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Government & Community Relations Working Group

(formerly: COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group)

Monday, April 25th, 2022

1. Roll Call

- ✓ Richard Swierat, Chair (D)
- ✓ Mark Wilson (C)
- ✓ Barry Ramage (D)
- ✓ Priscilla Goldfarb (P)
- ✓ Rebekkah Smith Aldrich (Staff Liaison)
- ✓ Saran Camara (Staff Liaison)

2. Working Group Name & Review of Purpose Statement: In acknowledgement of the evolution of the scope of work this group is discussing, the Working Group Members are proposing a name change from the *COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group* to the *Government & Community Relations Working Group*. The group feels this better reflects the long-term goals to increase state aid for public library systems and to raise the profile of the system in the Hudson Valley community in order to better position the system for grants and, potentially, private fundraising. The group is working on a new purpose statement to reflect this evolution. It was acknowledged that ultimately it would be ideal for this working group to become a standing committee of the board, but, for now, as the work evolves, the working group model is suitable. The group also explored the idea of inviting ad hoc members to the group who have expertise in public relations and marketing.

- a. **ACTION:** The Committee recommends an upgrade to the name of the working group from the *COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group* to the *Government & Community Relations Working Group*.

3. Foundation for Hudson Valley Libraries (FHVL)

- a. As endorsed by the board in September 2020, the Working Group has completed its analysis of the status of the Foundation for Hudson Valley Libraries and is recommending that the working group pursue the dissolution of the Foundation for Hudson Valley Libraries.
- i. **Background:** The Foundation for Hudson Valley Libraries was formed in 1995 with a stated mission to “enrich life-long learning for everyone in the Hudson Valley by helping the region’s public libraires improve their services and reach financial stability.” This was formed as a regional not-for-profit, tax-exempt public foundation that had a stated intent to “make available targeted grants to develop and improve library services, especially public library services, and assist with library expansion within the Mid-Hudson Library System region.” The bylaws state the board should be made up of representatives from the five counties served by MHLS along with the MHLS executive director, “business manager,” and one member of the MHLS Board.
 - ii. **Issue:** A study of this organization, which is financially tied to MHLS in that our Finance Manager & Personnel Officer serves as its treasurer, indicates that it has been dormant since at least 2013 with strong evidence of little to no activity going back to 2002. In its history, two restrictive grants have been made to select member libraries. Minutes of board meetings in 2002 indicate serious doubts about the

effectiveness of and need for the Foundation. Between 2002-2013 the board failed to meet annually. At this time, there is no evidence of activity by the board of this organization since 2013. A review of the existing minutes of this organization indicates good intentions but little realization of organizational goals. In 2019 this issue was brought to the attention of the board by the then new executive director, due to the pandemic, the issue was put on hold until now. Given that COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group was charged with the task to determine how to secure funding and support to offset future potential governmental delays or cuts, the group has determined that we have alternative options to manage donor funds without the challenges presented by the lack of MHLS control or oversight of another 501(c)3 organization which jeopardizes our reputation and standing with government entities and donors.

- iii. **ACTION:** The Working Group recommends that the last known board of the Foundation be approached to consider dissolution of the entity to ensure MHLS is not tied to an organization in poor standing with the IRS or the State of New York. This recommendation is tied to the Working Group's additional recommendation to pursue the creation of a fund with the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley, discussed below, to simplify the fund development infrastructure available to the Mid-Hudson Library System.

4. Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley

- a. As endorsed by the board in September 2020, the Working Group has completed its analysis of establishing a fund with the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley (CFHV). The group feels it would be prudent to pursue establishing a fund with this organization for the following reasons: clear control of the fund by the MHLS board and administration; administration and reporting responsibilities are covered by the CFHV; and the opportunity to access the established network of donors CFHV has ties to.
 - i. **ACTION:** The Working Group recommends that initial steps be taken to establish a fund to benefit the Mid-Hudson Library System through the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley. Once we approach the CFHV to indicate our interest, the Working Group will come back to the MHLS Board with answers to frequently asked questions to ensure we all understand the commitment we are making before the final establishment of the fund.

5. Branding & Messaging Strategy for the Mid-Hudson Library System

- a. Rebekkah presented the "MHLS Messaging Matrix" (attached), an activity the Working Group identified as key to future work with members, legislators, and potential outside funders.
- b. The Working Group authorized Rebekkah to generate a request for proposals (RFP) from regional public relations firms and advised a mid-year budget adjustment be considered for this work by the Finance Committee.

Government & Community Relations Working Group | MHLS Messaging Matrix

	Legislators (currently provides 75% of our revenue)	Member Libraries (currently provides 24% of our revenue)		Private/Charitable Foundations	General Public
		Directors	Trustees		
Barriers	Time Competing Interests	Time Concerns MHLS is competing with them for funds	Time	Competing Interests Lack of knowledge/confusion of the difference between their local library and MHLS	Time Lack of knowledge/confusion over difference between their local library and MHLS
Motivation	Meaningful service to constituents Visibility of their work	Provision of modern, timely, economical library service	Provision of modern, timely, economical library service	Meaningful use of available funds	Great local library service Economical local library service
Influences	Voters Other legislators Trusted allies in local communities	Peer Leaders MHLS Staff	Library Directors MHLS Staff MHLS Trustees	Foundation Board Members Foundation Staff	Library staff Family members/Neighbors Local leaders
Best Channels	One-on-One meetings Phone Calls Social Media (for some)	One-on-one interactions with MHLS Staff MHLS events County Meetings DA Meetings MHLS Bulletin Facebook	One-on-one interactions with MHLS Staff MHLS events Direct email to trustees MHLS Bulletin Social Media?	One-on-One meetings with foundation executives and board members	Word-of-Mouth Social Media
Message Direction	More than 50% of constituents are library cardholders. Funding for systems results in a high return on investment of tax dollars. OBE: early literacy; digital equity	System services save you time and money. System services help prepare your library for the future.	System services allow you to provide affordable, modern services to your cardholders. System services help prepare your library for the future.	Investing in MHLS maximizes the good that can be done with your foundation's funds regionally. OBE: early literacy; digital equity; sustainable communities	MHLS helps your local library serve you/your family. MHLS helps to reduce taxes locally.