

## **Advocacy Still Possible!!**

The New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Libraries and Education Technology held a public hearing on Tuesday, November 29 at 10am in Albany. It was a very long day, but very interesting day that lasted until 4:30pm with just a 10-minute break. Gloria Gorman, Director of the East Fishkill Library, Claverack Board members Jenny Post and Wendy Wilde, and I attended. I also spoke and submitted written testimony, which is available at <http://director.midhudson.org>.

Written testimony can still be submitted through Friday, December 9. There is also the possibility that it may be accepted later depending upon the publication of submitted testimony. You can contact Lindsey C. Fecteau if you have any questions. She is the Legislative Analyst with the Committee and can be reached at 518- 455-4881 or [facteau@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:facteau@assembly.state.ny.us)

Testimony is being sought on the impact of the 2011-12 State budget on public libraries and the future needs of our public libraries and library systems.

Michael Borges, Director of NYLA, spoke and recommended the following:

- Increase the \$14 million Public Library Construction Program to \$34 million.
- Create a Universal Service Fund to establish a stable funding stream to expand broadband, particularly in rural communities.
- Schools are exempt from Wickes Law and libraries should be too.
- Enable libraries to access other sources of state funding, such as Adult Literacy Education (ALE), Employment Preparation Education (EPE), Universal Pre-K and Workforce Development funds.
- Allow libraries to partner with other governmental entities, such as BOCES, to provide internet access and other shared services.
- Provide libraries the same increase in funding--4%--being proposed for schools next year.

## **Automation Coordinator: Recruitment and Transition**

Laurie Shedrick submitted her resignation as Automation and Technology Coordinator on Friday, November 18, 2011 after serving on staff at Mid-Hudson for nine years. Her resignation takes effect Friday, December 9, 2011, three weeks after serving notice.

Recruitment to replace her began on Monday, November 21, with notices being sent to the statewide library listserv NYLINE, the directors of the state's public library systems, (PULISDO) and the national Innovative Users Group, (IUG). Additionally, notices were emailed or posted to the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council, Western New York Resources Council, and LISjobs.com. I am still looking for places to post notices as well.

We are advertising the position with a salary range of \$56,000 to \$61,000.

Minimum qualifications are a Master's degree (MLS, MIS) from an ALA accredited institution and 2 or more years of related full-time experience, including 1 year of supervisory experience.

Additionally we are looking for someone with a background in customer service, project management, and the ability to collaborate as well as lead.

As of Friday, December 2, we had eight applicants. Three do not meet minimum qualifications. Two are recent graduates of an MLS program and one has an MBA and is in human resources management.

If we're lucky, we will appoint someone by mid-February. A review committee will be formed in December. It will include at least one member library director as well as the cataloging and technology staff. Review of candidates will begin January 3rd. My goal is to schedule a first-round of phone interviews by January 13.

Staff have met to identify what Laurie does on a daily, weekly, monthly and as-needed basis. A prioritized checklist of about 60 items has been developed. Staff have been assigned specific tasks.

The items with highest priority, as well as those of low priority, were shared in my December report to the Directors Association. Those identified as low priorities will be put on hold until a replacement is hired.

A list of contacts will be sent to directors and the Millennium list before Laurie leaves.

Cataloging and technology staff will begin meeting with me for a daily, 8 AM, huddle beginning Tuesday, December 6.

### **CSEA Negotiations**

An agreement was reached with our CSEA bargaining unit on December 18. Negotiations included cost-of-living increases and percentages paid by union members for both health and dental insurance.

Linda Vittone, Jim Tuttle, Peter Hoffmann, John Bickford, Roland Patterson and I participated on behalf of Mid-Hudson. Jim is Board President and Peter the in-coming President. John and Roland are chairs of the Personnel and Planning Committee and Finance Committee respectively. Doug Morrison from CSEA led staff members Kit Kassel, Kerstin Cruger, and Robert Drake on behalf of our CSEA bargaining unit.

The agreement will be discussed by the Board in executive session on December 10 and a vote by the board in open session will follow.

### **Preliminary 2012 Budget**

The Finance Committee met on November 30 to review a draft of the Preliminary 2012 Budget and a number of changes were subsequently made. A vote is planned for the December meeting.

### *Revenues*

State revenues are budgeted at 96% of what was received this year. This anticipates that the Governor's proposed 10% reduction from 2010 funding will be implemented and the partial restoration of aid provided by the legislature this year will not be provided in 2012.

Payment for system services by member libraries increase by 30%. Member library payments of \$422,000 for delivery and automation is replaced by a \$600,000 general members assessment.

Other notable revenues include reimbursements by members for electronic network purchases of \$176,197, a construction grant of \$32,879, interest and payments for other services.

### *Expenses*

Budgeted expenses for 2012 include an overall increase of just under 10% but include some significant one-time costs. These are, in round numbers, \$70,000 in capital repairs to the Auditorium, and \$87,000 for a Sierra server, if the successor to Millennium is based on-site at Mid-Hudson. Together, these represent nearly 80% of the difference between our projected year-end expenses for 2011 and the proposed 2012 budget.

### *Personnel*

Salaries and wages would increase by 5% from what is projected for 2011 year-end. This includes the salaries and COLAs negotiated with CSEA for 2011-2012.

The same COLAs have been budgeted for all staff.

Salaries also reflect increases that were indicated by the benchmarking of staff to either comparable position at other library systems or to civil service positions at the Poughkeepsie Public Library District. These benchmarked salaries and wages, however, have been only partially applied.

The purpose of the benchmarking was to ensure that the salaries and wages at Mid-Hudson were fair, equitable and sustainable.

A part-time financial assistant position that was authorized when we reduced staff earlier this year is included. This has not been filled but there is a plan to begin assisting member libraries with e-rate applications in 2012. A nominal fee would be charged for this service.

Salaries and wages also include temporary funding to increase part-time staff during the transition period, between Laurie Shedrick's departure and the hiring of a new Automation Coordinator.

Benefits have a net increase of 5% from benefits projected for 2011 year-end. But the drop in unemployment insurance payments and the increase in retirement costs cancel each other out, masking the impact of retirement costs in 2012.

Seventy-five percent of the increase in lifetime health insurance costs are for retirees, including for the three additional retirees who opted for this benefit this year. Twenty-five percent of the health insurance increase is for current employees.

A three-tier schedule for the percentages paid by staff for health insurance is part of the agreement with CSEA and is based on what a staff earns. This results in a modest savings by the Library System had there been no change in what staff pay. Details of this will be discussed at the December meeting.

#### *Other Highlighted Expenses*

Expenditures for equipment includes \$86,750. This is for the possible purchase of a new server for Sierra. If the decision is to base Sierra in the Innovative “cloud,” this may not be purchased.

An increased conference and travel budget to support attendance at the annual Innovative conference in California by the new Automation Coordinator and his or her support staff is also included and is largely a one-time expense.

### **Planning and Personnel Committee**

I want to thank John Bickford, Chair of the Personnel and Planning Committee and the Committee's members. They have had a very busy fall and will be meeting again on December 7 to review my evaluation.

#### *Annual Members Survey*

The Annual Member Survey was launched by John and the Committee in September. I believe there were seventy-nine respondents, which was an improvement over last year's forty-four respondents. John compiled the results. The Committee met and reviewed the results on October 13. Following the meeting, I consolidated and grouped the comments into themes. There was a total of 353 comments and suggestions, from one-word responses to short paragraphs.

System staff were frequently mentioned by name and their contributions recognized repeatedly. Individual Mid-Hudson Library System Trustees were also singled out for praise. However specific names of staff and trustees were not included in the consolidated comments.

Staff reviewed the results and consolidated comments. The perception was that there were fewer negative comments than last year. However, there was concern that the handful of comments critical of the System would outweigh the preponderance of positive responses and comments.

The consensus of the staff was that we needed to focus on the future and the new plan of service. There wasn't much in the survey suggesting we need a course correction in the new plan.

Following a discussion of this by the board, I think the results should be shared with the members in some format.

#### *Salary and Wage Review*

The committee met on October 13 to also review the benchmarking of senior staff and their salaries to comparable positions and salaries at four library systems: North Country Library System, Ramapo Catskill Library System, Suffolk Cooperative Library System and Westchester Library System.

Salaries were averaged and adjusted for cost of living by location. The latter was based on Sperling BestPlaces, which has been used by the New York Library Association in its salary surveys and found at [www.bestplaces.net](http://www.bestplaces.net).

A similar process was used for other staff, which were benchmarked against civil service positions and the wages and salaries of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District.

The purpose of the review was to ensure that our salary and wage schedule was equitable, proportionate, competitive and sustainable. The findings have been incorporated into the Preliminary 2012 Budget.

#### *Lifetime Health Insurance Benefit Policy*

A draft policy statement on the lifetime health insurance benefit provided retired staff under NYSHIP was reviewed on October 13 as well. Presently, the benefit is provided under a number of separate motions by the board of trustees. Added to the personnel policy, the policy would stipulate the following:

MHLS's health insurance plan provides employees and their dependents access to benefits in retirement subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between the insurance carrier and MHLS.

Cost for these benefits are shared by MHLS and the retired employee. MHLS contributions for these benefits are subject to change by the Board of Trustees, insurance carrier, or employee agreement, and may be based on an employee's date of hire, length of service, and salary or age at time of retirement. Salaries at the time of retirement may be indexed for inflation in future benefit years to determine a retired employee's contribution.

All Mid-Hudson Library System staff hired after September 1, 2003, must have ten years of continuous full-time service to be eligible for the lifetime health insurance benefit. Employees hired before September 1, 2003, are required to have five years of continuous full-time service. [CURRENT POLICY]

Dependent Survivor Coverage is available to spouses of former employees who completed fifteen years of continuous full-time service prior to their retirement and have family coverage at the time of their death. [CURRENT POLICY]

Beginning January 1, 2011, employees must be within five years of retirement age to be eligible. [NEW CONDITION]

Under NYSHIP, the minimum employer contributions are 50% for individual policies and 35% for family policies.

#### **Libraries and Economic Development**

The Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council has now published its Strategic Report. I attended the presentation of the draft on November 9 at Locust Grove. It took a bit of

effort, but I did succeed in libraries and library systems being added to the report as potential partners in workforce development efforts. Hopefully this is something we can build on.

Libraries that have received Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) grants are the ideal candidates to build economic development programs. They are already involved in workforce development by providing skill-building and job-seeking training for the underserved, under-employed and unemployed.

There are five BTOP-funded centers in the Mid-Hudson Economic Development Region, including at the Poughkeepsie Public Library District and Mahopac Public Library.