

Pollard Memorial Board of Trustees – Trustee Minutes

Date:

- o The meeting took place on Wednesday, January 14, 2026.

Location:

- o The meeting was held at Pollard Memorial Library (PML), 401 Merrimack St. Lowell, MA, as a hybrid meeting, both in person and via Zoom.

Opening Business

Meeting call to order

- o The meeting was called to order by Donna Richards at 5:33 pm.

Attendance

Present:	Excused:	Guests:
Bridget Cooley, Library Director Donna Richards, Chair Ellen Anstey, Vice Chair Judith Davidson, Secretary Suzanne Frechette Helen Littlefield Courtney McSparron Jack Moynihan Christopher St. Croix Titiana Tambi	Christine O'Connor	Lisa Golden, Director HHS

Acceptance of / Amendment to Agenda

- o The agenda was unanimously approved on a motion by Judy Davidson, seconded by Helen Littlefield.

Prior Meeting Minutes Approval

- o The meeting minutes from *December 10, 2025* were unanimously accepted, with revisions as requested, on a motion by Donna Richards and seconded by Helen Littlefield. Suzanne Frechette and Courtney McSparrow abstained because they were not present at the December 2025 meeting.

Public Comment Period

- o Public comment time was made available. However, no members of the public were present to make a comment at this meeting.

Current Business

Vote for Officers

- o According to our by-laws we must elect 'officers' at the annual meeting (first meeting of the new year). On a motion made and approved on December 10, 2025, Donna Richards was nominated for Chair, Ellen Anstey for Vice Chair, and Judy Davidson for Secretary, positions to be held for one year.
- o A vote was taken. In order to ensure a quorum, Christopher St. Croix participated in this vote. The vote was unanimous, and each vote was documented.

On-boarding New Members / Strategic Plan Workgroups and Committees

- o Titiana Tambi asked to have this item on the agenda for a group discussion. She asked for clarity about the role of Board members and the activities in which they should be participating. This led to an incredibly rich and far-ranging conversation among new and old Board members that included the current onboarding strategies we are using (Chair Richards has developed a process and materials but is more needed?). Discussion ranged across issues related to the areas of: library trustee role; inner workings of the library itself; an understanding of how the library fits within the city structure and how the library works with city manager and city councilors; a need for knowing how the library is funded; and how the library communicates with the community.
- o There was significant conversation about the upcoming city budget debates and the ways the library could use data to communicate the value of the library to city government officials. Director Cooley raised important examples, and Tambi urged that data be connected to the narratives trustees can build about library value. An ad hoc committee was formed to look at the issues of outreach and advocacy facing the library, with the goal of beginning to develop plans for Trustee focus and work in this area. It will be chaired by McSparron and Tambi. Members will also include Ellen Anstey, Donna Richards, Library Director Bridget Cooley and members of the library staff whom she will select and invite to the discussion.
- o Bridget Cooley was also asked to make a presentation at the next Trustee's meeting on "Budget 101" in which she will describe the ins-and-outs of the library budget with attention to Lowell's budgeting processes.
- o These discussions led to questions about the Trustee's role regarding the Standing Committees described in the By-laws, and integration with the Strategic Plan Committees in which staff are now engaged. Richards shared the spread sheet of Trustees and terms, explaining that standing committees are operating differently than they did before the strategic plan was implemented. In some aspects, the new strategic plan committees took over the old standing committees. Frechette, as an attorney, spoke to the importance of the standing committees from a legal sense. It was agreed that the Chair, Richards, would send a copy of the By-laws to all members of the trustees, and a discussion of the By-laws (in particular the role of Trustees and Standing Committees) would be continued at the next meeting of the trustees.
- o The discussion ended with an acknowledgement of not only how much PML, and all public libraries, have changed over the last few years, but also how the Board of Trustees is reshaping themselves in response to new internal and external demands and needs.

Advocacy - State's role in ensuring all libraries are funded

- o A candidate forum for State Senator to replace Ed Kennedy is planned for January 23, 2026. It has been proposed that the question *“Libraries are being asked to provide more and more for their communities, the Lowell library is a community hub and is integral to learning and services in the city. With the federal assaults on libraries and museums, how do you see the state's role in ensuring all libraries are funded in the way their communities need and deserve?”* be asked of each candidate participating. This is an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of State funding for libraries to participants and attendees.
- o Bridget Cooley, Judy Davidson, and Chris St. Croix plan to attend.

Richards urges trustees who attend to introduce themselves to the candidates and bring talking points from which to engage with them. Today's email from Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners has info about the state budget (to be released 1/28) and talking points. Richards will resend that message to all Trustees. That message emphasizes advocacy at the State level for MBLC funding is vital because it covers:

- **Delivery and other MLS services:** The Massachusetts Library System is funded through MBLC budget line 7000-9401.
- **Statewide programs, resources, and services** from Boston Public Library's Library for the Commonwealth (MBLC budget line 7000-9401).
- **Offsetting the cost of your library's membership in Library Networks.** State funding from MBLC budget line 7000-9506 helps keep network fees affordable.
- **Local aid for your library** through the MBLC's State Aid to Public Libraries Program (MBLC budget line 7000-9501).
- **Statewide services and outreach** provided by MBLC staff (MBLC budget line 9101).
- **Library services for people who have a disability** through the Talking Book Libraries at Perkins (MBLC budget line 7000-9406) and Worcester (MBLC budget line 7000-9402).
- **Letters about Literature, Massachusetts Books Awards, and programs that support literacy,** especially in gateway communities through the Massachusetts Center for the Book. (MBLC budget line 7000-9508).

Funding for the Community *mosaic project* for Bicentennial

- o The Finance Committee of the Pollard Memorial Foundation met on 1.14.26 and would like to financially support the community mosaic project and surrounding events. They will vote on a total amount on 1.21.26 and work with Bridget Cooley to see how she wants the funding.

Update from Strategic Plan Task Groups

- o Culture (Judy Davidson / Courtney McSparron)
 - Committee met on 12/12/25. Building on the November meeting in which the committee re-affirmed its mission and identified three focus areas for their work (staff satisfaction, patron satisfaction, and library attention to issues of diversity), committee members shared the actions they would take in their areas of work responsibility to make positive movement toward these goals.

The other Strategic Plan Task Groups are not currently meeting with Trustees.

- o Advocacy (Donna Richards / Ellen Anstey)

- o City Engagement (Ellen Anstey / Donna Richards)
- o Community Engagement (Courtney McSparron / Christine O'Connor)
- o Planning & Building Usage-Accessibility (Helen Littlefield / Jack Moynihan)
- o Collection Development (Library Staff Only)

Reports

Chairperson's Report

- o Richards described the diverse and interesting programs trustees have access to through the MBLC and urged trustees to avail themselves of these opportunities. She will be sending more information on the MBLC offerings to each of the trustees. She strongly suggested that each trustee put themselves on the mailing list for more information. She explained that even if you were not available for a specific online program, if you sign up you will be sent a link to the recording and will be able to review it later.
- o MBLC listserv request emails from: Alysa A Hayden, MLIS & MS (she/her), Library Advisory Specialist

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners

m: 857.488.6545 | o: 617.725.1860 x250 | 617.725.0140 (Fax)

alysa.hayden@mass.gov (preferred contact) | [MBLC - more info](#)

Committee Reports

- o The Committees, as defined in the current version of the Trustee Bylaws, will meet on an as needed basis. Current trustee assignments are listed. When a committee convenes trustees can volunteer to participate. None of the standing committees have met since the last trustee meeting in December.
 - Governance/Policy Committee (J. Davidson*/S. Frechette/C. O'Connor)
 - Art Committee (___ */Ellen Anstey/Donna Richards)
 - Security/Building/Grounds (Suzanne Frechette*/Helen Littlefield)
 - Outreach (Donna Richards*/Judy Davidson/Helen Littlefield)
 - Nominating/Personnel (___ */Donna Richards/Ellen Anstey)

Director's Report

- o Bridget Cooley prepared the Director's Reports dated January 9, 2026 that was distributed to trustees via email prior to the meeting. Specific discussion arose around numerous issues including:
 - School resource officers from high school are still active in dropping by the library, checking for high school students, and making their presence known.
 - Teen feedback on the changes in the Young Adult area is increasingly positive.
 - PML has made strong connections with Adult Education programs across the city of Lowell.
 - Lowell Philharmonic tied in PML in their latest concert, making library connections across their musical program.
 - Holiday programs included wreath decorating, gingerbread house—two sessions; and a Hanukkah storytime.
 - Plans have been formalized for use of the new technologies that will be placed at the Senior Center and main library.

- Cooley described how the Library One staff initiative is going forward. Offices and workplaces are being moved around. They are looking at streamlining workflows. She is working closely with HR as changes are made.
- Gwen J's last day as Community Outreach Librarian is Friday. Her position will be replaced, but the position will be rewritten before it goes forward to be advertised. Cooley will have to get Union approval for making any changes.
- Currently they are engaged in the roll out of the lighting project.
- Colburn St. sign to be done very soon.
- IMLS grant was re-instated and has been received. These funds will be spent on materials for the World Languages collection.
- The library has seen an increase in legally scheduled parent/child visits. It's free to meet at the library, where other meeting locations require payment. There have been incidents where children/parents are not in compliance with the Library's Behavior Policy. Cooley is assessing and addressing the situation.
- Cooley shares information about the ways library staff are addressing those with most need in the community—from the health and cleanliness needs of the "library regulars" to the significant food needs of the community (the little pantry is getting a lot of use.)

Grants

- o On December 3, 2025, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the federal agency that provides funding for America's libraries, announced that it had **reinstated all of the grants it had previously terminated**, including those to libraries and library organizations across the U.S. FYI: The grant reinstatements come as a direct result of a federal court decision in *Rhode Island v. Trump*, a lawsuit brought against President Trump by 21 states after Trump in March [issued an executive order](#) directing the elimination of IMLS and six other federal agencies. The administration subsequently began mass termination of the agency's grants, paralyzing or otherwise jeopardizing a wide swath of services in libraries across the country.
- o NOTE: Federal uncertainty made it necessary to cut many of the services the MBLC provided with IMLS funds including [accessibility training to provide services for people who are blind and disabled](#), [grants to 18 communities](#) to help improve local library services, collections, and programs; and a [major reduction in statewide research databases](#), heavily used by students. MBLC is working hard to restore these services BUT it will take some time AND there is always the possibility that the ruling that blocked [Executive Order 14238](#) will be appealed.
 - PML received a \$4,000 grant for ELL books to be purchased. These monies were initially cut, but have now been reinstated!

PML Foundation (Donna Richards)

- o Donna Richards provided the following PML Foundation Report.
 - The PMLF did not meet in December.
 - The next meeting is January 21, 2026.

Friends of the PML (Helen Littlefield)

- o Helen Littlefield provided the following Friends Liaison Report.
 - Friends did not meet in January.
 - The Friends' next meeting is Feb 28th 9:30-10:30 in Director's Office.

Old Business

- There was no old business.

New Business (Announcements and Questions)

- There was no new business

Adjournment

- o The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 PM on a motion by Courtney McSparron and seconded by Suzanne Frechette. All in attendance were in favor.
- o Our next meeting is **Wednesday, February 11, 2026**.

APPROVED BY Board of Trustees: 2/11/2026



Goal-Based Director
Report - January 9, 2025.docx