

Board of Library Trustees Art Committee Minutes

The Art Committee of the Board of Library Trustees met on Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 2:30 p.m. at the Lawler Branch of the New Bedford Free Public Library.

Present: Ann O’Leary, Chair
Lee Blake
Carl Cruz
Diana Henry
Olivia Melo, Library Director
Alexandra Copeland, Art Curator
Christina Connelly, Chief Operating Officer, City of New Bedford
Mikaela McDermott, City Solicitor
Elizabeth Treadup-Pio, Assitant City Solicitor

Ms. O’Leary called the meeting to order at 2:39 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

New Bedford Art Museum Expansion Project

Olivia introduced the representatives from the Mayor’s Office and Solicitor’s Office who were present to review an email sent on April 30th requesting a statement of intent between the Library Trustees and NBAM/Artworks for developing a Memorandum of Understanding for exhibiting City Art at the Museum upon its renovation and expansion to the 2nd floor. The Board of Trustees tabled this discussion at their regular monthly meeting on May 25th until the Art Committee could meet to have a more in-depth discussion with the City Solicitor present.

Topics of discussion included art museum expansion project, its plan for additional space with museum quality conditions, the current arrangement of the city gallery exhibiting city art, curated by Library Art Curator, Allie Copeland, and availability of art to display in larger space as 99% of the art under the care of the Library Art Curator is already on exhibited throughout the library with free access to all. Concern over charging residents to view art from the Free Public Library was shared by all members of the committee and they are committed to ensuring free access to the city art.

The preliminary statement of intent drawn up by City Solicitor, Mikaela McDermott, was reviewed and revised with the inclusion of the words ‘*selection*’ and ‘*rotating*’ and additional sentence specifying ‘*residents of the city could view, at no charge, exhibits at NBAM that include works from the collection*’.

Ms. Melo and Ms. Copeland agreed the revised statement incorporated the mission of public libraries which display art. Mr. Cruz added, as examples, the Boston Public Library and the New York Public Library, who own and display extensive and valuable art collections, dispelling any misconception that a public library is not an acceptable space for art collections.

Ms. Henry asked Ms. McDermott to draw out the preliminary statement with the above noted revisions, as a general statement of intent, not a Memorandum of Understanding. The Art Committee voted to recommend the following statement to the full Board of Trustees for a vote.

The New Bedford Library Board of Trustees ("Board") wishes to enter into an arrangement with the New Bedford Art Museum ("NBAM") in which the NBAM displays a selection of the New Bedford Library's art collection ("Collection") on a rotating basis at NBAM's location at 608 Pleasant Street. The Board has asked the city's legal department to explore how such an arrangement could work, consistent with state law. Any such arrangement would guarantee that residents of the city could view at no charge exhibits at NBAM that include works from the Collection.

Ms. Henry made the motion to recommend the statement above to the full Board; seconded by Mr. Cruz, unanimously approved by all members of the Art Committee.

Ms. Melo will prepare a letter to be sent to the Art Museum with the statement as written on library letterhead once it is approved by the full Board at their meeting, immediately following the Art Committee meeting, if it is approved.

James Arnold Bust Loan Request

Ms. Copeland presented a loan request received from the James Arnold Mansion to borrow the library's original bust and its stand and to have a 3D copy made for permanent display at the Mansion. She read the library's borrowing policy and showed that the request does comply with this policy. Ms. Copeland stated a few concerns, including that the sculpture does show some cracking and its stand is not level. She added that it's preferable that the two pieces be moved by professional art movers rather than the city.

Ms. Copeland asked that the Art Committee support her going forward with discussion of the loan request with the individuals requesting it. Mr. Cruz made the motion; seconded by Ms. Henry, unanimously approved by all members of the Art Committee.

Next meeting to be scheduled at a later date.

Meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.