

Government & Community Relations Working Group

Friday, August 22, 2025 | 10:00am

1. Roll Call

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|---|---|
| ✓ Jill Leinung, Chair (C) | <i>Alumni Members</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peter Carey (P) | <input type="checkbox"/> Priscilla Goldfarb |
| ✓ Jenny Post (C) | ✓ Myrna Sameth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Silvius (G) | ✓ Richard Swierat |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Mark Wilson |
| ✓ Barry Ramage (Ex Officio) | |
| | ✓ Rebekkah Smith Aldrich (Staff Liaison) |

2. Executive Director Aldrich provided an **update on the primary revenue streams** of the organization: New York State and the Members Assessment as well as information about how federal actions are impacting the outlook of the financial future of MHLS.
3. The Working Group members reviewed the **purpose statement** of the working group and agreed that the gist of the statement is still relevant and valid, however reserved the right to wordsmith it for flow in the coming months: *"To raise the profile of the Mid-Hudson Library System; In a way that ensures stakeholders, such as member library leaders and legislators, understand the value of the System to our member libraries and communities while also promoting the value of our member libraries; So that stakeholders contribute to the financial sustainability of the System."*
4. As this was the first meeting of the Working Group with both sitting board members and alumni board members, the group reviewed what has been accomplished through the working group's efforts and direction to the Executive Director since 2020:
- a. **Fundraising**
 - i. Increased number of grants and sponsorships pursued and received (e.g. Digital Equity work; three years of funding for The Library of Local Project from Climate Partners HV; Dyson Foundation grant for PR consultant; and Road Trip sponsorships from Central Hudson, Stewart's Shops, and Adams Fairacre Farms)
 - ii. New [Support page](#) created for the web site
 - iii. Targeted campaign to fund The Book Haven Collection long-term rather than year-to-year
 - iv. Internal procedures developed to ensure proper documentation of donations and acknowledgements
 - v. Free access to [Candid's Foundation Directory](#) secured via a partnership with SENYLRC
 - b. **Public Relations**
 - i. PR Consultant Assessment Completed thanks to Dyson Foundation Grant secured by Richard Swierat
 - ii. PR & Communications Plan developed, focused on three target audiences:
 1. Legislators

2. Charitable Foundations

3. General Public

- iii. Staff job description upgraded to reflect identified needs in this area: Library Sustainability Associate & Communications Specialist
- iv. Routine Press Releases, social media posts, radio and podcast appearances
- v. New budget line created for community engagement work (e.g. materials/equipment for tabling at events)
- vi. Increased number of strategic partnerships (e.g. Climate Partners HV, Adirondack Mountain Club, Central Hudson, The Tempestry Project)
- vii. Identification and pursuit of awards and recognition for MHLS/RSA/staff/trustees as recommended by the PR consultant
- viii. Production of the 2025 MHLS Road Trip to raise the profile of MHLS in the Hudson Valley
- ix. New web site coming soon to address more of the PR consultant's recommendations

c. **Advocacy**

- i. Active pursuit of Special Legislative Funds for MHLS (e.g. \$30,000 from Senator Hinchey, invitation to apply for capital funds for boiler project from Assemblymember Jacobson)
- ii. More targeted advocacy activities to reach specific legislators
- iii. Online Advocacy Briefings for our members beyond just getting ready for NYLA Advocacy Day
- iv. Pop-Up Postcard Parties (anonymous donor provided 5,000 postcards)
- v. Coming soon:
 - 1. Advocates email group for retired directors and trustees and close community allies
 - 2. Advocacy Ambassadors program (i.e. at least one representative from each member library board will take the lead in communicating and mobilizing local audiences for advocacy purposes)

5. The Working Group discussed the need to create a focused development plan with a specific goal **of creating an endowment fund** that could be grown to a level that would provide more financial stability for operating the system.

- a. **For Board Discussion:** To this end, the Working Group proposes creating a draft purpose statement for an Endowment Campaign; an elevator speech to explain the need for such a fund; identify the best financial mechanism for housing such a fund; and would like to eventually form an Endowment Campaign Committee, made up of current and alumni trustees of MHLS as well as perhaps inviting other trusted stakeholders with experience in this type of campaign. The Working Group asks that this be discussed at the September board meeting before they invest more time in this effort.

6. Board President provided a verbal report on the recent meeting among members of the working group and **Kevin Quilty of the Community Foundations of Hudson Valley** to discuss the pros and cons of creating a fund to benefit MHLS through the Community Foundation.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:17pm.