

MID-HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM
MINUTES of the BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
Saturday, December 12, 2020

President Swierat called the meeting to order at 10:00am.

1. ROLL CALL AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Trustees Present: Stuart Auchincloss, Lisa Baker Brill, Sharon Davis, Kenneth Goldberg, Priscilla Goldfarb, Michele Ment, Barry Ramage, Lynne Ridgeway, Janet Schnitzer, Richard Swierat, Mary Linda Todd, Mark Wilson

Trustees Absent: Robert Culp (e), Rajene Hardeman (e), Debra Klein (u)

Directors Association Liaison: AnnaLee Dragon, Kinderhook Memorial Library

Staff Present: Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Saran Camara, Casey Conlin, Laurie Shedrick, Linda Vittone

2. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In his report, President Swierat:

- Presented the formal resignation of Putnam County representative, Robert Culp from the MHLS Board. Mr. Swierat moved, and Mr. Auchincloss seconded, to accept Mr. Culp's resignation. The board voted unanimously, with regret, to accept Mr. Culp's resignation.

*President's report
presented*

Ms. Goldfarb moved, and Ms. Ment seconded a resolution to acknowledge Mr. Culp's service to the board and the organization and thank him for his service:

*Resolution to
recognize the service
of Robert Culp to the
MHLS Board*

WHEREAS, Robert Culp has served on the board of the Mid-Hudson Library System with distinction since 2017; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Culp has continued to provide support, guidance and advice despite health challenges for the past two years;

WHEREAS, Mr. Culp's advice and guidance provided MHLS, through the work of the Facilities Committee, with the technical knowledge and support for the significant renovations to the public meeting spaces as well as administrative offices; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Culp always worked collaboratively with MHLS administrative personnel and board members, listening to their concerns, opinions and advice to inform the best results in all renovations and repairs to the MHLS facilities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Mr. Culp's colleagues on the Board of the Mid-Hudson Library System express their sincere gratitude for his service to the institution and to the libraries of Putnam County for whom he was elected to represent.

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The resolution passed unanimously.

- Mr. Swierat acknowledged that this was the last meeting for Columbia County representative, Sharon Davis as her term expires at the end of the year and took this opportunity to thank her for her service. Ms. Davis thanked the board for their support during her tenure and helped to introduce the new representative recently elected to the board to represent Columbia County, Jill Leinung. Mr. Swierat moved, and Ms. Goldfarb seconded a resolution to commend and thank Ms. Davis for her years of service to the board and the organization:

Resolution to recognize the service of Sharon Davis

WHEREAS, Sharon Davis has served on the board of the Mid-Hudson Library System with distinction since 2016 and will complete her term in December of the year 2020; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Davis has leveraged her expertise from her career as a well-respected school librarian to the advantage of our organization during her tenure, ensuring the voice of the professional librarian was at the table for critical discussions about the future of libraries; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Davis provided an insightful and exacting perspective through her service on the Mid-Hudson Library System's Incentives Committee which resulted in the successful administration of the State Aid for Library Construction Program during her participation; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Davis always spoke truth to power;

NOW THEREFOR, BE IT RESOLVED, that Ms. Davis' colleagues on the Board of the Mid-Hudson Library System express their sincere gratitude for her service to the institution and to the libraries of Columbia County for whom she was elected to represent.

The resolution passed unanimously.

- Mr. Swierat acknowledged that this is the last business meeting that MHLS Finance Manager & Personnel Officer Linda Vittone will be in attendance as her retirement date is December 18th, 2020. Mr. Swierat noted Linda is "unflappable," and thanked her for her service. Mr. Wilson, MHLS Treasurer, made comments noting how reliable Ms. Vittone is and that she always made herself available to him. Mr. Ramage, former MHLS Treasurer, commented on Ms. Vittone's professionalism, noting she is highly organized and precise, dedicated and has done an excellent job. Ms. Goldfarb noted that Ms. Vittone is "our rock - always patient, pleasant and prepared, knowledgeable, unhurried, willing to go the extra mile. You help us do our jobs better and we'll miss you dearly. Thank you for all you have given of yourself to MHLS and very best to you in your retirement." Mr. Swierat moved, and Mr. Wilson seconded, a resolution to thank Ms. Vittone for her service to the Mid-Hudson Library System on the eve of her retirement:

Resolution to thank Linda Vittone upon her retirement

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WHEREAS, Linda Vittone, MHLS Financial Manager & Personnel Officer has announced her retirement from the Mid-Hudson Library System after 20 years of service; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Vittone has provided excellent leadership to ensure the financial stability and integrity of our organization during her tenure; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Vittone has distinguished herself with deep knowledge and abilities related to financial matters of our organization; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Vittone has been invaluable to navigating both challenges and opportunities, particularly during The Great Recession and the COVID pandemic; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of the Mid-Hudson Library System hereby expresses its profound gratitude to Ms. Vittone for her service to the organization, for her sound advice and valued counsel, all of which has enhanced the future of our organization and our ability to serve our member libraires.

The resolution passed unanimously.

- Mr. Swierat acknowledged the twenty-five (25) year service milestone reached in 2020 by MHLS Facilities Operations Manager Chris Herron and noted Mr. Herron's dedicated service to the organization during the pandemic. Mr. Swierat moved, and Mr. Auchincloss seconded a resolution to express the board's gratitude for Mr. Herron's service to the organization:

*Resolution to thank
Chris Herron*

WHEREAS, Chris Herron, MHLS Facility Operations Manager & Assistant Delivery Operations Manager has achieved the milestone of 25 years of service to the Mid-Hudson Library System; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Herron has served our organization with dedication and demonstrated great integrity and ingenuity; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Herron, in the face of the COVID pandemic, has risen to the challenge to keep our workers safe through study, research, and development of best practices for facility management and worker safety;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of the Mid-Hudson Library System hereby expresses its gratitude to Mr. Herron for his service to the organization, for his sound advice during the pandemic, and for his superior work on behalf of our organization.

- Mr. Swierat acknowledged the recently received messages from member library directors and the chair of the Director Association thanking the staff for their dedication, customer service, program design and partnership during this past year, particularly in the face of the

DA thanks MHLS staff

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pandemic. Mr. Swierat added his thanks to the MHLS staff for their hard work over the past year.

- Mr. Swierat thanked his colleagues on the MHLS Board for their extraordinary service this past year, which necessitated many more meetings and request for input than usual. Mr. Swierat noted that 2021 will bring its own challenges and that continued vigilance to maintain organizational stability and sustainability will be necessary.

*Board president
thanks colleagues*

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Auchincloss noted an error in the September 2020 minutes, item 13 should read that Ms. Goldfarb seconded the action item. Ms. Goldfarb moved, and Mr. Auchincloss seconded the approval of the September minutes with this correction. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes approved

4. TREASURER’S REPORT

Mr. Wilson reported that all basic aid was received in August, all categorical aid in September and that all aid, as anticipated, was reduced by 22.6%. Mr. Wilson noted that while the receipt of these funds were welcomed to ensure cash flow projections could be met, that the system’s ability to weather the cut was much due to the efforts of MHLS staff who worked diligently to find savings, renegotiate contracts, and seek alternative funding sources. Mr. Wilson concluded by noting that the system is in good shape as we enter into 2021 but that “we are not out of the woods yet” given the state’s financial projections for 2021-2022. Mr. Ramage moved, and Ms. Schnitzer seconded that the August 2020, September 2020, and October 2020 financial reports be received. The motion carried unanimously.

*Financial Reports
received*

5. REPORT ON PAYMENT OF BILLS

Ms. Schnitzer reported that she reviewed the warrants for September and found them acceptable. Ms. Todd reported that she reviewed the warrants for October and found them acceptable. Mr. Auchincloss reported that he reviewed the warrants for November and found them acceptable. Ms. Ment moved and Ms. Goldfarb seconded that the warrant reports for September, October, and November 2020 be received. The motion carried unanimously.

Warrants received

6. DIRECTOR’S REPORT

In addition to her written report, Executive Director Aldrich reported that:

- The staff continue to manage the repercussions of the 22.6% cut and the anticipated cuts for fiscal year 2021. Ms. Aldrich provided an update on the status of recent grants applied for including CARES Act funds through the State Library and a Grown with Google grant.
- Ms. Aldrich provided a report on planned outreach efforts to newly elected state representatives to ensure those new to their district get an early introduction to the library community as budget season begins in Albany and provided insights as to what online advocacy activities will look like in 2021.

*COVID-19 Financial
Response*

*Outreach to elected
officials planned*

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- Ms. Aldrich introduced Saran Camara, who began as the MHLS Financial Manager & Personnel Officer on December 7th. Ms. Camara is training with Ms. Vittone for two weeks to learn the role's responsibilities.
- Ms. Aldrich provided a situation report on the impact of the rising COVID-19 infection rates in the region and the preparations system staff and member libraires are engaged in to best balance the protection of library workers and the public with the need to secure access to library services for the public. Ms. Aldrich noted outreach efforts to the regional control rooms to obtain guidance for libraries, county-level outreach, and the development of documentation by system staff to aid members as they may need to change their service levels.
- Ms. Aldrich highlighted a number of successful projects and programs that were completed in 2020, despite the disruption of the pandemic and ensuing financial crisis including the completion of the first ILS Road Map and the development of an ILS Road Map 2.0, the early adoption as a development partner of the next generation online library catalog interface, the certification of Tech Ops staff by our vendor; the transformation of the MHLS Trustee Education Series to an online webinar series that attracted a high numbers of member library trustees and the creation of pandemic specific resources and professional development opportunities.
- Ms. Shedrick explained the preparation and response that helped to minimize the impact of the October ransomware attack.

*Saran Camara
introduced*

*COVID-19 impact on
member libraires*

*2020 service
highlights*

*October 2020
ransomware attack*

7. DIRECTOR'S ASSOCIATION LIAISON REPORT

Ms. Dragon thanked the MHLS staff for their ingenuity, focus, "grace and patience," during the pandemic to aid member libraires pivot services and safety measures, going so far as to declare the Mid-Hudson Library System, "The best system ever." Ms. Dragon provided an update on the collaborative efforts of staff and members to salvage the e-magazine service after the new vendor more than doubled the price of the service with less than two weeks notice before the order deadline. Ms. Dragon specifically thanked Ms. Shedrick for her advocacy to negotiate an affordable entry point and to design a financial plan with the Central Library/Collection Development Advisory Committee to find a feasible path forward and retain and enhance this service.

*DA thanks system
staff.*

e-Magazine update

8. NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Wilson presented the slate of officers for 2021 noting that Ms. Schnitzer had chosen to remove herself from the slate leaving the officer of secretary uncontested. Ms. Ridgeway moved, and Ms. Davis seconded the following slate of officers:

President: Ric Swierat

Vice President: Barry Ramage

Treasurer: Mark Wilson

Secretary: Stuart Auchincloss

Member-at-Large: Priscilla Goldfarb

The motion passed unanimously.

2021 officers elected

9. FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. Ridgeway reported that the committee assessed and reprioritized the MHLS Capital Plan & Timeline. This reassessment informs their recommendation that the board would not pursue funding through the State Aid for Library Construction program in 2021 given the financial uncertainty of the coming year, and the fact that this program requires matching funds, and the finding that current plans can begin in 2022. This assessment also informed recommendations made to the MHLS Finance Committee for 2021 budget planning purposes.

2021 Capital Plan and Timeline

Ms. Ridgeway reported that staff are proceeding with project to increase ventilation and introduce air purification measures to further protect against the spread of COVID-19. Ms. Ridgeway thanked Ms. Aldrich and Mr. Herron for their work to ensure the board is a good steward of the facilities.

COVID-19 prevention measures

10. PERSONNEL & PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Ramage and Ms. Aldrich introduced the need to amend the MHLS records retention/disposition policy to align with the new schedule from the NYS Archives. Mr. Auchincloss moved, and Mr. Wilson seconded an amendment to update the schedule referenced from MU-1 to LGS-1. The motion passed unanimously.

Records Retention Schedule updated

Ms. Aldrich presented the 2021 Action Plan as recommended by the committee, noting the work to adjust services in light of the pandemic and capacity issues faced by staff due to the hiring freeze. Ms. Goldfarb moved, and Mr. Auchincloss seconded a motion to accept the 2021 Action Plan as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

2021 Action Plan approved

11. BOARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Goldberg provided commentary on the value of attending the board meetings of the local library of the town a trustee may live in as a visitor to gain perspective as system trustee. Mr. Goldberg reported on the evaluation results of the 2020 Annual Membership Meeting, noting the abundance of complementary comments and the theme that attendees missed the social opportunities the in-person event had provided. Mr. Goldberg drew attention to the committee’s goal to develop a board self-evaluation process for the MHLS board in 2021.

Annual Membership Meeting Report

12. BYLAWS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Auchincloss introduced the recommended edits to the 2021 Rules and Procedures document to clarify the role and reporting requirements of board liaisons and to align the document with current practices. Mr. Goldberg moved, and Ms. Schnitzer seconded a motion to accept the draft 2021 Rules and Procedures for the board as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

2021 Rules and Procedures adopted

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Mr. Auchincloss presented the proposed 2021 board meeting schedule, noting that the Bylaws, Policies and Procedures Committee plan to meet earlier in the year than usual to address a comprehensive review of the bylaws. Ms. Schnitzer moved, and Ms. Ment seconded a motion to adopt the 2021 board meeting schedule as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

2021 meeting
calendar approved

13. FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Wilson presented the committee’s report, detailing the numerous actions taken to balance the budget for 2020 and the planning assumptions for 2021. Mr. Wilson noted that the 2021 proposed budget shows a deficit of \$212,450 and discussed that a number of actions that are in progress could positively impact that number including grants being pursued, the union negotiation, future federal stimulus packages, and the efforts of the MHLS COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group.

Budget development
report

Ms. Goldfarb moved, and Mr. Auchincloss seconded a motion to move into executive session for the purposes of discussing the status of the negotiations with the union. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Aldrich, Ms. Vittone, and Ms. Camara were invited to join the board in executive session. The board moved into executive session at 11:30am.

Executive Session to
discuss union
negotiations

Ms. Goldfarb moved, and Mr. Auchincloss seconded a motion to close executive session. The public meeting reconvened at 11:40am.

Mr. Auchincloss moved, and Mr. Ramage seconded the approval of the proposed 2021 budget. The motion passed unanimously.

2021 budget
approved

Mr. Swierat provided a report from the MHLS COVID-19 Response and Recovery Working Group, detailing the results of interviews with MHLS trustees as well as experts in the areas of fundraising and marketing. Next steps involve interviews with member library directors and trustees as well as efforts to fine tune system branding and marketing to best position the system to attract alternative revenue sources. Ms. Dragon provided feedback in her role as the 2020 chair of the Columbia County Library Association (CCLA), noting support among Columbia County libraries, many of whom rely on fundraising locally, for the system’s efforts in alternative resource development. The CCLA does not feel this will compete with their local efforts.

Response & Recovery
Working Group
report

14. RACIAL EQUITY WORKING GROUP REPORT

Mr. Swierat provided an update on the work of the group which has developed to the point of forming teams to work in four areas: MHLS Board Education, Policy Review, Communication Assessment, and Board Development/Recruitment efforts. Mr. Swierat clarified that the work of the group is a broad focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion across racial, gender, LGBTQ+, and economic lines. Ms. Goldfarb, a member of the working group, noted that the group is humble in its work and acknowledges that it does not have all the answers. Mr. Auchincloss, also a working group member, noted the importance of authenticity in this work and the time it takes to do this right.

Racial Equity Working
Group forms teams
and designs
orientation process

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Out of the work of this group will come an orientation for 2021 committee chairs which will serve as a general orientation to that role as well as provide an introduction to the work of the working group.

15. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Mr. Swierat reviewed the list of standing committees modeled on the 2020 list of committees. Mr. Auchincloss moved, and Ms. Ridgeway seconded the adoption of the same standing committee list for 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. Mr. Swierat explained a desire to identify a way to thank staff for their efforts during the pandemic. Ms. Ridgeway moved, and Ms. Schnitzer seconded a motion to authorize the MHLS Executive Committee to determine an appropriate gesture.

*2021 Standing
Committees approved*

*Executive Committee
authorization*

16. COMMUNICATION

Ms. Shedrick reported on the Sierra Certification Process noting that in addition to herself, Nina Acosta, Assistant ILP Operations Supervisor have completed the required courses to receive the Sierra System Coordinator/Administrator certificate. Nina Acosta, Kerri Carpenter, Cataloging Specialist and Tara Stohr, Interlibrary Loan & Cataloging Specialist have completed all the required courses, and most of the recommended coursework to receive the Sierra Technical Services Coordinator / Administrator Certificate. Mr. Auchincloss commended Ms. Shedrick for her leadership to increase the professionalism and training of the MHLS staff.

*MHLS staff achieve
certification in Sierra
administration*

Mr. Conlin reported on the successful translation of the MHLS Trustee Education series to an online environment for 2020, a practice that will be carried on in 2021, and provided an update of efforts to evolve the 2021 Turning Outward program to be 100% online.

*Conversion of core
services to the online
environment*

Ms. Aldrich commended both Ms. Shedrick and Mr. Conlin for their leadership during the pandemic to continuously assist member libraries pivot in the face of the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

13. ADJOURNMENT

At 12:16pm, Mr. Auchincloss moved, and Ms. Schnitzer seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. **The motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted by:
Michele Ment, Secretary

Approved 2020
By the MHLS Board of Trustees

