. It shows that the Board really listens and cares about what they are voting on.

Mr. Hailer stated that the first potential topic of discussion was philanthropic strategy. The members discussed their concern that developing a strategic plan should be timely and hoped the trustees would try to move quickly. Mr. Gallery stated that the strategy won't be ready in September but with work in between to prepare, the hope was to have a plan by the end of this year. He wanted to take the time to get it right, and not rush. Mr. Hailer stated that they will be discussing philanthropic strategy more at length during executive session following this meeting.

Ms. Cronin asked that the term "Philanthropic Strategy" be changed to "Management/Philanthropy" or "Governing/Philanthropy" so that there is clarity in regards to

the context managing of the subject outside of just fundraising. The other members had no objection to this suggestion.

There was further discussion among the members on the proposed topic timeline and when each topic should be discussed. Ms. Cronin suggested that presenters at the hearings state in the beginning of their presentation what the proposed end result of their presentation is; whether they are seeking a vote and/or what that vote will be, or if they are presenting for informative reasons only. Mr. Leonard said he will relay this message to the staff.

Mr. Hailer posed the question of how often the Committee wanted to meet and reminded them that the full Board meets five times per year. The Committee agreed it would be best for them to meet just prior to those meetings. They agreed that grouping related topics based on the time sensitivity to the BPL (i.e. budget in January, operating expenses in March, etc.) Mr. Hailer stated that meetings will run more efficiently if topics are pre-determined and the trustees know what each meeting's focus will be in advance on a recurring basis. He noted that they all hope to be better stewards for the Library.

Both Mr. Gallery and Mr. Hailer stated that Special Collections should be the first item discussed in September. Mr. Hailer stated it is the single greatest responsibility for the Trustees. Mr. Gallery expressed that the collections piece is an important topic, if explained that we are trying to raise money, it is a central topic and goes to access and preservation. Mr. Hailer stated the original goal of forming the trustees was to protect the collections, but expressed that discussing the community in crisis, and seeing what pressing matters the staff is facing is a critical topic and should be addressed in September as well.

Mr. Leonard added that the rare books inventory is nearing completion and there are some reveals they would like to share with the trustees. He also understands patron topics is something we see every day and should be pressing. The other members agreed with Mr. Hailer's earlier comments that strategies & services for underserved populations and patrons in crisis should be moved up to September. Mr. Gallery suggested having someone from the Boston Police Department or another city agency come in to discuss the opioid epidemic with the full Board at length.

Mr. Gallery said he is glad to see the development of some structure for future board meetings and understands there will be items that come up and will be added to the agenda.

Mr. Hailer commended from a risk and governance standpoint that the staff is always transparent and extremely helpful to the Board.

Mr. Hailer moved onto the next subject on the agenda, Philanthropic Strategy Discussion. He stated that the goal is to have less dependence on state and city funding moving forward. Ms.

Cronin reaffirmed that she felt it was very important in how the committee shapes this topic and integrate how they caption it, not just “philanthropic”.

Mr. Leonard referred to an attachment before them “Philanthropic Strategy Development-Proposed Roadmap” based on a previous conversation when they were introduced the Kubler Wirka report. The questions were asked what would be the context of next steps. He suggested this draft is a proposal to put those actions in place. He stated that some topics will affect the BPL’s legal standing so it was decided it would be best discussed in Executive Session.

Representative Rushing thought this proposal was great but so different from what they are currently doing. He hoped the Committee would consider a strategy which allows all BPL users to give donations. He gave the example of how WGBH does their campaigns. (They are free for all but, somehow manage to ask for donations from the public). He feels in some ways the BPL and WGBH are very similar. Although he noted he understands that BPL patrons’ information is confidential.

Mr. Gallery explained if you go to the website, there are several ways to donate and it can be very confusing for a patron to understand what he/she is donating to. Representative Rushing and Ms. Cronin both agreed, and stated the need for more broad based and grassroots efforts for fundraising.

Mr. Leonard expressed that he does not have deep expertise in this area, so they will look to work with consultants to work through the process.

Ms. Cronin said it is easy to get bogged down on the planning and get off track with a realistic time line. She felt they did not have the time to take a year to plan and then kick off the new fundraising plan. Mr. Hailer replied from his experience that it does take a long time to change the idea that funding moves year to year and that there is never enough funding to develop projects. He pointed to the Museum of Fine Arts, and how they have a huge amount of wealthy deep supporters. At the MFA, regular patrons will donate \$25.00 because they really believe in the museum. He felt moving to the BPL, he hoped not to over analyze it but get out there as well. Ms. Cronin added that it is crucial to get the right messaging of what the BPL story is so that they can tell themselves to help for fundraising. She added it is so wonderful to know the BPL is funded by the City but added it is a difficult obstacle to change the public mentality that it isn’t enough and that the BPL needs additional financial support. Mr. Leonard added by way of example that the 43 million budget does “X” but given existing requirements and capabilities, let alone any new initiatives, a 60 million target budget wouldn’t be out of the question.

Ms. Cronin added donors don’t want to give for operating costs they want to know their money is making a difference in programing or other tangible places.

Ms. Cronin questioned the idea of new strategy obligations and what are the restrictions on what the trustees can do. Mr. Leonard explained that they will ensure they abide by the conflict of interest law, and will do nothing that violates compliance with it.

The Committee discussed the current lack of explicit coordination between various parties as an example of a challenge. Mr. Leonard stated that there is either an answer to this within the new hybrid organization for these groups or there is not.

Section C of the proposal talked about that Library Actions. Mr. Leonard said they will be discussing this matter at Executive Session along with the residency waiver and better coordination with the Affiliates.

Mr. Gallery stated that they will need to start with hiring a Director of Operations to continue this work.

They discussed the three components necessary for the RFP (communication tools, dealing with structural feasibility, and doing the actual work). They agreed to do a field test strategy and see if it is working. .

Mr. Leonard pointed out that in FY19, if funding is not coming in, we will have deficit with no BPL Foundation money. So the urgency of developing a plan was a priority.

Mr. Leonard asked if there were any questions regarding this to which there were none.

Mr. Hailer stated that he was ready to move onto the Executive Session but asked for public comment for which there was none.

Mr. Leonard stated that there were complications that would be detrimental to discuss in an open forum. This would be residency and discussion regarding affiliate relationships, both of them comply with exemptions to go into the Executive Session.

The Chair polled the Committee members who voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela R. Carver