



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Library Committee

Councillor Winslow, Chair
Councillor Condon
Councillor Linehan
Councillor Taylor

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

5:30 PM

City Hall, Room 105
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Watch the meeting with Teams: <https://tinyurl.com/5a9pvesf>

Roll Call

Present: 4 - Stephen Winslow, Paul Condon, Amanda Linehan and Ari Taylor

Also Present: Councillors Colon Hayes, Luong, McDonald, O'Malley
Maria Luise-Special Assistant to the Mayor
Alicia McNeil-City Solicitor
Prasanna Rajasekaran
Carol Ann Desiderio-City Clerk

Councillor Winslow called the meeting to order at 5:39 PM.
There will be audio and video of this meeting via Teams.

Minutes to be Approved

Business

The Library Committee will discuss the status of the lawsuit and next steps moving forward.

Councillor Winslow explained there was a lawsuit involving a Council President and the Library Board of Trustees and also Councillor O'Malley. He asked Prasanna, Assistant City Solicitor to give us the status of that right now.

Prasanna explained that the status is that the lawsuit was dismissed with prejudice. It was originally filed by Councillor O'Malley in their capacity as Council President, but after O'Malley was removed as President and Councillor Linehan became president, and on behalf of the City Council asked that the case be dismissed. The city solicitor's office withdrew as counsel in the case, leading to the dismissal of the case. He clarified for the committee members that 'standing' refers to the legal ability to file a lawsuit, and since O'Malley was no longer Council President, they could not pursue the case on behalf of the City Council, though they could potentially file a suit in their personal capacity. He noted that with the dismissal, the City Council is no longer directly involved in the lawsuit, and future legal actions would be in an individual rather than official capacity.

Councillor Winslow said back in June the Council approved creation of this committee to try to reach out to the library trustees to have a discussion about what the role of the Council President is with the Library Board of Trustees in a less formal form. Because

the suit continued Councillor Winslow as Chair of this committee waited to have the first meeting of the newly formed Library Committee but now we can do that. He discussed the KP Law memo, which provided the trustees' interpretation of the Council President and Mayor's roles, and acknowledged the need for the Council to develop its own understanding and expectations. We heard from the community we didn't think that a lawsuit was the way to pursue this and a dialogue with the Councillors and Library Board of Trustees was a better way to approach it. We should go back and look at some of the documents and referenced the Pine Banks Trust and the original intent of the trust's creators, emphasizing the collaborative relationship envisioned between the city, mayor, and trustees, and the importance of maintaining that spirit. He tries to think back to what Elisha Converse in making a large donation thought and the trust is always the intent of the trustees and he feels the intent was a collaborative with the Trustees and the City and light collaboration with the Mayor and the Council. He feels they would not have made the City Council President and Mayor ex-officio members if there wasn't a decision to have a partnership collaboration.

Council President Linehan said she thinks that all sounds great and has been attending the Library Board of Trustees meeting and agreed to reach out to the library director and trustees' chair to invite them to the next meeting to initiate further dialogue, aiming to clarify boundaries and roles in a collegial manner. She would like to set goals and suggested creating a written framework or document outlining the roles and responsibilities of the Council President and trustees, to provide clarity and prevent future confusion. Her experience on the Board is that they are a pretty collegiate group and they have been welcoming and transparent thus far. They have been having light short meetings the past couple of months that she has been attending.

Councillor Condon said when he was Council President and an ex-officio member of the Library Board of Trustees unless it was a tied vote he wouldn't vote. He feels he didn't need to get involved they are self sufficient. We have been very fortunate over the years to have people who are very good. He feels that people he respects have a lot of respect for the Library Director and the way she runs the ship.

Councillor Taylor said she thinks it will be good to have clarification of boundaries. There has been a lot of information out there that is confusing and nothing is set and clear which causes a lot of innuendo and negativity. She feels it would be good to clarify the rules of the Library, the Council and the Council President what's expected of us and what the boundaries are. An explanation of the Council and Council President She feels this is a good place moving forward and looks forward to meeting with Dora and the Library Trustees.

Councillor Winslow he agrees to have that clarity and dialogue. He also mentioned we just updated our Charter and sometimes you update legal documents which would be good collegiate discussion of how we make the library work better. Also transparency of the Library Finances what are the checks and balance and do they need any help or assistance. Asking what are the standards of other boards and are we meeting their standards. He said the Library is a significant department. As Council President he also attended meetings and saw a very functioning Library Board of Trustees. He suggested the committee should educate itself on the financial management standards applied by other library boards and assess whether the local trustees are meeting those standards. We are getting pressed about how we spend our money and we are getting questioned about how the Council oversees how the City spends their money. He emphasized that one of the City Council's roles is to scrutinize how public money is spent, especially in significant departments like the library, and to respond to public inquiries about financial oversight.

Councillor McDonald appreciates starting with an open hand of discussion and dialogue between the library board and the Council and wouldn't want the Council to presume what that might be. The two things besides meeting to build some better respect and repore and relationship between the library board and the Council is I think ultimately somewhere, some better written understanding of this is our job and this is their job there isn't a lot of clarity about what the underlying relationship is supposed to be. This is not the first priority but it will be helpful to get to that so that and we can point to the future where we are not back here in another two years with a different Council President and a different set of concerns and feels that is worth exploring. Also this whole relationship is confusing to the general public people assume the Library is the City and the City is the Library like most cities and towns but that is not the case here. Finding the appropriate information about the library and making sure there is a general sense of the transparency and high level that the City provides about city pieces the city provides about city departments are also available for the library making sure there's an understanding of how to make sure people get access to that information.

Councillor Colon Hayes is attending this meeting to see what the goals are and agrees to have something more updated in writing and make it clear what the role of the ex-officio rights of the Council President are. Also some clarification of only voting in the case of a tie.

Councillor O'Malley appreciates the open intention of clarifying the relationship of the ex-officio Council President and the Library Board of Trustees and clarified without rehashing a lot of it but the history does need to be rehashed the Library started in City Hall but the Council voted to make it it's own entity and the first three trustees were City Officials who populating this quorum then they became two and they stopped participating meetings why not sure, do not have the records. He understands it's not part of the City of Malden but similar to the relationship we had with the MHA and MRA. The City does not have an archive anymore when we built the new city hall. He was a sponsor for the library to build a new archive in their basement alot of records were transferred to 110 Pleasant Street and the Oak Grove Community Center. Personally he feels the library would be a great place for our public records but only if the public has access to them. He looks forward to clarifying a relationship and feels this is the right way to go about this and looks forward to purchasing it.

Councillor Linehan agrees with everything Councillor O'Malley just said and I just wanted to piggyback and say that one of the things we also identified when we set up the committee was that we were going to have an action item that just listed the steps we were going to take and I I think we should do that. We should document what we want to do in writing listing some of those goals. I think that'd be great.

Councillor Winslow will review the notes and feels meeting one more time and then reach out to Dora and start a discussion.

Councillor Luong feels if everyone comes in with the best of intentions the outcome will be positive and said Councillor Taylor hit the nail on the head in defining everybody's goals, defining what everybody's interpretation of ex-officio actually is. And where does our power land, I think is super important and I look forward to seeing what you all come up with.

David Ball, Constituent asked for transparency regarding legal fees and the financial impact of litigation on city resources, especially in light of potential layoffs and budget constraints. He argued that lawsuits are not conducive to building community,

suggesting that open dialogue and collaboration are preferable to legal action in resolving disputes between the Council and library trustees.

Councillor Winslow and the committee agreed to create a written list of action items and goals for the committee, aiming to provide structure and clarity for future work. They plan to reach out to the library director and trustees' chair once the director returns, to begin discussions on clarifying roles and improving collaboration.

Other Business

Adjournment

A motion was made by Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Condon, that this meeting be adjourned 6:12 PM. The motion carried unanimously.

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