

Mohawk Valley Library System
Board of Trustees Meeting
March 21, 2024

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rosemary Barger, April Davies, Katherine Hawkins, Susan London, Mary VanPatten (arrived 9:37am), Christine Witkowski, Kim Zimmer, and Eric Trahan, Director.

EXCUSED: Haileab Samuel, Rebecca Sokol

GUESTS: Tom Gessick (T.M. Byxbee), Kate Clingan, Beth Rienti, Wade Abbott, Sharon O'Brien (virtual), Mary Carrier(virtual), Maria Cancro (CAN - virtual), Valerie Acklin (GLV - virtual), Charity Thorne (SCP - virtual).

Call to Order Vice President Katherine Hawkins called the meeting to order at 9:34am.

Financial Review Tom Gessick from T.M Byxbee attended the meeting to present the 2022 MVLS Review Report, and the 2022 MVLS/SALS Joint Automation Project Review Report. Draft reports were reviewed by the trustees. Tom wanted to start by commending Joe Sherry for the work he does at MVLS as our finance manager.

Tom notes that this is a review, not an audit. Nothing has come to their attention that would indicate that the financial reports from MVLS were inaccurate. As MVLS reports on the cash basis of accounting, increases or decreases in operating lines from one year to the next are largely due to the timing of receipts and disbursements. For example, on page 3, you can see the net assets and liabilities for the company. As far as aid received, most of the differences between 2021 and 2022 are due to Covid relief programs such as the PPP loan that MVLS had forgiven as well as CARES Act funding. Tom's conclusion is that there were no material modifications to note. The 990 was due in November 2023, but due to staffing changes at T.M. Byxbee will be submitted after the board reviews it at this meeting. Tom says he is in communication with the IRS and will try to get any fees waived; if they are not waived, T.M. Byxbee will take care of them. Rosemary asked about what we can expect this year in terms of timing for the 2023 review. His expectation is that the 2023 review should be done by this summer, and we can expect him to be back to present it at the July or September meeting.

Advocacy Update Wade Abbott attended the meeting to discuss Advocacy Day. We had great turnout this year. The one-house budgets look good, both showing increases in Library Operating and Construction Aid, so we are optimistic as the budget enters final negotiations. Wade brought a Library Superstar candy bar to Susan to thank her for her participation in Library Advocacy Day.

Staff Update Beth Rienti attended the meeting to update the board on her work as Public Services Consultant at MVLS. She shared a Public Services Update write-up which is in the board packets. She wanted to highlight the Cabin Fever Club that she and Mary Carrier put together. She's also been attending Whispering Pines Preschool for story-times. She just announced that this year we will be awarding outreach mini-grants to members. MVLS got a Dream & Do grant to put together memory kits for folks with dementia.

Katherine asks about work with the Schoharie County Jail. Beth says that Sharon and Eric have been the point people on that so far. Kim says that she had a conversation with the undersheriff in Schoharie about a need for more programs and items that the jail could use. Beth knows that very often BOCES runs programs in local jails and correctional facilities and wondered if that's happening in Schoharie. She'll touch base with BOCES on that. She also mentions that incarcerated populations are a targeted group for outreach, so if any of the Schoharie County libraries would like to apply for an outreach mini grant, a program that partners with the Schoharie County Jail might be a good idea.

Back in July, Beth sent directors a survey asking what trainings they would be interested in. The topics that came up most often were Technology and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Mary Carrier has focused on Technology trainings, and Beth has organized several DEI-focused trainings. Katherine asks about attacks on DEI programs. Beth says that libraries are for everyone, librarians know that, and at MVLS we will keep fighting for these programs. Val asks if there is a way that MVLS can spearhead joint programs for DEI initiatives so that there could be some safety in numbers for libraries. Beth says there are many systems that have DEI committees, and if this is something that MVLS directors and staff are interested in, she's happy to start up that sort of committee.

Kim appreciates the kits that MVLS supplies and how they can really help libraries put together new programs with materials that they might not otherwise have access to.

Consent Agenda: Consideration of January Meeting Minutes, Treasurer's Report, Statements of Financial Position for January and February, Payment Schedules #1 for \$153,626.20 and #2 for \$207,549.53.

MOTION: To approve the Consent Agenda.

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

Review of the new format for Financial Statements Eric wanted to draw the board's attention to the financial statements for January and February which look different due to the switch from QuickBooks desktop to QuickBooks online. Rosemary thinks that it's impressive that this switch has been as relatively seamless as it has been.

State Annual Report There's a copy of the Draft 2023 State Annual Report in the board packets. Susan asks about the Outreach Council only meeting once in 2023 – Eric says that's a function of staffing changes at MVLS in 2023. Beth plans to meet quarterly with the council and they've already met once in 2024. She also asks about reductions in attendance in certain groups; much of that is due to how the Annual Report categorizes different age groups.

MOTION: To approve the 2023 MVLS State Annual Report as submitted.

Davis/Zimmer. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

State Budget & Advocacy Eric is hopeful that things look positive for the budget, although the final negotiations have yet to happen. He recommends that folks keep an eye out for NYLA's action items to keep libraries top of mind for our representatives.

Spring Symposium Planning is underway for the 2024 Spring Symposium, which will be at the Margaret Reaney Memorial Library in St Johnsville. It is tentatively scheduled for May 2nd, and Eric is currently working on arranging presenters.

SCPL JA Exit Eric reports that JA received SCP's formal notification that they will be leaving the Joint Automation Project. Eric has been working with SALS and our attorney on the JA response. Several board members have questions about whether the public is aware of these changes and what will happen with regards to resource sharing. This is a complicated thing and there is still a lot to be sorted out. The agreement between every library and the Joint Automation Project says libraries must give at least 6 months' notice to withdraw from the consortium, and Schenectady has given that notice. Kim says several libraries haven't signed their JA agreements due to this upheaval. She thinks that SCP is trying to make improvements to their library in their own way, and we should focus on moving forward to try and make this transition as smooth as possible. Maria wanted to say that obviously this is a tenuous situation and we all have concerns, but everyone needs to do what's best for their communities.

The **Director's Report** for January and February was distributed before the meeting. Eric organized the report around the goals that were set during our Plan of Service process.

1. **Empower Libraries with the Vision & Knowledge for Secure Futures** Quite a few MVLS libraries are working on budget propositions this year. MVLS staff has also been working closely with new library directors in Northville and St Johnsville.
2. **Empower Libraries with the Skills, Tools, & Resources for Serving All** Beth and Mary have been organizing training sessions for library staff and trustees.
3. **Empower Libraries with Collaboration for Outstanding Library Services** MVLS is trying to use SCPL's exit from JA as an opportunity to work with all of our libraries on collaborative answers about how to best move forward.
4. **Empower Libraries for Inspiration & Methods for Telling the Library Story** Telling the Library Story was a big theme on Advocacy Day. It will also be a theme for our Spring Symposium, where we plan to help trustees and staff develop an "elevator pitch" about their libraries.

DIRECTOR'S COUNCIL The directors have been very busy! Kim reports that starting in December they've had several working meetings to discuss SCPL's exit from JA. It's been a great opportunity for them to get to know each other a bit better and find a lot of common ground. Everyone benefits from JA and JA provides a lot of services that libraries could not afford on their own, but sometimes the directors feel constrained by JA's rules. They have plenty of questions about the future and they are hopeful that we're moving towards getting answers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

NOMINATING Rebecca Sokol has tendered her resignation from the board. We will be filling this seat with a representative from Fulton County. Eric will contact the Fulton Council libraries to see if they have a possible MVLS board member they could recommend. We thank Rebecca for her years of service on the MVLS board.

MOTION To accept Rebecca Sokol's resignation from the MVLS board.
Davies/Hawkins. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

AWARDS Eric and Beth would like the Awards Committee to help make decisions regarding the new Outreach Mini Grants. Applications are due April 26th.

Privilege of the Floor: Susan mentioned that the Times-Journal had a photographic essay about the Sharon Springs Library's dog sled program. She brought a copy of the paper and passed it around. April mentioned that the SUNY Cobleskill mac 'n cheese cookoff was a great success and she won. Their 50th Anniversary Library Cookbook also came out this past fall and copies are still available.

Executive Session

MOTION To enter into executive session at 11:27 am to discuss a pending legal matter. Zimmer/Davies. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

ADJOURNMENT With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:03pm.

Next Board Meeting:

9:30am, Thursday, May 16, 2024.

MVLS Service Center