

Mohawk Valley Library System
Board of Trustees Meeting
May 16, 2024

MINUTES

PRESENT: Rosemary Barger, April Davies, Katherine Hawkins, Susan London, Mary VanPatten, Kim Zimmer, and Eric Trahan, Director.

EXCUSED: Haileab Samuel, Christine Witkowski.

GUESTS (IN-PERSON): Kate Clingan, Terry Pavoldi (MID), Valerie Acklin (GLV).

GUESTS (VIRTUAL): Stephanie Cole Adams, Wade Abbott, Beth Rienti, Pat Gosda, Sharon O'Brien, Mary Carrier, Maria Cancro (CAN), Evan Fronk, Nicole Hemsley (AMS), Charity Thorne (SCP), Erica Wing (JOH), Tyson Davidson, Nathan, Irene S, Christine, Debbie McCambridge.

Call to Order President Mary VanPatten called the meeting to order at 9:30am.

Lawyer's Update MVLS's lawyer, Stephanie "Cole" Adams attended the meeting to discuss Schenectady's exit from the Joint Automation System. Her impression is that this situation is more relational than legal. SALS and MVLS are two separately-chartered library systems who have, by contract, come together to form the JA, which operates by contract and by setting policy. The contract makes it clear that the agreement to be a part of the JA may be terminated with 180 days' notice. There's no legal or regulatory requirement to be a part of an ILS. Once an entity has exercised their right to leave, the JA has a responsibility to assist them with that in a timely manner. She also has looked at correspondence between MVLS and DLD to determine if there are additional considerations because SCP is the Central Library.

How does withdrawal from the ILS impact a library as a member of the cooperative library system? Looking at the law, Cole sees that to become a participant in a library system, the library system has to amend its charter to include that library. For the Board, as the governing body of MVLS, this means thinking about how the transition team is handling the termination of SCP's contract with JA, considering what this means for the Central library, and questioning whether this has an impact on the system as a chartered entity. That's largely an unknown right now but it's good to think about the future.

April asks about how Schenectady being MVLS's Central Library changes things. Cole says that with the obligations in the Central Library Plan, you have to ask whether it is possible for a library that's not participating in the ILS to serve as a Central Library. Eric says that DLD has said that if SCP goes through with the withdrawal from the ILS, MVLS has to name a new Central Library.

Rosemary asks about what effect Schenectady leaving MVLS would have on the MVLS charter. Cole says that there is no mechanism to remove a library from the chartered service area other than to change the system's charter, which would need to be a board action. April asks if the MVLS board makes that decision, would there be an impact on State funding? Cole doesn't know the answer to that, but says that the MVLS Board would probably want to take that into account before voting on a charter amendment. Kim asks what happens if Schenectady decides to petition to join a different library system. Cole says if a member of a cooperative library

system who is part of the charter is petitioning to join another library system, that is largely uncharted waters and would need to be discussed further with DLD. Cole says it would be appropriate for the MVLS Board to have a list of questions for DLD that they feel they need to have answered in order to operate as the governing body of MVLS.

Mary asks if Charity can address the reasons why SCP is making these decisions. Kim says that it's her understanding that SCP, JA, and County IT started these discussions a year ago. Eric clarifies that there was a meeting in June 2023 between JA, MVLS, and SCP to explore SCP increasing their IT capabilities. Then in November 2023, County IT wrote a letter to JA that said they would be taking over SCP's IT. There was a meeting on January 25, 2024 with representatives from SCP, MVLS, JA, and County IT to try and come up with a way forward now that County IT would be handling the library's IT. Eric says that following that meeting, he was under the impression that progress was being made, until February 29th when the SCP board voted to withdraw from JA. Terry asks why Schenectady leaving JA means they can't participate in the ILS. Schenectady patrons still can be a part of the MVLS ILS, they'd just need a second library card.

Kim asks Charity if we can request more answers from the Schenectady board about their decision-making process. Charity replies that she would be happy to relay a request to the SCPL board for more information to help MVLS better understand the decision.

Consent Agenda: Consideration of March Meeting Minutes, Treasurer's Report, Statements of Financial Position for March and April, Payment Schedules #3 for \$110,850.26 and #4 for \$103,764.68

Rosemary noted that the March minutes needed an update: Tom Gessick from T.M. Byxbee presented the Board with only the MVLS 2022 Review Report and Form 990, not JA's.

MOTION: To approve the Consent Agenda with the above change to the minutes.

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

State Budget & Advocacy Eric shared that there are two new bills that you may see Advocacy Alerts about. One is about loosening the requirements for libraries to receive Construction Aid so that library systems are able to spend more of the Aid that they are allocated. The other one is about e-resource access for libraries.

Library Budget Votes This year we have many libraries going out for budget votes, which is great news – most of the library votes are next Tuesday. Kim asks if we have any libraries not going out for a budget vote, and how we can celebrate libraries taking this risk. Eric says we have one library that doesn't do a traditional budget vote, Canajoharie, and St Johnsville hasn't had a vote in a few years. Those conversations happen with individual libraries. We are very supportive of libraries sharing their materials and ideas with each other.

Val shared that her library's budget got voted down by 9 votes last week. It was a 53% increase in the tax levy, which makes it sound like a lot more money than it is, and the local newspaper wrote an article about that very close to the election. This will impact the services they're able to provide to their patrons. She says it's important to keep the 9 votes in context, a lot of her community voted to approve the budget, but this has made it clear that there are members of the community who don't understand the value of the library.

Symposium 2024: Recommended Actions In the board packets, Eric included his conclusions from the Spring Symposium. We plan to share these with the folks who attended the Symposium to make sure that his conclusions make sense to them. We'd also like to find a way to get input from folks who didn't attend. Katherine thinks that MVLS board members should have participated in the conversation with Kate McNally. The decision to have MVLS trustees leave was made with confidentiality in mind. Val says that she personally would have preferred to have the trustees in the room. She says, having been there, this document is a lot more positive than she felt the conversation really was. There was a lot of frustration and anger expressed. Kim agrees with this assessment, there's concern about trust. She thinks it was a very productive meeting. Kim and Val think that there's concern from directors that their issues are not getting across to MVLS staff and trustees and maybe we've reached the point where that clarity is more important than confidentiality.

Val suggested some sort of "retreat" where we could gather together directors, MVLS staff, and trustees from MVLS and member libraries. Eric says we'd need to have buy-in from the directors for this. Val says she'd be interested in joining a committee to explore this.

BoardStrong Eric recommends looking at the document from BoardStrong because he thinks that the MVLS Board might benefit from cultivating a relationship with them.

SCPL JA Exit Eric wanted to talk about the May JA meeting last week. We got the letter from DLD encouraging JA to work with SCPL to resolve their differences. He says to take a look at the ad-hoc committees created and let him know if you are interested in joining any of them.

Central Library Services DLD says that if we get to the point where SCPL is not in our ILS, they are not able to be our Central Library. Eric has discussed this with Nicole Hemsley of the Amsterdam Free Library who is willing to take on Central Library services. We'd have to amend our Plan of Service and develop a new Central Library Plan. DLD says this needs to be acted on by October in order to take effect on January 1.

MOTION: Given the SCPL decision to leave the JA ILS, and the directives received from DLD, the MVLS Board moves their intent to name the Amsterdam Free Library the Central Library of the Mohawk Valley Library System, effective January 1, 2025.
Davies/London. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

JA Actions – Policy Updates Updates to 5 JA Policies were voted on at the JA Council meeting on May 8th. They now go to the SALS and MVLS Boards for acceptance.

MOTION: To accept the changes to the JA User Account Policy.
London/Davies. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

MOTION: To accept the changes to the JA Wireless Network Policy.
Davies/London. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

MOTION: To accept the changes to the JA Information Security Policy.
Davies/Hawkins. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

MOTION: To accept the JA Security Policy Addendum.
Davies/London. Ayes – All. Nays – None.

MOTION: To accept the JA Security Description with grammar correction (remove the extra word “Outlook” from page 1 of 3).

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

The **Director’s Report** for March and April was distributed before the meeting. Susan asks about the number of participants for the Cabin Fever programs. Mary Carrier says that there were 77 attendees.

Susan asks about what’s included in the Memory Care Kits. Beth says there is a bit of variety, but they contain books for caregivers, books written with persons with dementia in mind, a picture book to share with youngsters in your family to explain what’s going on, large-print reusable dry erase word searches, handouts from Alzheimer’s organizations with tips and resources for caregivers, puzzles, fidget toys, and essential oils. Currently there are six Memory Care Kits, largely funded by MVLS’s Dream & Do grant.

Kim asks if there will be a golf tournament this year in Cobleskill for the Foundation. There is one scheduled for August 23rd.

DIRECTOR’S COUNCIL Kim reports that the directors have been meeting weekly with Eric to discuss the SCPL transition. They had a Directors’ Council meeting yesterday in Amsterdam. They were supposed to also meet with the SALS directors yesterday but unfortunately the timing did not work out for that meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

AWARDS The Awards committee will be meeting next week to discuss the applications for Outreach Mini Grants.

NOMINATING We still have a trustee vacancy. Val mentions that the timing of the MVLS Board meeting is a problem for filling that.

Privilege of the Floor: Katherine wanted to mention the letter that Mary VanPatten wrote to the UHLS Board President. She felt that while she agreed with it, there should have been more input from the rest of the MVLS Board. Mary says that she did not intend to represent the entire Board, just herself as Board President and Schenectady County resident. Eric also did not intend that letter, which was drafted by our lawyer, to speak for the entire Board. Katherine thinks that was the implication and would prefer it if discussions pertaining to things like that included all members of the Board.

Rosemary asks whether Friends groups need to have a separate 501c3 from the library – Eric and Val say yes. Kim says that her Friends group is quite small and they have a separate 501c3. April says this puts more of a burden on the Friends group, but it benefits the library to keep them separate.

ADJOURNMENT With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:02pm.

Next Board Meeting:

9:30am, Thursday, July 18, 2024.

MVLS Service Center