

Government & Community Relations Working Group

December 1, 2023

1. Roll Call

- ✓ Richard Swierat, Chair (D)
- ✓ Mark Wilson (C)
- ✓ Jill Leinung (C)
- ✓ Barry Ramage, Ex Officio (D)
- ✓ Rebekkah Smith Aldrich (Staff Liaison)
- ✓ Laura Crisci (Staff Liaison)

2. Chair's Comments: Chair Richard Swierat asked the group to consider the long-term future of the working group and whether it needs to exist beyond 2024 as a working group or standing committee, should be combined with another committee, or disbanded.

3. MHLS Staff Updates:

- a. Personnel Update:** Stephanie Werskey, Library Sustainability Associate & Communication Specialist has been hired. This job description has been altered to account or recommendations from the Impact PR & Communications report received earlier this year.
- b. Update on the Dissolution of the Foundation for Hudson Valley Libraries:** There are two more steps to go to dissolve the Foundation, one of which is tied to the final financial report in May 2024. After that, the process will be complete.
- c. Grant Updates**
 - i. State Aid for Library Construction Program: The EV Charging Station Project was amended to account for site preparation work related to the area around the stations.
 - ii. Dyson Foundation: The Foundation has offered MHLS \$3,000 toward implementing recommendations from Impact PR & Communications. These funds are planned to be used for graphic design efforts related to the new web site.
 - iii. Climate Partners of the Hudson Valley
 - 1. Decarbonization Grant: Submitted for the rooftop solar project. Notification is expected in February 2024.
 - 2. The Library of Local: No funds were received in 2023 but an ask will be made for 2024.
- d. Online Presence Updates**
 - i. Discover.midhudsonlibraries.org
 - 1. *New Year, New Library Catalog* Campaign
 - ii. Social Media
 - 1. New policies under development
 - iii. Midhudson.org
 - 1. Wireframe of the new home page was presented, the design is based on recommendations from the Impact PR & Communications report.
 - 2. Support Page that would provide opportunities for private and corporate giving to MHLS was discussed.

e. State Advocacy Plan Discussed:

- i. Outreach to the Governor
 1. Meetings with the Lt. Governor and DOB
 2. Lobbyist Hired
 3. NYLA Campaign post-Thanksgiving
- ii. Outreach to key Hudson Valley legislators and the Lt. Governor
- iii. Letters to all regional state legislators
- iv. Letters to member library directors and board presidents will be sent to impress upon them the importance of participating in state level advocacy.
- v. Prep for Advocacy Day on February 7th includes a partnership with the Ramapo Catskill Library System to once again offer bus transportation to Albany.

f. Review of draft PR Plan: The working group reviewed the draft PR plan which is based on advice from Impact PR & Communications. It is designed with quarterly activities and deliverables. The working group endorsed this approach which staff will carry out.

4. Alumni Group Proposal: Chair Swierat proposes an advisory group be created that harnesses the expertise and advocacy strength of former MHLS trustees with a goal to broaden our advocacy capacity at the state level. Staff will gather the names of former trustees to explore this idea.

5. Other

- a. Fund establishment with the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley: The Working Group will explore this again in 2024.
- b. Executive Director Aldrich reported on the partnership with the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill:
 - i. MHLS has been invited to table at the upcoming 75th anniversary of The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Sunday, December 19th at the Henry A. Wallace Center at the FDR National Historic Site Visitor Center from 10am to 2pm. The Center has waived the exhibitor fee for MHLS. "*Human Rights Expo: Meet a diverse group of local organizations supporting all facets of human rights.*" For more information: <https://www.nps.gov/hofr/human-rights-close-to-home.htm>
 - ii. The Center has booked a date for their "Bravery in Literature Award Ceremony" and has invited Executive Director Aldrich to participate. They are also considering how best to promote the importance of libraries through the event. This will be held on Saturday, February 17th at 6:30pm at the Fisher Center at Bard (Bard College) and will be a ticketed event. More details will be shared as they are available. Confirmed authors that will be involved include: Mike Curato (Flamer); Alex Gina (Melissa); George M. Johnson (All Boys Aren't Blue); and Maia Kobabe (Gender Queer).

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50pm.