

## Pollard Memorial Board of Trustees – Meeting Minutes

### Date:

- o The meeting took place on Wednesday, February 11, 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 5:35 pm.

### Attendance

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

### Acceptance of / Amendment to Agenda

- o The agenda for *February 11<sup>th</sup>* was unanimously approved on a motion by Courtney McSparron, seconded by Jack Moynihan.

### Prior Meeting Minutes Approval

- o The meeting minutes from *January 14, 2026* were unanimously accepted with only minor technical revisions on a motion by Ellen Anstey and seconded by Courtney McSparron.

### 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

### Budget 101

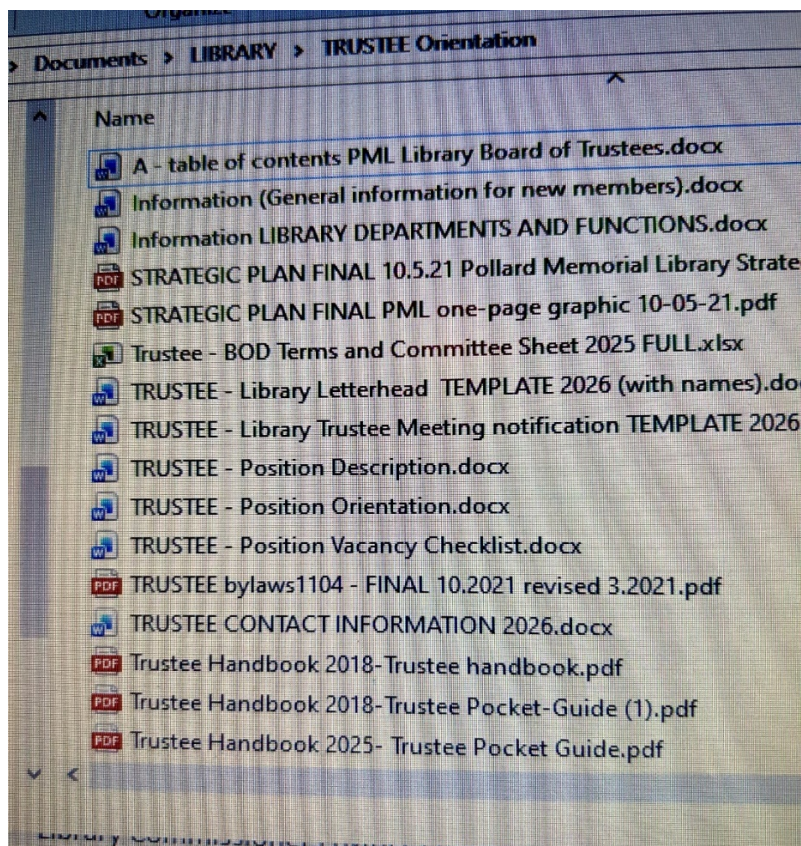
- o Director, Bridget Cooley, presented a very informative review of the FY27 budget process and preparation of the Library's budget. Two sets of documents presented: 1) Budget Overview

2026 which shows City Budget and State Aid spending ; 2) City Line Items/ State Aid Line Items which describes what is covered in each category The discussion covered the differences between the two funding sources and how the director uses both to prepare a coherent budget that covers library expenses in a timely and efficient manner.

- o There was also significant time spent explaining the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR)—how this works, what happens if the MAR is not met, and PML’s overall low funding (of the 347 municipalities in the Commonwealth with certified libraries PML falls in the lowest 5% for per capita funding. The most recent complete data available from the MA Department of Revenue prepared for the MBLC regarding municipal library funding is FY24. PML allocated \$13.31 per capita based on population count. Our neighboring libraries’ FY24 per capita funding: Chelmsford (\$63.64), Tewksbury (\$49.51), Dracut (\$26.74), Westford (\$73.41), Tyngsboro (\$37.29), Andover (\$81.66), Billerica (\$40.36), and Lawrence (\$14.26). The state median is \$44.90. FY25 data available to date shows Lowell is not making significant strides in funding. Just a \$115,000 increase in the city budget would increase spending by \$1.00 per person.
- o Unfortunately, while the city allotment for library services has been slow to rise, patron usage has increased significantly, but there has been no increase in the budget relative to this increase. Director Cooley provided an example of how the Young Adult section of the library has increased in use. A rich discussion followed on the ways PML and the Trustees can ADVOCATE to bring attention to how low funding impacts services.
- o In other issues related to PML funding, it was mentioned that the Health Dept. has hired a new financial officer who has been most helpful assisting Cooley. There are questions about the grant funding—Digital equity, ARPA, etc., and a suggestion to apply for Community Preservation funds. (CPC funds) as these funds are first and foremost for municipal needs. (Art restoration, building).

### On-boarding New Members

- o At last month’s meeting we acknowledged not only how much PML, and all public libraries, have changed over the last few years, but also how the Board of Trustees are reshaping themselves in response to new internal and external demands and needs. It became clear that the first step to ‘on-board’ a new member is to prepare them with the necessary introductory information.
  - We will create an ad hoc committee to review current onboarding strategies, the process and materials. We discussed including:
    - 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 Richards has put introductory materials in a folder, but ultimately these should be on a shared drive that all can access.



- o Christopher St. Croix volunteered to work on the committee and is willing to chair. In locating these materials online in a central location, we will need to be clear on city restrictions regarding a central repository and what software content management programs can be used for everyone to get at the same items.
- o We acknowledge the wonderful quality of the materials created by Richards, recognizing that these will serve as the basis for the next steps. However, the group is also concerned about teaching new trustees about “the unsaid things.”

### Advocacy - Updates

- o Courtney McSparron and Titiana Tambi will be meeting on Friday following this meeting to get started on a proposal/plan for the formation of an ad hoc committee to address what is needed *and* how to advocate for the PML. They will have a report for the March 2026 meeting.
- o On Wednesday, January 28, 2026, Governor Maura Healey released her proposal for the FY2027 budget. The \$62.8 billion budget includes a **2% increase** for all Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) budget lines.
- o Although the current Federal Administration sought to dismantle IMLS AND proposed eliminating funding for libraries - Congress passed a **\$1.4 million increase** in funding for library programs run by IMLS and on February 3<sup>rd</sup> President Trump signed the appropriations bills that included this *increase* in federal funding for libraries. **Thanks to advocates**, advocates wrote letters, sent emails, made phone calls, and invited elected officials to visit their libraries, and went to congress ..... and that advocacy produced results.

- o November 14, 2025 U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. McConnell ruled in favor of 21 state attorneys general suing Donald Trump over the dismantling of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and several other small federal agencies. This permanent injunction means that the Trump administration cannot do further harm to the IMLS. **The Trump Administration is appealing the ruling against them.**

### Review of PML Board of Trustees Bylaws

- o We returned to our discussion about the Trustee Bylaws and the best ways to review and revise to insure the bylaws are up-to-date and supporting Board functioning.
- o Our plan is for all Trustees to review the Bylaws on their own. Richards will send the Bylaws in Word format, each Trustee can make revisions in preparation for the full board to discuss at the March meeting.

### Update from Strategic Plan Task Groups

- o Culture (Judy Davidson / Courtney McSparron)
  - Committee met on 2/6/26 and addressed:
    - Updates to the methods discussion of the last culture committee meeting including, “no, but” project, Niche Academy, how to capture reference questions in gimlet. How to capture community feedback with the book mobile, using gimlet to develop a bank of questions and answers?
    - Katelyn Baker presented methods designed to meet the diversity objective of the committee. There was discussion of what a full diversity assessment of PML might entail.
- o No trustees met with the other library Strategic Plan groups (City Engagement, Community Engagement, Planning & Building Usage-Accessibility, Collection Development).

## Reports

### Chairperson’s Report

- o Richards has submitted requested trustee contact information to the Massachusetts Library System.
- o On January 23<sup>rd</sup> Director Cooley sent Olivia Hart-Paulson, City Solicitor, 28 attachments of requested information regarding the open meeting law complaint submitted by Laura Ortiz in June 2025.
- o Niche Academy presented a webinar today, February 11<sup>th</sup>, entitled *Library Trustees and Advocacy*. This presentation had a broader scope than what was presented in trustee orientation, as this was designed for a mixed audience of library advocates (including Friends and Foundation board members) and people interacting with library advocates (like Directors and ADs) in mind.
- o FYI - Introduction/Overview of the State Aid Program - Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am. Register on the MBLC website.
  - This session is geared towards new and/or acting directors to provide an introduction to and overview of the State Aid to Public Libraries program and the requirements that need to be met in order to qualify for State Aid to Public Libraries funds. This is **not** a workshop about how to fill out the surveys/forms.

## 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.
  - 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)
- o No committee has met at this time.

## Director's Report

- o Bridget Cooley prepared Director's Report dated February 6, 2026 which was distributed to trustees via email prior to the meeting. Specific discussion arose around numerous issues including:
  - Cooley asked the staff to share the love they feel about working at the library. She shared these comments from a staff meeting:
    - o The lighting project is lovely and showcases the library.
    - o Staff are working well as a team with the right attitude, initiative, and more.
    - o We are offering a greater diversity of resources and collections.
    - o We have been getting good feedback from teens and other patrons about how busy, engaged, etc. the library is.
    - o We get to work in a beautiful old building.
    - o Working together has been beneficial to us.
    - o Amazed at what we have accomplished and where we are going.
    - o I appreciate seeing the friendships made at the library - 2 little girls met up and now have a standing playdate at the library.
    - o Claire (YA librarian) and the YA area of the library are amazing, and it's great to see teens hanging out productively during the day.
    - o We've had so many little quality of life improvements that make us look vibrant and new (i.e. new staff picks bookmarks, changing a layout, tools available, etc.
    - o Staff now have ownership of projects and tasks and we can make changes that benefit the library.
    - o The fact that we are about to add a new homeschool group meetup.
    - o Patrons come in and share how much they love the library.
    - o Staff love that they get to help people every day.
    - o People are appreciative of (and sometimes surprised by) the good customer service that we offer. As we demonstrate a lot of kindness and patience helping to connect them to services or resolve their issues.
  - The Director's Report also included a list of the Accomplishments for the calendar year – 2025. It is an incredible list, illustrating the amazing productivity of PML staff. Trustees suggested that Director's annual review be posted on the library web page.
  - Library Lovers Month is coming up. Please consider how you can advocate for the library. Feel free to grab info from the library web page.
  - There is a meeting with Massachusetts Ability group scheduled. PML will make a display related to disabilities.
  - Regarding the Lowell school district: Home Schoolers meet-up has been scheduled and is getting good press.

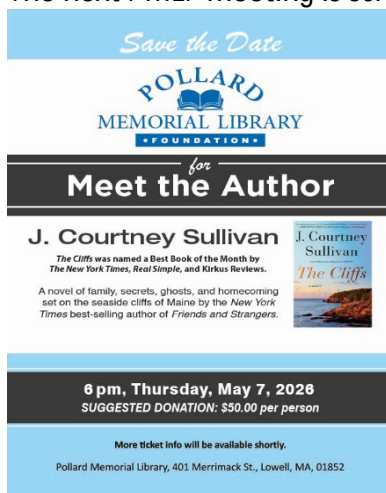
- Bi-centennial discussions are flourishing in many arenas; Lala Books and Lowell Philharmonic, included. The Friends will provide some sponsorship. Storytelling and sounds of the city being touted.
- The January programs were very well received.
- PML is making use of another UMASS Lowell digital navigator to help with technology issues, as well as an Intern from UMass Lowell who is helping with the Art documentation.
- Cooley received training on the new #311 training from the City.
- There has been a resignation of a staff member, and the position description has been sent to HR for review with new information about the position tasks.
- Phase 2 of lighting project is underway.
- There have been some minor incidents with some visitors.
- Cooley describes her emphasis on new, clean book/material copies when possible. She believes this is important to show patrons PML care about the materials.
- Discussion of Library bling includes: Book mobile stickers and a suggestion for a Christmas Tree ornament of the book mobile.

## Grants

- o No grants under discussion.

## PML Foundation (Donna Richards)

- o Donna Richards provided the following PML Foundation Report.
  - The PMLF met on January 21, 2026. The board approved to financially support the community mosaic project and surrounding events.
  - Preparation has begun for the Annual Meet the Author night – Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm – J. Courtney Sullivan – her most recent novel is *The Cliffs* (Reece's Book Club), she also wrote *Friends and Strangers* (Read with Jenna Book Club), *Saints for All Seasons* and *Maine ....* to name a few.
  - The next PMLF meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2026.



### Friends of the PML (Helen Littlefield)

- o Helen Littlefield provided the following Friends Liaison Report.
  - Next meeting 2/28 at 9:15am in library director's office.

### Old Business

- o Patron/Staff safety in the event of police or federal agents entering the building *without* being requested.
  - The Pollard Memorial Library DOES have a POLICY which clearly outlines the steps to be taken in the event of ICE agents are in the building. FYI - Areas open to the general public are open to police/agents, and they may enter without a warrant. In doing so, the police/agents must observe the same rules of any members of the public.

### New Business (Announcements and Questions )

- o Cooley will not be available for the 3/11 (March) Trustee meeting.
  - Trustees will meet without her and the focus will be the Trustee Bylaws.

### Adjournment

- o The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM on a motion by Donna Richards and seconded by Jack Moynihan. All in attendance were in favor.
- o Our next meeting is **Wednesday, March 11, 2026**.

**APPROVED: 3.11.26 PML BOARD of TRUSTEES**



Goal-Based Director  
Report - February 6, 2026.docx