



THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF BROOKLINE

Minutes of the Board of Library Trustees, Public Library of Brookline

A hybrid meeting of the Trustees of the Public Library was convened on Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at 6:15pm.

Present: K. Hung, M. Burstein, B. Bloomenthal, C. Lohe, K. Livingston, J. Goleman, J. Vanderkay, J. Margolis, M. Vogt, F. Silver, C. Chanyasulkit, S. Zelkha.

Also present: Interim Library Director, D. Savin; Assistant Director for Administration, R. Brennan; Interim Head of Circulation, Bryan Kreusch; Executive Assistant to the Library Director, C. Artavia; T. Gellman, C. Zuttermeister, Y. Wu, R. Lauro-Priestly, P. Lauro-Priestly, J. Matthews; P. Salazar, S. O'Donnell, M. Miller, Sammy Friedman.

Motion to convene by Burstein; Lohe seconds. All present vote yea, 6:15pm.

All votes conducted by roll call.

I. Nominating Committee Report and Election of Officers

- A. Nominations committee (Burstein and Livingston) present the nominees: Chair, K. Livingston; Vice-Chair, C. Chanyasulkit; Secretary, J. Goleman; Treasurer, Carol Lohe.
- B. Livingston runs the election for Chair; presents herself as the nominee.
 - 1. Livingston asks if anyone wants to nominate themselves or someone else for Chair (none).
 - a) Nominations for Chair close. Vote for chair is conducted by Burstein. Board votes unanimously; Livingston is elected Chair.
- C. Livingston runs the election for Vice-Chair; presents Chanyasulkit as the nominee.
 - 1. Livingston asks if anyone wants to nominate themselves or someone else for Vice-Chair (none).
 - a) Nominations for Vice-Chair close. Vote for Vice-Chair is conducted by Burstein. Board votes unanimously; Chanyasulkit is elected Vice-Chair.
- D. Livingston runs the election for Secretary; presents Goleman as the nominee.
 - 1. Livingston asks if anyone wants to nominate themselves or someone else for Secretary (none).



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- a) Nominations for Secretary close. Vote for Secretary is conducted by Burstein. Board votes unanimously; Goleman is elected Secretary.

E. Livingston runs the election for Treasurer; presents Lohe as the nominee.

- 1. Livingston asks if anyone wants to nominate themselves or someone else for Treasurer (none).
- 2. Nominations for Treasurer close. Vote for Treasurer is conducted by Burstein. Board votes unanimously; Lohe is elected Treasurer.

F. Livingston thanks Hung for her service as Chair. Hung thanks the board and the oncoming board. Hung thanks Savin and her team for their role in making these meetings happen.

G. Hung conducts an icebreaker game.

H. Livingston leads Board member introductions of the two new Board members: Bloomenthal and Silver.

II. Annual Motions

- A. Motion that the Board authorize, pursuant to Chapter 41 Section 56 and Chapter 78 Section 11 M.G.L., the Director and, in . . . *[their]* absence, the Assistant Director, to approve all bills, drafts, orders and payrolls chargeable to the respective appropriations for which we have responsibility, except for any charges relating to the repair or renovation of a library facility, which is coordinated through the Building Commission. Such approval shall be given only after an examination to determine that such charges are correct, and that the goods, materials, or services charged for were ordered, and that such goods and materials were delivered, and that the services were actually rendered to or for the Town, as the case may be.
- B. Motion to use trust funds to pay for Mass Library Trustee Association dues for those Trustees so wishing.
- C. Motion to continue to meet the second Tuesday of the month at 6:15 p.m.
- D. Motion to authorize the Director to transfer funds between any and all accounts, thereby closing out the FY25 budget.



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1. Vogt makes a note that the Board does not always meet on the second Tuesday of the month because of certain holidays, for example, Veteran's Day.
 - a) Vogt proposes to change the wording in the motion to "Interim Director or Director".
 - b) Vogt proposes to change "in her absence" to "in their absence" in order to make the phrase gender neutral.
 - c) Short discussion.
2. Burstein moves to vote for all motions in the agenda at once, and to and keep the wording as "second Tuesday of the month" and to look later (in July) at what they want to do about meetings in October or November.
3. Livingston runs the vote for all four motions: A., B., C., and D., with the change as specified (her to their); Goleman seconds. All motions pass unanimously.

III. Comments from the Chair

- A. Livingston explains that per the bylaws, she will be making committee assignments and later in the meeting will be talking about what each committee does, what their function is, and examples of what they have done this year so that the new members will get an idea of the committees they would like to be on.
 1. Requests (to be on a committee or not) can be sent directly to Livingston via email. New members are expected to be on 2-3 committees.
- B. The May 9th email from the MBLC stated that everyone on the Board must take the COI (Conflict of Interest) test, and an Open Meeting Law option as well.
 1. If anyone on the Board wants to be on the MBLC mailing list, the Board will cover the fee for this.
 2. Short discussion.

IV. Comments from the Public (3 minute limit per-person)

- A. Carrie Zuttermeister, Youth Services (three years at Public Library of Brookline). Zuttermeister says she is a recent graduate of Simmons Library School and came here today to comment on the library's Pride flag. Zuttermeister says she was here when it was taken down. She goes on to say that we talk about libraries as neutral spaces, and in



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library school we talk about what it means to be neutral. Neutral means providing accurate information in regard to all political positions. That doesn't necessarily mean that libraries are a-political. Libraries are under attack. The IMLS is under attack. There are book bans taking place throughout the whole country, even in Massachusetts, and queer books and literature are some of those books under attack. Zuttermeister goes on to say that flying the Pride flag, especially in June, would be a statement of solidarity with libraries and the turmoil that they are currently experiencing, and it would mean a lot to the staff at PLB as well.

- B. Mac Miller, Collection Services (two years at PLB). Miller says that when they started at PLB the Pride flag and the Black Lives Matter flag were flown in front of the library; he was present when the flags were taken down by previous library administration. Miller has expressed their displeasure about this to the previous administration and to their coworkers. It saddens Miller that there has been no motion to reinstate the pride flag. Miller goes on to say that it behooves us all to examine what we mean by 'neutral' given this political climate, the current federal administration's views towards libraries and queer people. Miller says queer rights are being stripped, and neutral institution or not, it would be a message of hope to people, such as themselves, to see a local library flying a Pride flag during Pride month.
- C. Roberto Lauro-Priestly, Circulation. Lauro-Priestly explained that when the [Pride] flag was taken down it felt that queer people were not supported; not only to the staff but to the public. The library should be seen as a safe space. Lauro-Priestly says that people see flags flown everywhere else, even at Town Hall, for example, or in the rainbow crosswalk, but not at the library, and he wonders if a queer person, under these circumstances, would want to come to the library.
- D. Paul Lauro-Priestly, speaker, says that at BHS there is safe space signage, showing that the youth are safe and welcome, and this is an important message to gay youth who come through the library's doors that they are safe and welcome. Lauro-Priestly says he is angry about money being stripped from libraries and museums.
- E. Yixuan Wu, Circulation Department. Wu says she is here today, not just because she works at the library, but because she is a resident of Brookline. Since the first year she moved to America, she has lived in Brookline. Wu describes how she saw the rainbow flag at the Coolidge Corner branch of the library, which she lives by, and she sent a picture to her gay friends in China, and it encouraged them. Wu says that whenever she sends pictures to her friends it is to say: See? There are some places that support gay people. But now, Wu says, the flag is not up anymore, and she feels very sorry. Wu says she agrees the library is a neutral place, but by flying the flag the library is not encouraging people to become LGBTQ, it is just showing LGBTQ people that the library supports them.



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- F. Jackson Mathews, Reference. Jackson says they got their start at the Coolidge Corner Library, and when they were there, there was an incident where the Pride flag was vandalized. Mathews says they found the vandalized flag, cleaned it up, and put it back up. Mathews says they would do this again and again if necessary. Mathews says they understand the hesitation to put the flags back up, but that it is important to have the flags up and show support for the community.
- G. Sean O'Donnell, Interim Collection Services Supervisor. O'Donnell says he is here for the same reasons as everybody else: that the flags should be up this June to support LGBTQ community. O'Donnell says that when staff found out that it might not happen this year, it was met very negatively and people were very upset because it affects so many people on staff at the library. Beyond the staff, O'Donnell says, this decision also affects members of the community directly because the flag shows them that this is a safe space. And even more broadly than that, O'Donnell goes on to say, he believes it is important to stand with peer institutions because it affects our reputation as a library and what we do here.
- H. Percival Salazar, Co-Chair of the PLB Pride Committee (working at PLB since October 2020). Salazar says that they remember when they first started at PLB, it was a scary time because of Covid, but they felt safe in this community, because they saw the BLM and Pride flags hanging in front of all the Brookline libraries. Salazar says they would like to see this again for June and hopefully for longer.
- I. Tori Gellman, Teen Librarian and member of the Pride Committee at PBL. Gellman says they are here today to speak on behalf of the Pride Committee, a group that is dedicated to planning and executing a full-day celebration surrounding LGBTQ+ identities and Pride during the month of June. Gellman says the committee has been working diligently to ensure that the library and Town of Brookline's dedication towards the LGBTQ community is on full display throughout the month of June and beyond. Gellman says it was representatives from the Pride Committee who were initially the ones who broached the subject of returning the Pride and BLM flags to the front of each branch of the library to align with the library's Pride events and with Juneteenth. Gellman states that it is the mission of the Public Library of Brookline to: *promote discovery, connection, and opportunity for all residents. Through our diverse resources and innovative programs, we aim to enrich the lives of our community members through free access to information in many different media and formats.* Gellman reminded the Board that one of the 2025 goals approved by them is to implement a library-wide strategy for equity and inclusion that will include deliberate practices to increase diversity both within the organization and in our collections, programs, and services. Additionally, Gellman goes on to say that the results of the 2022-23 PLB staff DEI survey showed that more than half of the staff openly identified as not heterosexual. The committee feels strongly, says



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Gellman, that representing the diverse groups that make up the community and staff is vital to achieving our library's mission. Rather than honoring the staff's desires to display both the Pride flag and the BLM flag, the Trustees have chosen to deny this request, citing the Facility and Grounds Policy. Gellman says that this policy does not explicitly prohibit the display of these flags, and was put into effect unilaterally by the previous Library Director, in May of 2023 following the disbanding of the library's Policy Committee. As a result, states Gellman, this policy does not reflect the sentiments or professional beliefs among many past and present library staff members. Gellman concludes by saying that the staff is aware that the Trustees' expressed concern about what message it sends should they agree to have the Pride and BLM flags restored to the front of our buildings, to which she asks, *what message did it send when the Board took them down?* Gellman says the staff feel so strongly about this that they've all devoted extra time and energy outside of their regularly scheduled hours to advocate for themselves and the community. The Pride Committee feel it would be incredibly meaningful to reinstate the Pride and BLM flags in front of the libraries for the month of June, and beyond, as visual proof of the institution's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. It's not enough, ends Gellman, to simply say that the library is a welcoming space to all. She urges the Trustees to align their actions with their words.

- J. Sammy Friedman, Coolidge Corner. Friedman says that keeping these flags up longer than just for Pride month shows that the Trustees care about the staff. Friedman says that others tonight mentioned that libraries have a guise of neutrality, but nothing is truly neutral, and the library needs to take a strong stance to make sure people feel safe. Friedman says that the library needs to be doing more than just putting out a Pride flag, but thinks it is important to maintain solidarity, and that it reflects the people who are working at the library. Friedman concludes by saying that it would be doing a disservice to staff and patrons, especially younger patrons, if the flag is not reinstated.
 1. Discussion ensues about whether or not the standard procedure is to discuss the public comment at this time in the meeting. Burstein answers that the standard procedure is to discuss the public comment during the Director's Report, but that B. Kreusch is here to present, and their time should be respected as well.
 2. Gellman asks if it is okay for her to ask what happens from here [in regards to the concerns brought up by the public].
 - a) Livingston answers that the Library Functions Committee handles policy issues.
 - b) Burstein says he does not want to derail the agenda, but asks to speak as Chair of the Library Functions Committee. Burstein says part of the understanding when the new policy was approved was that the flags



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would come back during the appropriate months, and that the Director would put up the Pride and BLM flags (depending on what type of programming the library had).

- (1) Burstein asks if the Pride flag went up last year (2024); it did not.
- (2) Burstein asks the Board if the plan is to put up the Pride flag this year (2025).
- (3) Savin says that she brought the Pride Committee's request to the previous Board chair to be put on the agenda; the previous chair brought it to the Executive Committee (Savin says she asked about the Pride flag, but not the BLM flag), and the Executive Committee agreed to not put the flag issue on this month's agenda.
- (4) Goleman replies by saying that it did not end up on this month's agenda because it is a policy issue and needed to go back to Library Functions.
- (5) Discussion ensues about wording of the current flag policy—written by the previous Director, and voted into effect by the Board in May of 2023: *Any signs, banners, or flags that do not directly promote the PLB, its programs, collections, and services, shall not be recommended to the Board*, and whether or not the flags would go back up in June.
- (6) Vogt mentions during the discussion that she did not see this issue on any of the agendas or minutes of the Board or Executive Committee meetings even though it was brought to them.
- (7) Vogt says she does not see anything in the current policy that would prevent the flags from going up in June.
- (8) More discussion about the intricacies of policies.
- (9) Burstein makes a motion that the Board ask the Director to put the Pride flag up for the month of June as promotion for our [PLB's] Pride programming; Vanderkay seconds.
- (10) Lohe interjects, mentioning First Amendment rights, and that the main reason to not put up a Pride flag is that anyone,



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including a neo-nazi group, could ask for their flag to be displayed and if the library refused, it could be successfully sued because of First Amendment rights.

- (11) Bloomenthal suggests, unless it would be disrespectful, to include signage underneath the flags, promoting the library's programs; then the flags could be used as symbols to promote programming, and that would meet the criteria of the policy. Bloomenthal says that the library is not running programming promoting neo-nazis, so they shouldn't have to worry about that. Discussion about this suggestion follows.
- (12) Zelkha reminds the Board that a lawsuit could impact the services of the library and the Board needs to be cognizant of that. Livingston concurs and agrees that it is the Board's job to protect the library, and asks for the Library Functions Committee to keep that in mind.
- (13) Vogt brings the discussion back to Burstein's motion. Discussion about this and the current policy.
- (14) Savin states that as Library Director, she shouldn't have to check with the Board before putting up signs promoting programming. Savin says that she brought the flag policy to the Board to discuss because the policy is confusing and should be rehailed to be more clear about what the Board wants. "Previously I thought I needed approval from the Board to put up the Pride flag," says Savin, "but I don't think I need approval from the Board to put up anything that advertises library programs."
- (15) Goleman respectfully disagrees with Savin, saying that a flag is a symbol, not a program, and that the last sentence of the policy states that any flags or banners that do not directly promote library programs may not be recommended to the Board, thus clearly qualifying the Director's discretion on such matters. Discussion ensues about the clarity of the policy and the use of signage.
- (16) Brennan brings up the Meeting Minutes from May 2023. He reads: *With the new policy regarding flags, the Trustees no longer vote on whether or not they're approved. Hirst [the*



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Director at the time] will have the final say on flags. Discussion about this and Board history regarding flags.

- (17) Lohe asks if this question about flag raising was sent to the Town Counsel and whether or not they got a response. Discussion about this.
- (18) Livingston states that the meeting needs to move on; Hung reminds the Board that there is a motion on the table.
- (19) Burstein amends his motion. Burstein moves that the Board asks the Director to put the Pride flag and BLM flag up for the month of June, accompanied by signage that promotes library or town programming for Pride month and Juneteenth. Seconded by Vanderkay.
- (20) Livingston mentions that if we don't have Juneteenth programming, we can not hang the BLM flag. It is mentioned that the Library is closed in honor of Juneteenth. Discussion about this.
- (21) Chanyasulkit mentions that she is sure there will be Juneteenth books displayed as part of library services and that she thinks we are really overthinking this whole discussion.
- (22) Livingston asks Artavia to re-read the amended motion on the table. Vanderkay seconds the motion.
 - (a) Bloomenthal, yea; Burstein, yea; Chanyasulkit, yea; Goleman, yea; Hung, yea; Livingston, yea; Lohe, abstain; Margolis, abstain; Silver, yea; Vanderkay, yea; Vogt, yea; Zelkha, yea. Motion passes.

V. Action Item Report: Promoting E-resources - Bryan Kreusch

- A. Report presented, discussion and questions.

VI. Secretary's Report

- A. Minutes

- 1. Motion to approve the April 8th, 2025 minutes by Lohe; seconded by Vanderkay.



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- a) Bloomenthal, abstain; Burstein, yea; Chanyasulkit, yea; Goleman, yea; Hung, yea; Livingston, yea; Lohe, yea; Margolis, abstain; Silver, abstain; Vanderkay, yea; Vogt, yea; Zelkha, yea. Minutes approved.

B. Correspondence

- 1. N/A

C. Other items

- 1. N/A

VII. Treasurer's Report

A. FY26 Budget Proposal

- 1. Lohe presents FY26 budget

- a) Lohe welcomes questions, comments.
- b) Discussion about how flexible the budget is regarding discretionary funds and conferences.
 - (1) Chanyasulkit says that because of IMLS cuts to United to Libraries and SACCO, the MBLC will not have enough money to pay for Trustees to attend trustee conferences.
 - (2) Lohe moves to accept the \$238k budget; Vogt seconds.
 - (a) All present vote yea. Budget approved.

B. Other

- 1. N/A

VIII. Library Director's Report

A. Other

- 1. Staffing:
 - a) Kreusch is working out of class at the Interim Head of Circulation.
 - b) One day in May the Coolidge Corner branch of the library was forced to close because there were a lot of unexpected call-outs that day and not enough staff to cover.
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2. The Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) conference is in Falmouth next week; Savin will be attending.
3. Margolis notes that in the last section of the Director's Report, the *Freedom of Information Act Requests & Court Orders*, should be entitled Patriot Act, rather than FOIA.
 - a) Discussion about FOIA vs. Patriot Act.
 - b) Savin notes that she will update it to the Patriot Act for their next report.

B. Financial

1. Burstein asks if Savin anticipates needing to go to Town meeting to ask for more money to cover expenses.
 - a) Savin answers no. What is reported in the budget now is 75% spent through the first pay period in May, meaning the budget is spent to the end of April FY25. At that point there are 8.5 weeks left of the year for payroll. The library is expected to spend three more payrolls in May, three in June; recently PLB has bought supplies and materials. There are funds available to cover these expenses..
 2. Vogt asks about the three resignations in April and if there is anything to report on those resignations or on staff morale.
 - a) Savin answers that none of these resignations were related to morale, they were all personal choices.
 - b) A staff survey is being pushed out to all staff which will close a week from today. Savin says they are making progress with the consultant; the process is moving toward an all staff meeting in July where problem solving conversations will take place.
 - c) Vogt says that the Board has heard a lot from public comment tonight and that it's possible there were miscommunications regarding the flag policy.
 - d) Discussion about this.
 - e) Bloomenthal praises the current administration for creating an environment where the staff can speak openly about issues that they feel passionate about. Bloomenthal's sentiment is echoed by Silver and Burstein.
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IX. Trustee Committee Reports

A. Trustee Development Committee

1. The Handbook for New and Continuing Trustees is handed out. Goleman and Lohe explain that it is one of three new initiatives for improving the experience of new trustees, the second being mentoring, and the third being library branch tours. The handbook section summarizing the BOLT committees is pointed out as a prelude to each committee chair describing the work it has accomplished this year. The following committee and chairs reported:
 - a) Finance Committee, Lohe.
 - b) Trustee Development Committee, Lohe.
 - c) Advocacy Committee, Margolis.
 - d) Library Functions, Burstein
 - e) Staff Appreciation Committee, Chanyasulkit.
2. Committee placement requests (for or against) can be sent directly to Livingston
3. Livingston mentions there are also liaison opportunities. Vanderkay is the Friends liaison. Livingston is the Foundation liaison. Each committee has a DEI liaison, and there is a Town Committee liaison, for the CDICR.

B. Library Functions Committee

1. Proposed change to Computer Use Policy
 - a) Burstein presents Computer Use Policy in light of the April 10th incident at the library.
 - (1) The current policy does not have a section on filters stating whether PLB uses them or not. (PLB does not filter.) Discussion follows about why the policy should state directly that the library does not filter any computers, including those used by children. The committee also plans to seek advice about possibly adding filters to children's computers.
 - (2) More in depth discussion to come. Burstein asks for Trustees to please pass along any thoughts or feedback to Burstein or Savin.



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- b) Burstein makes a motion to approve that language be added to the Computer Use Policy stating that the library's computers do not contain filters ; Livingston seconds.
- c) All present vote yea (Vanderkay, absent, left meeting). Motion passes.

X. Old Business

- A. Livingston reminds the Board that it is the Chair's responsibility to represent the Trustee view point with the press. All Board members should redirect questions from the press to Livingston .
- B. Livingston reminds the Board that when they have questions for the library director, it is a best practice to bring them to the Board chair—not the library director. The chair should communicate directly with the director or interim director.
- C. Reminder about the COI law and Open Meeting law.

XI. New Business

- A. None

XII. Remarks for the Good of the Order

- A. None

XIII. Adjourn

- A. Livingston motions to adjourn; Margolis seconds; All present vote yea.
- B. Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.

Minutes drafted by Cary Artavia

If you plan to make a motion or amend the minutes, please give a written copy to the Trustee Secretary. Please contact Library Administration (brkadmin@minlib.net / 617-730-2360) with questions about this meeting.

Attested, June 5, 2025

Judith Goleman, Secretary



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