MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS

Date: Thursday, April 2, 2020

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Place: Zoom Video Conferencing

Commissioners: Roland A. Ochsenbein, Chair; Mary Ann Cluggish, Vice Chair; Mary Kronholm, Secretary; Deb Abraham; Les Ball; Stacy DeBole; Philip Madell, Esq.; Gina Perille; N. Janeen Resnick

**Staff Participants:**

James Lonergan, Director; Liz Babbitt, State Aid Specialist; Celeste Bruno, Communications Director; Andrea Bunker, Library Building Specialist; Kate Butler, Electronic Services Specialist; Tracey Dimant, Head of Operations & Budget; Maura Deedy, Library Advisory Specialist; Rob Favini, Head of Library Advisory and Development; Susan Gibson, Accountant V; Paul Kissman, Library Information Systems Specialist; Evan Knight, Preservation Specialist; Rachel Masse, Assistant to the Director; Matthew Perry, Outreach Coordinator; Shelley Quezada, Consultant to the Unserved; Mary Rose Quinn, Head of State Programs / Government Liaison; Lauren Stara, Library Building Specialist

**Observers Participants:**

Catherine Halpin, Collaborative Library Services Coordinator, Boston Public Library (BPL); Molly Moss, Assistant Director, Forbes Library, Northampton; Alex Reczkowski, Library Director, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield; David Slater, Executive Director, Old Colony Library Network (OCLN); Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director, Massachusetts Library System (MLS)

**Meeting Called to Order by Chair Ochsenbein**

Chair Ochsenbein called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.

**Approval of Minutes: March 5, 2020**

* Page 1, line 45- change to “Also, the BPL is…”

Commissioner Resnick moved and Commissioner Perille seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners approves the minutes for the monthly business meeting on March 5, 2020 with correction.

**Board voted unanimous approval.**

**Commissioner Cluggish voted present.**

**Approval of Minutes- Emergency Meeting March 19, 2020**

* Page 2, top section- issue with numbering
* Page 5, line 8- change to “if” not “of”
* Page 5, line 9- change them to the MBLC

Commissioner Ball moved and Commissioner Kronholm seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners approves the minutes for the emergency board meeting on March 19, 2020 with corrections.

**Board voted unanimous approval.**

**Chair’s Report**

Chairman Ochsenbein presented the following report:

Twenty-eight days ago, on March 5, we held our monthly MBLC board meeting at the Boston Public Library. BPL President David Leonard welcomed us and we conducted our business that day in the usual fashion, together in the Commonwealth Salon. Afterward, we toured the digitization labs. It was a normal, bustling day at the BPL.

The next morning, I spoke at a legislative breakfast hosted by the Bigelow Free Public Library in Clinton, one of the last of the breakfasts leading into the FY2021 legislative budget season. The breakfast was well attended, the mood upbeat and enthusiastic. Rep. Natalie Higgins, the House Library Caucus Co-Chair, also spoke, as did Sen. Harriett Chandler and Rep. Harold Naughton, all of them articulate library supporters. Coming off a year in which our total funding exceeded our request (for possibly the first time ever!), there was by contrast a hint of caution in their comments regarding next year. Important needs in education, transportation infrastructure, and other areas would compete for any increases the state would see in its revenue collections. Mind you, this was before the spread of the coronavirus was fully understood. Libraries will be ok they assured us, but just know that there is some pressure next year. As of a few weeks ago, that was where we were going into next year.

Since then, and with stunning speed, the world has completely changed.

Beginning on March 13, Governor Baker began issuing increasingly severe emergency orders in response to growing concerns over the spread of the coronavirus, now officially called COVID-19. On that day, he issued an order prohibiting large gatherings. Two days later, he ordered public schools closed, prohibited gatherings of 25 or more, and prohibited on premises consumption of food and drink at bars and restaurants. Four days after that, he activated the National Guard. In another four days, on March 23, he ordered non-essential businesses to cease in-person operations, and he issued a statewide stay-at-home advisory. And just two days ago, he announced that the DCU Center in Worcester is being stood up as a field hospital, and that an arena at Fitchburg State is being outfitted as a temporary morgue if needed…an arena to serve as a temporary morgue.

As we meet today, remotely via Zoom videoconference, it is a very different world compared to that of last month’s board meeting in the marvelous surroundings of the Boston Public Library. Today, all public library buildings in the Commonwealth are closed to the public, as are nearly all academic and special libraries. That is an extraordinary statement. The only other time this has occurred was not during the Great Depression or a World War; it was during the influenza pandemic of 1918, when an estimated 675,000 people in the U.S. and tens of millions worldwide succumbed to the disease.

I am extraordinarily impressed with the response of the MBLC leadership and staff and those of our affiliates during this difficult time. The number of communications that have come out this past week or so as things have developed so rapidly– updates, advisories and announcements, including the comprehensive MBLC Service Update from yesterday– are excellent and so needed at this time. I was also pleased to see articles from publications such as the Boston Globe and the Atlantic describing how the availability of library services, many of them digital, are playing an even more important role at a time when buildings are physically closed—eBooks, audiobooks, databases, online courses, virtual story times, outside-the-building wifi access, phone assistance and outreach, and more. The MBLC, the affiliates, and others have been working to expand the already wide access to electronic offerings. At a time when most are staying home and schools are closed, these services are enormously beneficial, possibly even lifesaving. I’ve seen any number of communications from libraries around the state, on social media and elsewhere, offering service updates that are resourceful, creative, and uplifting even in this heavy time. Libraries are at their best. I am proud to be associated with this community.

We will eventually recover. I personally think it will take a long time to fully recover. There are many long-term consequences that are not yet understood. That said, public libraries and the role they play in society will be, I am certain, critically important to recovery efforts in too many ways to list here. And I think this may well be the focus of our message over the coming months, as we, at the appropriate time, turn our attention to regaining full operations.

The budget fallouts may also be significant. The FY2021 state revenue forecasts will certainly be revised as a result of the economic disruption we are experiencing, and that in turn will inform a new look at FY2021 and beyond. We will need to communicate our needs and our value often and clearly to lawmakers. Further, it is unclear what impacts, if any, there may be on the construction program in terms of passing the bond bill, raising the cap, and whether or to what extent projects may be delayed or reconsidered at the local level. I think there is also concern building on the municipal level about next year’s local budget picture. Local tax receipts will be directly affected by the temporary closure of businesses, loss of sales/meals/room taxes, and the compounding effects of job losses. But then there may also be some positive countervailing consequences from the various stimulus measures.

Looking ahead, there are at this moment more questions than answers but what IS clear is that the future looks very different today than it did just a few weeks ago, and our role in supporting libraries and helping make things better for people may never be more important than it will be over the coming months and possibly years.

Finally, I’d just like to say that, according to health officials, it seems clear we are in for a very difficult few weeks or months immediately ahead. I pray for all of our good health.

Activities for March, 2020:

* March 16: special Executive Committee call to discuss events and impacts on libraries—James later that day issued statement with a series of updates and recommendations in response to the governor’s orders.
* March 16: attended virtual MLS Executive Board meeting as MBLC liaison.
* March 19: Special emergency Board meeting to discuss further Covid-19 response.
* March 20: MBLC issues a second statement under my signature as chair with further recommendations and sends statement to Governor’s office.
* March 24: Executive Committee call.

**Director’s Report**

Director Lonergan presented the following report:

Meetings/activities since the last monthly Board meeting:

* March 9— MLS Executive Board retreat, Northborough Public Library
* March 10—Boston Library Consortium Executive Director search call with Koya Consulting and Rob Favini
* March 16— MLS Executive Board meeting, virtual
* March 18—Introductory meeting with Brian Boyles, Executive Director of Mass Humanities, virtual
* March 19—MBLC emergency Board meeting to discuss response to COVID-19, conference call
* March 25—Strategic planning process discussion with Abby Straus
* March 30—MSLA and MBLC conference call re: Virtual School Librarian website

**FY2021 Budget:** The House typically debates its version of the budget in April, and the Senate in May. However, given the current State of Emergency, House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz recently said it would be highly unlikely that the House will have a budget in April. Options being considered by the legislature include collectively settling an new revenue estimate, pre-conferencing the budget so that leaders in both branches are in broad agreement before it goes to the floor of either branch, or having the Governor file a one-month spending extension now to keep government running through July to give legislators more time to adjust and plan. Legislative and administration leaders will also convene a hearing soon to discuss the budgeting impacts of the outbreak. According to a recent State House News Service article, one policy analysis group estimated COVID-19 may cause state tax revenues to plummet $1.8 billion to $3 billion in the next 15 months.

**H.4154,** *An Act Financing the General Governmental Infrastructure of the Commonwealth,* which includes $150 million for the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP), is still in the House Ways and Means Committee. We continue to monitor the bill’s status.

**MPLCP Annual Cap:** We recently followed up with Maya Jonas-Silver, the Director of Capital Planning at Administration and Finance regarding the “future-readiness” focus of the MPLCP. We shared sections of our reviewer worksheet that focus on flexibility to accommodate future changes as well as our regulation that requires a design for “a facility whose projected future functional life must be shown to be not less than 20 years.” Unless the timeline for this year changes, we should hear about our cap for FY2021 officially in June and possibly unofficially in May.

The **Institute of Museum and Library Services** (IMLS) has announced that the President has signed the CARES Act, which designates $50 million in coronavirus response funding for IMLS. Following passage in the House of Representatives, both chambers of Congress approved of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, a $2 trillion response to the growing pandemic. The emergency investment allocated to IMLS will enable libraries and museums to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus, including “by expanding digital network access, purchasing Internet accessible devices, and providing technical support services to their communities.” The MBLC anticipates further guidance on how much funding Massachusetts will receive and how these funds may be used.

**Strategic Plan 2021-2025:** Our strategic planning process is moving along; Abby and her colleague Jane held a focus group with the Ecosystem Committee on March 18 and they are currently scheduling a focus group with the Automated Network directors/administrators and board representatives. They have completed most of the individual interviews and will be holding a virtual workshop with MBLC staff next week.

**COVID-19 Response**  
All members of the Library Advisory and Development unit have been working hard to meet the needs of the library community around the COVID-19 pandemic.

* Maura and Rob have been responding to daily questions around library closings, library remote services, staffing closed libraries, and the impact of staff layoffs.
* Evan has been busy fielding questions relating to the safe handling of collections, has been sending daily status reports from MEMA to the library community, and has been representing the library community within COSTEP MA.
* Paul has been working with Network administrators to coordinate the continuation of statewide services.
* Kate has been making daily changes to the MBLC website adding COVID-19 response announcements and resources
* Shelley and Lyndsay wrapped up LSTA grant reviews throughout the state of emergency keeping the application process on track.

**FY2021 LSTA Grant Round**  
We continue to move ahead on this year’s application process. The application deadline of April 7 will remain, however we have made the following changes to requirements:

* We are not requiring authorizing signatures on application grants as part of the April 7 deadline in recognition of scattered workforces and lack of access to municipal officials.
* Letters of support can be in the form of an email message to the grant applicant.
* We are instituting online-only application submission for the FY2021 grant round.

The May 6, 2020 SACL LSTA review meeting is scheduled to proceed. We are planning to have a virtual event with review groups meeting via teleconference.

**Trustee Orientations**  
Trustee orientations scheduled for April 2020 have been cancelled. We are currently working on creating virtual events to take their place. We will wait to make call on orientations scheduled for May and June. All depends on state’s social distancing guidance and venue availability.

**Mass Library Trustee and Friends Associations**Both the MLTA and the MFOL have suspended board meetings. The MFOL cancelled their Spring Friends Sharing with Friends meeting that was scheduled for April 25, 2020.

**Small Library ARSL Scholarship**Lyndsay Forbes along with Kristi Chadwick and Michel Eberle of the MLS announced this year’s funding for up to six Massachusetts public librarians to attend the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) annual conference in Wichita, Kansas, September 30-October 3, 2020. Scholarship recipients will use their experience at the conference to help plan future Small Library Forums.

Evan was interviewed for ***American Libraries*** magazine’s blog : *How to Sanitize Collections in a Pandemic: Conservators weigh in on the mysteries of materials handling during COVID -19* <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/how-to-sanitize-collections-covid-19/>

**MPLCP:** Governor Baker’s new guidance for all public construction projects statewide requires adherence to the "safety stand down" guidelines provided to the construction industry last week. This temporary order requires a halt to public construction projects (effective 3/27/2020), and applies to all projects managed or sponsored by the state or a state agency, including the library construction projects funded through the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP), while contractors review site-specific issues, develop mitigation strategies and communicate to workers about new state guidelines for construction work during the coronavirus pandemic.

Those new state rules require, among other things, all workers to self-certify before each shift that they are not sick and that certain construction workers have their temperatures taken daily. Also last week, the Governor’s chief legal counsel sent a letter (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/march-25-2020-construction-guidance/download>) to city and town executives with the new guidance and instructions that all construction projects should continue operations during the Governor's state of emergency but with social distancing measures incorporated. The guidance imposes a zero tolerance policy at work sites. If a worker is sick, they are to remain home. If a worker begins to feel sick on the job, they are to go home. And if a supervisor sees a worker who appears sick, they are to send the worker home.

The **Communications Team** has been working to increase ease of access to digital resources. The consumer portal (mass.gov/libraries) has been updated and expanded to include free-for-now resources as well as unique opportunities from authors, illustrators and educators. The resources can be seen at <https://libraries.state.ma.us/pages/free-resources>  Always free statewide resources are also included.  This one-stop place makes it easy for residents to find library resources and other free resources. The team also continues to develop the Lauren Baker video library.  
  
The team is using MBLC social media channels to connect users and librarians to digital resources. The team has also created promotional posts for libraries to use on their social media channels: <https://awarehouse.mblc.state.ma.us/collateral/campaigns/digital-library/>

**Database promotion**The MBLC has developed database promotion for social media that takes users directly into the databases and gives the local library the usage statistic:

* Databases Dogs:

<https://awarehouse.mblc.state.ma.us/collateral/programs/databases-dogs/>

* Databases Health Aging:

<https://awarehouse.mblc.state.ma.us/collateral/programs/databases-healthy-aging>

* Databases Wellness:

<https://awarehouse.mblc.state.ma.us/collateral/programs/databases-wellness/>

* Databases Kids:

<https://awarehouse.mblc.state.ma.us/collateral/programs/databases-kids/>

* Databases: Home Improvement: <https://awarehouse.mblc.state.ma.us/collateral/programs/databases-home-improvement/>

The team is also putting together MBLC Service Updates that will be sent regularly to the library community. Consistent regular communication from the MBLC in the form of a single update will help the library community see that the work still continues and that the MBLC staff is here to help them get through this. These updates don’t preclude staff from sending individual updates as needed.  
  
In terms of **summer reading**, the communications team has been in touch with our partners at the Boston Bruins. Many Bruins staff have been furloughed, including the staffer who works with us on the summer program. Right now, it is unclear whether Blades visits will occur this summer. Bruins summer materials have all been developed but the MBLC is holding off on orders for now. MBLC staff is working to confirm if the First Lady and Blades Summer Reading Challenge can still move forward. Libraries may have a difficult time launching any summer programs and this challenge could help fill the gap in that it is mainly online. The team has taken orders for the national CSLP poster but getting them out to the libraries is an issue due to closures.

**Office Lease:** The lease for our new office space on the fifth floor at 90 Canal Street has been officially executed. We are still scheduled to move in early August, however given all that is going on, that could change.

**Legislative Report**

Mary Rose Quinn, Head of State Programs presented the following report:

# Welcome to 2020 Census Day plus one and the day that librarians and library supporters were scheduled to converge on the State House and participate in the Massachusetts Library Association (MLA)/Massachusetts School Library Association (MSLA) Library Legislative Day. There has been discussion with the MLA Legislative Committee about creating an online replacement for this annual advocacy day. The Committee Meeting for March was canceled as a result of pandemic. The topic will be taken up at the April meeting. James Lonergan and I have been in regular communication with Representative Higgins’ office regarding a virtual event. Representative Higgins has offered assistance and support.

# In addition to the regular budget advocacy for this possible online event, and for the Legislative Agenda as a whole moving forward, topics for discussion should include the role libraries play in helping communities access e-government, tax preparation and filing, unemployment and other job related assistance, social safety net access, and information about the stimulus. Libraries will be critical partners in the restoration of municipal services. Librarians are busy shifting as many programs and services as they can online to assist their patrons and protect their staff members through this crisis.

# The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act includes funding for libraries, education, and Cultural Heritage. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is slated to receive $50 million, the National Endowment for the Humanities, $75 million; the National Endowment for the Arts, $75 million; the Department of Education, $30.8 Billion; and the Federal Libraries, $18.8 million. According to the American Library Association’s summary statement, the funding to IMLS is, among other things, “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus, including grants to States, territories, and tribes to expand digital network access, purchase internet accessible devices, and provide technical support services.”

# Libraries will also be key to the continuation of the Census. Massachusetts leads the New England states in the number of people who have responded to the Census. More work still needs to be done. The door to door count has been postponed two weeks, through April 15 and will have to be extended further since the time frame for the stay at home order has been extended through the month to May 4. As a reminder, the Massachusetts Federal central office is in New York. Maura Deedy continues to send out information and reminders. The State’s Complete Count Committee continues to share online resources. Nickelodeon and PBS have developed PSAs using Blue’s Clues and Sesame Street characters to remind parents and children about the importance of the Census. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is working with Superintendents to ensure that information is being shared by teachers in their online classes. Colleges and Universities are urging the Census to use their registration lists for counting students, and Secretary Galvin is recommending to municipal leaders that they use Reverse 911 to encourage residents to fill out their Census. In addition to the links to the PSAs already mentioned, I will share the link to the statewide map of the count with Commissioners as soon as I receive it.

# The Center for State Policy Analysis, a non-partisan research and analysis group at Tufts University’s Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life estimates that the tax revenue shortfall over the next fifteen months will total between $1.8 and $3 billion. The revenue decline has been immediate and will impact the final quarter of FY 2020 and the full FY 2021 budget year. The Center’s analysts said that, “from an economic perspective, the crisis differs from previous downturns because of the unprecedented pace of the decline.” The group estimates that revenue losses for FY 2020 could reach $540 million to $753 million and hit somewhere between $1.2 billion and $2.6 billion for FY 2021. Massachusetts is required by its Constitution to have balanced budgets each year. Stimulus money will help reduce deficits; the state also has a $3.5 billion rainy day fund to offset revenue gaps. The Center’s figures and projections align closely with those discussed by the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, headed by Michael Widmer. Mr. Widmer expects the FY 2020 revenues to fall short of benchmarks by approximately $500 million. Both groups also agree that “a global recession is a virtual certainty”.

# As unemployment claims reach record levels and state and local revenue funding resources fall rapidly, municipalities have begun reworking their FY 2021 budgets that had mostly been decided and set in January and February. Library budgets are being reworked as well, for both this current year and next.

# Governor Charlie Baker announced his House 2 $44.6 billion budget back in January based on consensus revenue figures of $31.15 billion agreed to by the state budget revenue writers in the House, Senate, and Administration and Finance (ANF). As a result of the economic fallout caused by the pandemic, the Governor’s office and ANF, along with House and Senate budget leadership, will hold a hearing to revisit revenue projections on April 7, 2020 for the FY 2021 budget cycle. The hearing will be live streamed from Senate Room 438.

# House Ways and Means Chair, Aaron Michlewitz expects that the House budget proposal will be delayed while legislative leaders assess the impact the coronavirus shutdown has had on revenues. Budget priority conversations were sidelined for COVID-19 discussions. The House also plans to discuss how their members will debate and approve the budget if they are not able to travel to the State House to vote in person. Chairman Michlewitz, Administration and Finance Secretary Michael Heffernan, and Senate Ways and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues are discussing contingency plans for the state budget, possibly collaborating on a non-traditional budget cycle and budget document once the new revenue estimates are available. One suggestion floated was to begin, rather than end, the legislative budget process with the Conference Committee report. There is also talk of approving a one month funding extension for the FY 2021 budget through the month of July, as we have done the last few years.

**Consideration of Joining Networks Grant Award Recommendation**

Paul Kissman, Library Information Systems Specialist presented the Board with the Joining Networks Grant. The Joining Networks grant opportunity allows public libraries in municipalities under 10,000 to join an automated resource sharing network for the first time.

This grant complements the Small Libraries in Networks program, funded out of account 7000-9506, which offsets the annual network membership fees for small public libraries that are members of networks.

The CW MARS network will add the Taylor Memorial Library, Hancock as a member during FY 2020. This grant provides first year joining fee and offsets the first year’s annual assessment for Hancock. The proposal was reviewed by MBLC staff.

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| --- | --- |
| Network | Total Amount Awarded |
| CW MARS (Worcester) | $2,600 |
| TOTAL: | $2,600 |

Commissioner Cluggish moved and Commissioner Ball seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners approves the above Joining Networks Grant to CW MARS totaling $2,600 as presented in agenda item 5.

**Board voted unanimous approval.**

**Consideration of approval of proposed revisions to the Board’s bylaws**

Commissioner Ochsenbein put together a small group to review the current agency Bylaws. Commissioners Kronholm, Madell, and Perille all agreed to review the current Bylaws with Commissioner Ochsenbein with staff assistance from Director Lonergan and Rachel Masse. Due to a clerical error it was believed that the last time the Bylaws were revised was January 14, 1998. Once staff began to review the Bylaws they realized that the Bylaws were revised on January 14, 2016.

Commissioner Madell offered to take the first look at the Bylaws. He reminded the committee that the Bylaws should not be too specific because then you are held to those words. If the Bylaws are kept general there is a lot more room for flexibility.

Commissioners decided that they wanted to take another look at the Bylaws. If so much was being removed they would like to see another procedurally-focused document available.

Commissioner Cluggish moved and Commissioner Kronholm seconded to table the proposed revisions to the Board’s Bylaws until there can be further review.

**Board voted unanimous approval.**

**State Aid Policies Update**

Mary Rose Quinn, Head of State Aid presented the State Aid Policy changes.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, and in an effort to support municipalities with libraries participating in the State Aid to Public Libraries Program as they cope with this emergency, the State Aid Unit is requesting changes to the State Aid Program Standards Policies which were reviewed and adopted by Commissioners in prior fiscal years.

Rather than address the changes individually in each of the ten policies for both 2020 and 2021, the modifications are reflected in an **Emergency Preamble to the State Aid to Public Libraries Program Policies** which, if approved by the Board, will be added to the State Aid Policies section of the website and as a preface to the printed versions of the policy documents going forward. Commissioners will have an opportunity to again review and adopt policies and changes to policies in September/October at their regular Monthly Board Meetings when State Aid Policies are scheduled for annual review and implementation. If the need arises, the Board can take up and vote on policy recommendations at any regular or emergency Board meeting. We will be bringing changes to Librarian education, training, and certification requirements to the May meeting to address cancelations and delays for classes and hiring deadlines for directors.

Libraries report their hours open and their materials expenditures each year on their State Aid Application and Compliance form with their State Aid Financial survey each October. The figures they report reflect the hours and materials expenditure for the prior fiscal year. In October 2020 (FY 2021), libraries will be reporting data collected for FY 2020 (July 1, 2019 to June, 2020) for materials expenditures and for a 38 week hours open requirement (usually Labor Day to Memorial Day).

As a result of the Governor’s Emergency Declaration on March 10, 2020, libraries began closing to the public. In addition, most libraries stopped ordering and purchasing materials for their collections and may not be able to meet the annual spending percentages required by the end of the fiscal year.

The Emergency Preamble addresses:

* Hours Open Requirement
* Materials Expenditure Requirement
* Accommodation Policies for the Hours Open and Materials Expenditure Requirement
* The Closure of a Public Library (Policy)
* Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) Chapter 78, Section 19A
* The FY 2021 Five Year Waiver Plan Policy
* Disproportionate Cuts

**Emergency Preamble to the State Aid to Public Libraries Program Policies for FY2020 and FY2021**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Massachusetts and in an effort to support and protect the Commonwealth’s municipal libraries, their dedicated staff members, Trustees, and the patrons they serve and to assist them in their future recovery efforts, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners suspends the following FY 2020 State Aid to Public Libraries Program Policies (Reported in the FY 2021 State Aid cycle) and revises the Five Year Waiver Policy and the Library Closure Policy in acknowledgement of the current crisis:

**Hours Open Requirement:** Hours reported for FY 2020 compliance period up to the Governor’s State of Emergency Declaration on March 10, 2020 will meet full compliance with the Hours Open Requirement (reported on the FY 2021 Application and Compliance form).

**Materials Expenditure Requirement:**  Expenditures on materials for FY 2020 from July 1, 2019 up to the Governor’s State of Emergency Declaration on March 10, 2020 will meet full compliance with the FY 2020 Materials Expenditure Requirement (reported on the FY 2021 Application and Compliance form).

**Accommodation Policies for the Hours Open and Materials Expenditure Requirement:** Suspended for FY 2020 (reported in The FY2021 State Aid cycle); see above policy revision for requirements.

**The Closure of a Public Library (Policy):** the Policy is revised starting with the FY 2020 Policy and going forward to include for clarification, examples of natural catastrophes, i.e. fire, flood, storms, and epidemics/pandemics and other states of emergencies (Federal, State, and Local).

NOTE: Libraries should reopen as soon as possible once the state of emergency is lifted. A municipality that does not reopen its library after municipal services are restored risks decertification.

**Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) Chapter 78, Section 19A**  
*The MAR formula has not changed and the requirement has not been reset. “No city or town shall receive any money under this section in any year when the appropriation of said city or town for free public library services is below an amount equal to the average of its appropriation for free public library service for the three years immediately preceding, increased by two and one-half per cent of said average. Said board may, upon petition of a community, waive aforesaid requirement upon demonstration of fiscal hardship. Said waiver may only be granted by said board in a given fiscal year to not more than ten cities and towns in the commonwealth.”*

However, the Board will continue to request additional waivers beyond the statutory limit in budget language (ten) to provide municipalities experiencing financial hardship with an opportunity to continue participation in the State Aid Program.

**The FY 2021 Five Year Waiver Plan Policy (Year Two):** The FY 2021 Waiver Plan Policy (Year Two) is replaced with the FY 2020 Waiver Plan Policy (Year One) and resets the Five Year Plan to FY 2021-FY 2025.

**WAIVER REMINDER:**The number of waivers available for FY2021 will not be determined until the budget language is final for FY2021. The Board cautions against cuts to library budgets by municipalities that are disproportionate in nature (i.e., the library is singled out for steeper cuts than other municipal departments).

1. Petitions are submitted in October with the Financial Survey and State Aid Application and Compliance Form.
2. Petitions for a waiver will be reviewed by the Board of Library Commissioners at their January 2021 meeting.
3. All petitioners for a waiver determined to have a disproportionate cut to their budget must present their petition in person at the January 2021 meeting.
4. The Board will review FY2021 MAR Waiver Petitions based on:
5. evidence of municipal fiscal hardship, and
6. demonstration by the municipality that the library’s budget was not disproportionately reduced.
7. The Board will vote on the petitions for waivers of the FY2021 MAR at their February 2021 meeting.
8. The Board will hear any appeals of the denial of an FY2021 MAR waiver at their March 2021 meeting.
9. The Board will act on any appeal at their April 2021 meeting.
10. The FY2021 State Aid to Public Library Program officially concludes at the conclusion of the April 2021 Board of Library Commissioners meeting.

NOTE: The MBLC Commissioners will address any further policy changes necessary once the extent of the COVID-19 impact on libraries is better understood. The Board will continue its review over the summer and present further policy revisions at its Board meeting in September to be voted on in October. (See regular State Aid Calendar)

**Regulations:**

<https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris/regs-standards.php>

**Policies:** <https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris/policies.php>

Commissioner Cluggish moved and Commissioner Ball seconded thatthe Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners approves the State Aid Program Policy changes as detailed in the accompanying documentation entitled: Emergency Preamble to the State Aid to Public Libraries Program Policies for FY 2020 and FY 2021.

**Board voted unanimous approval.**

**Report from the Massachusetts Library System (MLS)**

Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director presented the report:

**MLS Strategic Planning Update**

I’ve contacted three Strategic Planning Consultants, and conducted ongoing

discussions with two of them. I expected proposals from them by the end of February; however one came in later than expected. A decision will be announced soon.

**\*\*COVID-19 Update**

MLS has suspended all in person CE offerings, Statewide Delivery, and BiblioTemps®. Offices are closed as well; all staff are working from home. We are sending regular updates to the membership, and conducting meetings with partners, members, and each other during this time. News is posted on the MLS and MBLC COVID-19 Resource Guide.

Unfortunately due to COVID-19 the MLS Director and Small Library Discussion Groups have been canceled. They will be rescheduled at a later date.

**Report from the Library for the Commonwealth (LFC)**

Catherine Halpin, Collaborative Library Services Coordinator, Boston Public Library (BPL) presented the following report:

In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, all locations of the Boston Public Library have closed to the public until further notice, effective March 16 at 6:00 P.M. Staff members are working remotely. Any library card set to expire in the coming weeks has been assigned a new expiration date for October 2020. The maximum fine threshold that would trigger a block to online material has been temporarily raised to $1,000 to minimize barriers to online access. To assure no overdue fines will accrue during this time, we extended due dates through May 30 on material currently checked out to patrons. On Wednesday, April 1, the Metro Boston Library Network agreed to extend this date, for all network lent material, through June 30. This change in the ILS affected ~142,400 items.

**Digital Services**

* Tom Blake reached out to academic institutions asking them to send a list of course reserves as they switched to a distance learning model. At this time, we’ve received ~4000 item ISBNs from six different institutions. After running a process to find matches in the IA/Open Library system we found a successful match rate of ~20% and sent the results back to each separate institution.
* The Internet Archive has established a temporary National Emergency Library which Boston Public Library has publicly endorsed. The emergency library is based on the Internet Archives Controlled Digital Lending model (physical copy of book is held, so that a digital copy can be lent, two weeks at time, with protections in place to inhibit further duplication). During this extraordinary time, the Internet Archive has removed its waitlist, allowing for simultaneous use, but maintaining two-week check outs and digital protections against further duplication. They are allowing this until June 30, 2020 to meet a specific need as libraries around the world are closed and people cannot access the physical materials that would ordinarily be available to them.

**Community Learning**

* Starting yesterday, April 1, we began offering a weekly online ESL class on Wednesdays from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. It is planned to add more classes to this schedule. Looking to advertise at bulletin boards in spaces people are still visiting, such as groceries and laundromats.
* Niche Academy: several staff were given the opportunity to take a Niche Academy training for how to build their own online tutorials. Many tutorials demonstrate the use of databases and other online resources, but a wider range of topics are being added as we increase the pool of librarians creating these.
* It is difficult to reach a lot of the population this department serves, as most of our capacity is tech based, and this group may be limited in skills or access to technology. We are working on a process for patrons to be able to call for Computer, Smartphone, Tech Support by calling our regular number and transferring to appropriate staff using a software called DialPad.

**Kirstein Business Library and Innovation Center (KBLIC)**

Small Business:

* Small Business Owners can continue to get one on one mentoring, but they are now being conducted via telephone. Call 617-565-5591 to schedule a session.
* Local law firm Goodwin is planning to offer a CARES Act overview for small business owners via Zoom/Webinar for a TBD date in April. They are continuing to offer their small business legal consultations via telephone on the third Thursday of the month. Sign up for slots dated: April 16, May 21, June 18
* Blog Post: Has Covid-19 Affected Your Business?

**Financial Literacy:**

* We are working with the Office of Financial Empowerment to offer a Virtual Credit Building Workshop in April, date TBD.
* LibGuide: Managing Your Money for Beginners

**Jobseekers:**

* Patrons can submit resume letters/cover letters for review. Submit to ask@bpl.org
* Blog Post: Unemployment Resources During the COVID-19 Pandemic

**Nonprofits:**

* Nonprofits can search for grant money remotely using our Foundation Center electronic resource. This access is only available for shutdown duration.

**Remote Reference**

* Online ASK@bpl.org email questions were up in March (424), more than double from February (206). The vast majority of these questions are patrons asking about their PIN numbers, expired library card reactivation, questions about holds, returning library books, etc. Some patrons are asking for help trouble-shooting e-book downloads and other kinds of device/online tech help. Very few actual reference questions, with the exception of out of state people who continue to ask for genealogy related articles, etc. Very few phone calls are being received.

**Online Collections/Remote Usage**

Moving our collections budget toward digital content purchasing for the near future.

**Regarding eCard registrations:**

* From March 1-25, 2020: 8,437 total new eCard registrations.
* That’s more than double the number of eCard registrations in the entire month of March 2019 (4,211) with a week remaining to account for in March 2020.
* 63% of those registrations (i.e., 5,338) occurred once the BPL closed (i.e., March 16-25).

The percentage increases between March 16-25 (first 10-day period of closure) over the previous 10- day period, March 6-15 (10-day period before closure) for the Overdrive, Hoopla, and Kanopy platforms:

* Overdrive (eBooks) up 22%
* Hoopla (movies, TV, music, ebooks, and comics) up 61%
* Kanopy (movies) up 142%

We have increased Hoopla checkouts from 10 up to 12, and Kanopy from 4 up to 8

OverDrive usage has seen a 40% growth in Unique Users from March 2019 to this year, March 2020. Increase in Children’s materials checkouts has risen sharply so we have been purchasing more eContent there to reduce the hold ratios and get more available to patrons faster.

* Juvenile material checkouts ~8,000 in March 2019, up to ~15,000 in March 2020.
* Youth Services team has also created a LibGuide highlighting remote services relating to their audience, including programs such as live-streaming story times: Remote Resources for Families and Youth

**Standing Committee and Liaison Reports**

**Commissioner Activities**

**Commissioner Ball**

* Participated in the Executive Committee Call

**Commissioner Cluggish**

* Participated in the Executive Committee Call
* Following ALA Advocacy on Twitter

**Commissioner Kronholm**

* Participated in the Executive Committee Call
* Spoke at the March 6 Legislative Breakfast at the East Forest Park Branch of the Springfield City Library

**Commissioner Resnick**

* Spoke at the March 6 Legislative Breakfast at the East Forest Park Branch of the Springfield City Library
* Spoke at the Monson Legislative Breakfast

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Commissioner Ball moved and Commissioner Perille seconded to adjourn the April 2, 2020 monthly business meeting of the Board of Library Commissioners at 1:02 P.M.



Mary Kronholm

Secretary