

Mohawk Valley Library System  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
January 20, 2022

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Rosemary Barger, Jane Borrelli, Deb Escobar, Katherine Hawkins, Susan London, Joanne Mickle, Mary Salluzzo, Rebecca Sokol, Helen Thomas, Christine Witkowski and Eric Trahan, Director.

**EXCUSED:** April Davies

**GUESTS:** Wade Abbott, Mary Carrier, Kim Zimmer (COB), Sharon O'Brien, Kate Clingan

**Call to Order** President Jane Borrelli called the meeting to order at 9:31am.

**Consideration of Minutes:** Minutes from the November 18, 2021 meeting were distributed. Eric noted that Sharon O'Brien's title needs to be corrected, she's the Member Services Coordinator not Consultant.

**MOTION:** To accept the minutes with this correction  
Witkowski/Escobar. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

The **Director's Report** for November and December 2021 was distributed before the meeting. Eric wanted to make special note of a few things mentioned in the report. First of all, he introduced our new Technology & Growth Specialist, Mary Carrier, who started with us last week. Secondly, an update to the report, the Hale Creek Correctional Facility now has a new librarian, who has been in contact with Heather. Next, the modification to Open Meetings Law has been extended, allowing us to continue to hold hybrid virtual/in-person Board meetings. Lastly, the report mentions that Schenectady had failed maintenance of effort. After working with the library and the county, Eric believes that the issue has been resolved.

**Staff Update** Wade Abbott attended the meeting to brief the Board on his role as Community Engagement & Communications Specialist. Wade is currently preparing for Advocacy Day, which will once again be virtual this year. While nothing can replace filling those legislative offices with library supporters, virtual does allow for more participation from folks who might not normally be able to make the trip to Albany. NYLA has scheduled their Advocacy Day for March 2<sup>nd</sup>, but Wade feels that's a bit late in the budget process and he's hoping to schedule meetings with legislators in February. Last year we were able to meet with almost everyone and they were very productive meetings. The education budget as a whole saw a large infusion of money last year, but Wade feels libraries were left out of that, even though we are an important part of education in the state. Wade really wants to make an effort this year to get out in front of legislators. He specifically wants to invite members of the MVLS Board to participate, as he feels it's crucial to have that presence from across the system and counties.

Helen asks about sending letters from individual libraries to all of our representatives and everyone on the Senate/Assembly Library Committees, noting the increased costs libraries have had over the last few years. Wade agrees. After each meeting, he sends a letter from MVLS thanking legislators for their time and asking them to keep libraries on their radar.

Deb asks if we have invited library trustees to participate, and Chris wonders about Friends groups. Wade has asked our member library directors to reach out to their trustees, and he'd like anyone who can get involved to be there. He'll be sending out emails when he has concrete dates for meetings, and he encourages

everyone to spread the word. Katherine asks if it's possible for those without good connectivity at home to come to MVLS and participate from here. Wade would be more than happy to set that up.

**Directors Council Report** Helen Thomas reported. The directors have been discussing their upcoming state annual reports as well as Advocacy Day. Everyone is still dealing with pandemic issues, and meeting minimum standards can be difficult with staffing shortages or closing because of COVID exposures. MVLS has been talking about the future of adult literacy programs once we move past the NYSCA programs. MVLS libraries continue to move towards becoming fine-free, with just Sharon Springs and the Schenectady County Public Library still charging fines. Helen hopes that now that they're one of the few still charging fines, she may be able to convince the board at Sharon Springs to eliminate them.

**Privilege of the Floor** Chris had a general request: the SCP Friends' bookstore is moving, and they are in need of some bookcases. If anyone knows of any available, please send them her way. Chris also read an article from BookRiot that she thought the Board may find interesting, about libraries as essential services and whether we're currently expecting libraries to do more than they are equipped to do. Susan had a question about the Director's Report – what steps are being taken with Schoharie County Jail and is there a way that Schoharie County folks would be able to help? MVLS has a responsibility to provide library service to the county jails. Since the new jail has opened, we haven't been successful with getting in contact with anyone there (this is as not that unusual, library service at the jail isn't always a high priority), so it's a matter of perseverance – Heather's experience with Hale Creek shows that. Anyone from Schoharie County who would like to help out is more than welcome.

**Treasurer's Report** Eric presented the statements of Financial Position and Payment Schedules for November and December 2021. We can see the Bullet Aid for Schenectady and Cobleskill on the December statement. We are still waiting on the remaining Local Library State Aid for 2021.

#### **Statements of Financial Position:**

**MOTION:** To accept for audit the Statements of Financial Position for November and December 2021. Hawkins/Witkowski. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

**Payment Schedules:** Eric noted the annual Medicare reimbursement for MVLS retirees.

**MOTION:** To approve Payment Schedules #11 for \$150,850.63 and 12 for \$191,999.69. Hawkins/Escobar. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**AUDIT AND FINANCE** We have received a proposal from TM Byxbee to do the annual financial review. The cost remains unchanged from the past few years, \$2850 for JA and \$3750 for MVLS.

**MOTION** To accept TM Byxbee's proposal for the 2021 Independent Financial Review. Salluzzo/London. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

**AWARDS 2022 Awards calendar:** We want to continue to present the awards at the Annual Meeting, which will move to October this year. Joanne thinks if the awards will be announced in October, then March is probably too soon to send the applications to members. Discussion ensued about the optimal timeline. The Awards committee will meet to discuss it further. Eric also wants to standardize the award amounts at \$500 for all and to add a third award honoring a library staff member, so these are other topics for the committee to consider.

**BUILDING AND EQUIPMENT** Nothing to report

**COMMUNICATIONS** Katherine suggests that we encourage library directors to have group Advocacy Day sessions at their libraries as well as at MVLS.

**LIBRARY SERVICES** Nothing to report.

**NOMINATING** Karen Bradley and Cheryl Cufari have put forth Mary VanPatten to fill the vacant Schenectady County seat on the MVLS Board.

**MOTION** To elect Mary VanPatten to fill the remainder of Felicia Spivey's term, which expires June 30, 2026.

Witkowski/Thomas. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

**PERSONNEL** Nothing to report.

**JOINT AUTOMATION COUNCIL** The JA Council met on January 12. There are a few items that the MVLS Board needs to act on, which are highlighted in the document in the board packets:

1. Reducing JA Fees by 8% for 2022 and standardizing the way that telecommunications are billed so that all libraries cover their own costs
2. Setting the 2023 JA fees, an increase of 3% from 2022.
3. Approving the JA budget amendments, having to do with the reductions in fees and telecommunications costs
4. Bookkeeping changes in order to have a balanced budget
5. Adjusting for a 2021 year-end timing issue

**MOTION** To accept the JA Fee changes for 2022 and 2023 and the amendments to the 2022 proposed budget

Barger/Thomas. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

Erica Wing's term on the JA Council has expired. She is interested in serving another term.

**MOTION** To appoint Erica Wing to the JA Council, a term to expire December 31, 2024.

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

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**FOUNDATION UPDATE** April Davies has agreed to serve on the Foundation Board. The Foundation needed a member from Schoharie County, and it's always nice to have cross-membership between the MVLS Board and the Foundation Board.

**MOTION** To appoint April Davies to the MVLS Foundation Board for a term to expire June 30, 2023.

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

Applications for Advocacy Grants were received from the Cobleskill (\$2500), Sharon Springs (\$2500), and Fort Plain (\$1000) Libraries.

**MOTION** To approve the Advocacy Grants for these three libraries in the amounts above  
Witkowski/Hawkins. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

**PLANNING DOCUMENTS** Eric explained the planning document in the board packets. The Vision Statement sets our ultimate goal for the system, the Mission Statement addresses what we do. When we work with libraries, we encourage simple and short Mission Statements, and we are modeling that here. The Goals reflect our Mission Statement and address the feedback we got in our listening sessions and surveys. The word “empower” is deliberately repeated in order to create continuity in the document and reflect our Mission in each of our Goals. Discussion ensued about some of the language in the Vision Statement. Eric discussed the purpose of the document: MVLS wants to disseminate it to all of our stakeholders (directors, staff, boards) so they have a clear idea of the way MVLS sees its job and its way of working with them. Its most practical purpose is as a communications tool – this is what MVLS does and what you can expect from us.

**MOTION** To accept the MVLS Strategy Proposal  
Thomas/Barger. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**CENTRAL LIBRARY AID CHANGES** Eric notes that Central Library Aid has traditionally been divided into Central Book Aid and Central Library Development Aid, but one of the state library bills passed last fall will combine them into one aid category. We plan to use this change as an opportunity to explore the ways we currently get central library services to our members.

**MVLS VAN** Now that employees can get reimbursed for driving their own vehicles, no one has been using the van. We are looking at the costs associated with owning a vehicle and considering our options.

**BENEFITS** In the interest of transparency, Eric wanted to disclose that when MVP removed basic vision coverage from our plan, he added it on for an additional cost.

**ADJOURNMENT** With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:21am.

#### **Next Regular Board Meeting:**

Thursday, March 17, 2022

MVLS Service Center