Friends of the Bigelow Free Public Library By-laws

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Revised and approved on June 20, 2024

Article I Name and Organization

The name of the organization shall be “The Friends of the Bigelow Free Public Library,” also known as The Friends.

It shall be a non-profit, non-sectarian, and non-political organization that operates in full compliance with IRS Code Section 501 (c) (3) and Chapter 180 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

Article II Mission and Purpose

Section 1. Mission

The Friends of the Bigelow Free Public Library supports the Bigelow Library’s mission to provide opportunities to explore, learn, create, and connect across the community. The dedication of the Friends allows the Bigelow Library to offer programs and services otherwise beyond its town funding, and helps assure our library's continuing excellence.

Section 2. Purpose

The Friends recognizes the library as a valuable and indispensable resource to the community and appreciates the special role it plays as a place where all are welcome and served. We support the library’s efforts to meet the changing information and resource needs of people of all ages in the community.

Section 3. Goals

To accomplish our mission, the Friends has the following goals:

- Build a membership that supports the library
- Encourage the use of library services
- Expand the resources of the library through fundraising
- Sponsor programs and cultural activities for children and adults

Article III Membership

Membership is open to any individual, family, organization or business that shares the Friends mission and is current with their dues (aka “active members”). A special Student membership category is open to students, aged 14 – 21, who do volunteer work with the Friends in lieu of dues during a 12-month period (aka “Student members”).

Section 1. Membership Categories and Dues

The Executive Committee shall establish the membership categories and corresponding annual dues. Changes to membership categories and/or dues will take effect at the start of the fiscal year and will be announced at the Annual Meeting.

Section 2. Membership Year

Members may join or renew at any point in the fiscal year, and their membership will be active for 12 months from the time they join or renew. Membership renewal dues are collected at least twice a year (e.g., May and October) to cover any members whose membership has passed the one-year mark.

Section 3. Membership Privileges

Members are entitled to attend all Friends meetings and may hold office and/or serve on committees. Each active member shall have one vote at the annual meeting. Student members are entitled to attend all Friends meetings and serve on committees but may not vote or hold office.

Section 4. Annual Membership Meeting

The Organization shall hold its Annual meeting in June, in preparation of the beginning of the fiscal year (hereinafter defined as July 1st to June 30th), which runs concurrently with the Town of Clinton. The purpose of this meeting shall be to elect officers when necessary, to receive various reports, and to enact other business. Public notice shall be posted in the library and online.

Section 5. Voting at Annual Meeting

Non-Board serving Friends members are entitled to vote for the slate presented by the Executive Board at the Annual Meeting and to vote on other business raised at the meeting. Each active member present shall be entitled to one vote. Voice votes are acceptable unless a voting member specifically requests a show of hands. No proxies allowed. Student members may attend the Annual Meeting but do not have voting privileges.

Article IV Governing Body

Section 1. Executive Board

The Executive Board shall be the governing body of the Friends, direct all its affairs, and administer all its funds. The Officers shall be President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and two (2) Members at large. Officers must be current dues-paying members of the organization. One officer may hold more than one office concurrently. The Library Director, or their designee, shall be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee.

Section 2. Executive Board Meetings

Section 2.1. Meetings of the Friends shall be held each month. Each Board member is entitled to one vote at meetings. Board members are expected to attend all meetings, with allowances for occasional absences for cause. If an officer fails to attend three (3) consecutive board meetings, the Executive Board may appoint a replacement to serve until the next election.

Section 2.2. Additional Executive Board meetings may be held as directed by the President, or as requested by another Executive Board member.

Section 2.3. Notice of the time and place of each meeting, including an agenda, shall be given not less than one week before the meeting.

Section 3. Quorum

A majority (more than half) of the Executive Board shall constitute a quorum.

Section 4. Voting

Each member of the Executive Board shall have one vote for Friends business. Unless otherwise specified herein, issues requiring a vote to be taken shall require a simple majority of board members present to pass. Voice votes are acceptable unless a voting member specifically requests a count. No proxies allowed.

Section 5. Committees

The Board shall have the authority to appoint committees to assist in carrying out the goals of The Friends. Committee chairs shall be appointed by the President (with the approval of the Board). The President is an ex-officio member of all committees.

Section 6. Duties

Section 6.1 The duties of the officers shall be:

- President – shall preside at all meetings of the Executive Board and may represent The Friends at private and public activities.
- Vice President – shall fulfill all the duties of the President in their absence and perform such duties as requested by the President.
- Secretary – shall keep and submit an accurate record of all meetings, and conduct correspondence as required.
- Treasurer – shall maintain an accurate record of all funds received and disbursed and submit a financial report to the Executive Committee each quarter; shall issue a summary Financial Report at the annual meeting based on the fiscal year activities; shall file all state and federal tax forms and the annual report to the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General.
- Members at Large – shall advise the Executive Board and take on special projects as needed.

Section 6.2 All officers and chairs shall immediately deliver to their successors upon relinquishing office, all records, correspondence, and properties belonging to The Friends.

Section 7. Nominations to the Executive Board

Officers shall be nominated by the Executive Board at least one month prior to the annual membership meeting. Nominations shall be submitted to the membership with the consent of the nominees with the announcement of the annual membership meeting. All nominees must be current dues paying members of the organization at the time of nomination.

Section 8. Elections of Officers to the Executive Board

Officers shall be elected by a majority vote of those present at the annual meeting for a term of two (2) years. All officers may serve up to a maximum of three (3) consecutive terms. No proxies are allowed.

Section 9. Vacancies

Vacancies on the Executive Board shall be filled by appointment by an absolute majority of the remaining Executive Board and shall serve until the next annual meeting. Absolute majority means more than half of all board members currently serving.

Article V. Fiscal Management

Section 1. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the organization shall start on July 1 and end on June 30.

Section 2. Funds

Activities of The Friends shall be self-supporting. All funds accrued by the Friends organization shall be deposited into the account of "The Friends of the Bigelow Free Public Library" and shall be disbursed by the Treasurer of the Friends as authorized by the Executive Board to be used for the purposes as described in Article II (Mission & Purpose). All financial requests must be received in writing and used for the purposes stated in Article II. Funds will be disbursed by the Treasurer upon approval of the request by the Executive Board. A copy of the purchase order and/or invoice for purchase shall be submitted to the Treasurer upon receipt of the purchase.

Section 3. Financial Report

The Treasurer shall make a financial report at the Annual Meeting of the Friends.

Section 4. Liability

No member of the Friends organization shall be liable except for unpaid dues; and no personal liability shall in any event be attached to any member in connection with any of its undertakings.

Article VI. Amendments to the By-laws

Amendments to these by-laws may be proposed at any Executive Board meeting. Amendments shall pass by a two-thirds majority vote at an annual membership meeting.

Article VII. Dissolution

Section 1. Method

Upon proper written notification from the Executive Board, a meeting of the general membership may be held to dissolve the Friends. A majority of the present members may dissolve The Friends provided all expenses have been met and that the Treasurer certifies that no outstanding bills remain.

Section 2. Net Earnings

No part of the net earnings shall inure to the benefit of any individual.

Section 3. Distribution of Assets

Upon the dissolution of the organization, assets shall be distributed for tax exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future tax code, to the Bigelow Free Public Library, Clinton, MA.