

Mohawk Valley Library System  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
June 17, 2021

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Jane Borrelli, Deb Escobar, Katherine Hawkins, Susan London, Joanne Mickle, Eleanor Spencer, Mary Salluzzo (joined late), Felicia Spivey, Helen Thomas, and Eric Trahan, Director

**EXCUSED:** Rosemary Barger, Rebecca Sokol, Christine Witkowski

**GUESTS:** Sharon O'Brien, Kate Clingan, Kim Zimmer (COB)

**Call to Order** President Jane Borrelli called the meeting to order at 9:33

First order of business is to fill Eleanor Spencer's Schoharie County seat on the board.

**MOTION:** To elect Susan London to represent Schoharie County on the MVLS Board, with a five-year term expiring June 2026

Hawkins/Thomas. Ayes – All. Nays – none.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

On behalf of the nominating committee, Deb Escobar presented the slate of nominees for Board Officers (Due to some technical issues, Eric Trahan also presented)

President: Jane Borrelli  
Vice President: Katherine Hawkins  
Treasurer: Sally Rappa  
Secretary: Joanne Mickle

**MOTION:** To accept the officer slate as presented  
Thomas/Escobar. Ayes – All. Nays – none.

**Consideration of Minutes:** Minutes from May 19, 2021 and April 15, 2021 were presented.

**MOTION:** To accept the minutes from May 19, 2021 and April 15, 2021 as presented  
Mickle/Hawkins. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

The **Director's Report** for April/May was distributed before the meeting.

- Eric reported some good news – he received notice on Friday that our PPP Loan was forgiven. MVLS also has everything is in place for State Aid payments to be made for 2021. While we still may not see these payments anytime soon, all steps on our end have been taken. We are also expecting our CARES Act funding soon, and we've heard that other library systems have begun receiving theirs. Additional Federal Aid should

also be available to library systems from American Rescue Plan funding, but we don't yet know how much or what the application process will be.

- Eric brought up the idea of changing our bylaws to move when our Annual Meeting takes place (as discussed during the April board meeting), as well as changing the trustee term to be on a calendar year basis. In reviewing the bylaws, Eric finds it would be a fairly simple change, which he could make and present at the next meeting. These changes would be presented in July and then would be acted on in September.
- Eric also wanted to address the situation with the Schoharie library. At the beginning of this month, the Schoharie Board voted to terminate their director, Don LaPlant, effective immediately, leaving the library with almost no staff and severely disrupting its hours. This transition has been very time-consuming and disruptive for staff at MVLS, particularly Eric and Sharon O'Brien, who has to make a lot of adjustments in Polaris when any library has a sudden change in their hours.
- Katherine Hawkins would like to commend Eric for the open communication about this situation with the MVLS Board. She read articles in the Cobleskill Times-Journal and appreciates the community support the former director is getting. She's concerned about what the reason for his firing might be and would prefer if those reasons would be made public, but trusts the Schoharie Board to do the right thing for the library.
- Helen Thomas comments that while she has a good relationship with her board, she is shocked that something like this could have happened in a neighboring community. She doesn't understand why the board handled it the way that they did, and thinks filling this position is going to be very difficult.
- Joanne Mickle asks, could this sort of staffing shortage could happen at our other small libraries if something were to happen to their directors? Eric says several libraries have moved away from the one-person library model for this reason, but sometimes it takes some sort of major upheaval to be a catalyst for change. The Schoharie library had recently hired a part-time clerk, but she has resigned as the position no longer fit the requirements of her graduate school internship (supervision by a degree-holding librarian). Kim Zimmer, director of the Cobleskill library, comments that she has been helping this clerk find a new internship, possibly at Cobleskill.
- Eric says that when he does trustee training, he emphasizes that the word "trust" is there for a reason - the community has put their trust in you as a trustee to run their library and that should be respected. Even where trustees are unelected, they are still, ultimately, answerable to their community. Susan mentions that the article in the Times-Journal showed a lot of support for the former director from community members, and she was surprised that the board would unanimously vote to remove him, given his level of community support. She worked with him at SUNY Cobleskill and says he was respected there. She asks, how are board members selected if they are not elected? Eric says it is a self-perpetuating board where the sitting board members select

the new ones. That's the case for most of our Association libraries, although Middleburgh has moved to an elected board.

- Joanne asks if library directors or library boards have firing clauses in their contracts. Eric says most directors do not have contracts, so it just depends on the personnel policies of the library. We are unaware of what Schoharie's personnel policies are at this time.

**Directors Council Report** Helen Thomas presented. The Directors Council met on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. They discussed new CDC recommendations, although with the Governor lifting most COVID-19 restrictions yesterday, many of those discussions have now changed. The Council also discussed the future of DVDs and audiobooks in our libraries, as well as self-registration. The Council will not meet in July, their next meeting is in August.

### **Privilege of the Floor**

- Kim wanted to thank MVLS for helping with the situation in Schoharie and has questions about how Schoharie's limited hours will be affecting their neighboring libraries. Will libraries still be sharing items with Schoharie/will they be sharing items with other libraries? Sharon says she has stopped all holds being shipped to Schoharie and sent any items that had been on their way back to their home libraries. No other library's materials will be going to Schoharie at this time. Currently, they only have hours posted for next Monday (6/21), and therefore the library will be "closed" in Polaris as of Tuesday. On Monday, Sharon will be going to Schoharie to pull all of the MVLS rotating collection items as well as some items that belong to Johnstown.
- Kim and Helen have had patrons coming to their libraries with a lot of questions that they don't have answers to. They are concerned that most Schoharie patrons are unaware what is happening. Helen asks how to let people know that they can change their holds to other libraries in the area. Sharon has communicated with anyone who has emailed through Polaris and told them to place holds for other libraries. If the Schoharie Board does not provide a message for us to share, we will be crafting a message to send out to neighboring libraries. Kim and Helen say they are happy to present whatever message Schoharie's board puts out because they are not looking to misrepresent anything to patrons, but there's been no clear message from the board, in the newspaper or elsewhere.
- Eric will try to develop our own statement so that library patrons know what to do. Helen thinks this is not a good look for libraries. Susan asks if it would be appropriate for MVLS to encourage the Schoharie board to release a statement. Eric agrees that that would be the next step.

**Treasurer's Report** Eric presented the statements of Financial Position and Payment Schedules for April and May 2021. Eric notes that in either July or September we will have budget amendments to discuss.

**Statements of Financial Position:**

**MOTION:** To accept for audit the Statements of Financial Position for April and May 2021 Salluzzo/London. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

**Payment Schedules:**

**MOTION:** To approve Payment Schedule #4 for April in the amount of \$98,052.56 and Payment Schedule #5 for May in the amount of \$134,642.97  
Hawkins/London. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**AUDIT AND FINANCE** Nothing to report

**AWARDS** Joanne thanked Eric for going to Schoharie and Schenectady to present this year's awards in person.

**BUILDING AND EQUIPMENT** Nothing to report

**COMMUNICATIONS** Nothing to report

**LIBRARY SERVICES** Committee meeting will be at the end of August or beginning of September

**NOMINATING** We have asked April Davies to fill the Schoharie County seat vacated by Christina Knee.

**MOTION:** To elect April Davies to represent Schoharie County on the MVLS Board, with a term starting now and expiring June 2025

Hawkins/London. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

There remains one MVLS Board seat open, in Fulton County.

**PERSONNEL** Nothing to report

**JOINT AUTOMATION COUNCIL** There was a meeting in May, the next meeting is July 14. JA continues to work on the development of patron self-registration for e-cards. The current plan is for a few libraries to start trying it to work out any problems, then once any issues have been ironed out, it will open up to everyone.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**REOPENING UPDATE** Eric says there is not much to report. With most COVID restrictions dropping this week, the current message is that you can do almost everything, although unvaccinated people still have a mask mandate. Some libraries are still requiring masks, some are not. For a lot of libraries' summer programs, the plan was for virtual or outdoor, but it looks like more traditional programs are possible.

**FOUNDATION UPDATE** Foundation trustees must be appointed – most years we have three openings to fill. One election happens at the MVLS Annual Meeting, the others are elected by the MVLS Board of Trustees.

**MOTION:** To elect Doug McFadden (Schenectady County) and Sally Rappa (Montgomery County) to three-year terms on the board of the Foundation for Mohawk Valley Libraries London/Hawkins. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

The Foundation is also working on their annual golf tournaments, the first on July 26<sup>th</sup> and the second on September 17<sup>th</sup>. They recently announced the opening of the advocacy grants for libraries. This evening is the Foundation's Annual Presentation at 7pm. Jennie Mosher from Schoharie, Robert Weatherby from Johnstown, and Whitney Hubbard and her team from Fort Plain will be discussing their experiences doing library programming during the pandemic.

**PLAN OF SERVICE** The surveys closed at the beginning of June, we got a good response from members. Work on this has been slightly interrupted by other library issues, but we will be taking next steps soon. We submit the Plan of Service to the State in October.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **REORGANIZATION MOTIONS**

**MOTION:** To approve NBT as the official bank of the Mohawk Valley Library System, to approve The Daily Gazette as the official newspaper of the Mohawk Valley Library System, and to authorize the President, Vice President, or Treasurer to sign checks for MVLS and for the MVLS/SALS Joint Automation Project Escobar/Mickle. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

**COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS** There is a link to the committee list online. Eric will send out a message asking folks to say which committees they are interested in and we will put together a committee list that way. If anyone has questions about what any given committee does, they should feel free to ask Eric or check out the Committee Charges list on the website. Katherine (currently the sole member of the Communications Committee) questions whether the Communications Committee is necessary with a Communications Specialist (Wade) at MVLS. Eric agrees it may be time to reconsider the committee structure and see what may be superfluous and/or what holes may need to be filled.

**2021/2022 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE** A schedule of meetings is available at <https://www.mvls.info/board-of-trustees/meeting-schedule>. Eric notes the summer meeting is currently scheduled for July rather than August. Meetings are held the third Thursday of the month. February, August, and December there are no meetings. Currently our Annual Meeting is in May, although we might adjust our schedule if we do go through with moving it to the fall.

**MOTION** To accept the schedule of meetings for 2021-2022 as presented. Salluzzo/Hawkins. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

### **CASH EXPOSURE LIMITS**

**MOTION** To approve annual cash exposure limits: \$500,000 for MVLS and \$300,000 for the MVLS/SALS Joint Automation Project. Mickle/Escobar. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

**TECHNOLOGY & ADVANCEMENT CONSULTANT** This is a proposed working title for the new position that MVLS will be looking to fill soon. A draft of the position description was included in the Director's Report. In our surveys, we found many member libraries were looking for more technical support (besides the equipment help that we get from JA). We also need to redo our website, as do many of our libraries, and with new library minimum standards, library websites have more requirements. The plan is to have a job description ready to be approved next month at the board meeting.

As a final note before Adjournment, Katherine wants to encourage our libraries to plan more programs about Juneteenth in 2022.

**ADJOURNMENT** With no further business, Jane adjourned the meeting at 10:43am.

**Next Board Meeting:**

Thursday, July 15, 2021

MVLS Service Center