**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS special meeting**

**Date:** Thursday, December 17, 2020

**Time:**  10:00 A.M.

**Place:**  Zoom Meeting

**Present:** Mary Ann Cluggish, Chair; Les Ball, Vice Chair; N. Janeen Resnick, Secretary; Deb Abraham; Stacy DeBole; Mary Kronholm; Gina Perille

**Absent:** Philip Madell, Esq.; Roland A. Ochsenbein

**Staff Present:**

James Lonergan, Director; 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; Paul Kissman, Library Information Systems 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 Present:**

Carine Aurelio, Assistant Librarian, Lawrence Academy; Michelle Eberle, Consultant, Massachusetts Library System (MLS); Amanda Fauver, Membership and Biblo Temps Manager, Massachusetts Library System (MLS); April Mazza, Consultant, Massachusetts Library System (MLS); Terry McQuown, Consulting and Training Services Director, Massachusetts Library System (MLS); Betsy Meaden, Business and Human Resources Director, Massachusetts Library System (MLS); Sharon Shaloo, Executive Director, Massachusetts Center for the Book; Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director, Massachusetts Library System (MLS); Abby Straus, Consultant, Maverick & Boutique

**Meeting called to order by Chair Cluggish**

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

Welcome everyone! Thank you for attending this special meeting of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners on December 17, 2020, with one agenda item, approval of the Strategic Plan.

At the end of the meeting there is time for public comment. Should you wish to address the Board, please wait to be recognized by the Chair.

May I remind you of Zoom etiquette: Stay on mute if not speaking, “raise hand” by pushing the button if you want to speak, speak when recognized by Chair, feel free to use the comment panel for short comments.

May I confirm that Lauren Stara will monitor comments and raised hands, and she will let me know if someone wants to speak.

Will staff and observers please identify themselves in the comment section and indicate your affiliation—we are required to keep a log of those attending this virtual public meeting.

Before we move on I will call the roll per open meeting law.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Here | Commissioner DeBole- Here | Commissioner Ochsenbein- Absent |
| Commissioner Ball- Here | Commissioner Kronholm- Here | Commissioner Perille- Here |
| Chair Cluggish - Here | Commissioner Madell- Absent | Commissioner Resnick- Here |

All commissioners are present with the exception of Philip Madell and Roland Ochsenbein who are unavailable and not in attendance. However, Roland, who was a member of the Strategic Planning Committee, sent comments via an email to James and me and I have forwarded them to Commissioners prior to this meeting as part of the discussion for today's meeting. For purposes of the Open Meeting Law, I have asked that his remarks be part of the minutes.

Commissioners received the Strategic Plan document on November 20, after it had been reviewed by the Staff and the Strategic Planning Committee which included four Commissioners, Les Ball, Jan Resnick, Roland Ochsenbein and me. All Commissioners were asked on Nov 20 to send in any edits, comments, errors or omissions. There were suggestions and edits by Commissioners and final changes were made at that time.

This meeting today was posted on December 10when Commissioners received a link to the Strategic Plan Document entitled Draft Strategic Plan 12-1-20 and also the Implementation Plan which is in process right now as an Excel document. The Implementation Plan may be misunderstood; I personally believe it was mislabeled, being called the “Strategic Plan Framework”, rather than the “Draft Implementation Plan”.

Once we vote the Strategic Plan today the word “Draft” will be removed from the Document.

On December 10, Commissioners were asked to send any questions or comments to James Lonergan for the purpose of saving time at this meeting.

From the comments that came in, it appears to me that at this late date, there is still confusion about what the Strategic Plan is and what the Implementation Plan *will be.*

I see the Strategic Plan as an aspirational document at the 50,000 foot level. However, the Implementation Plan is where the rubber meets the road, where the details and action items of how we will work to achieve these aspirational goals, who will be responsible for achieving those goals, by what measurements, over the next 5 years. This is in process and still to be written and reviewed.

The Strategic Plan itself has now been in process for more than 11 months and has had extensive input and review by all of our affiliates and numerous other groups. I have asked Abby and James to describe the process for both documents. They will answer submitted questions in their comments.

Please be aware that people have squeezed this meeting into their busy day, and others have appointments right afterward.

To make this meeting as efficient as possible, I would like to have a motion and second to approve the plan and put it on the table for discussion.

Commissioner Perille moved and Commissioners Resnick seconded to approve the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.

Abby Straus, Consultant, Maverick & Boutique went through the entire process.

**The Strategic Planning Process**

Overview

* Process fundamentally what was proposed
* Adapted to conditions with COVID‐19
* Engaged broad range of stakeholders
* Staff involved in making the plan
* Development of implementation plan begun in tandem with strategic plan
* Completion delayed with no loss in quality or engagement

Strategic Planning Committee (SPC)

* Mary Ann Cluggish
* Roland Oschenbein (with us for most of the project)
* Mary Kronholm (with us for most of the project)
* Jan Resnick
* Les Ball
* Gina Perille (joined later)
* James Lonergan
* Tracey Dimant
* Rob Favini
* Paul Kissman
* Mary Rose Quinn
* Maryellen Osborne
* Andrea Bunker
* Matt Perry
* Evan Knight (joined for some activities later in the project)

Planning Meetings & Release of Documents

* January: Kick‐off meeting with strategic planning committee
* January: Meeting with staff (discussed staff involvement and committed to same). At this meeting, we agreed to have a staff representative from each division on the strategic planning committee to ensure adequate staff input into the plan.
* February: SPC meeting re stakeholder engagement
* April: MBLC staff strategic planning workshop
* July/August: Report of findings sent to SPC followed by workshop to review
* July/August: Report of findings sent to staff followed by workshop to review
* September: Staff began working on detailed action plan
* September: MBLC Board meeting re plan progress
* September: Workshop with SPC to review and discuss plan framework. After this workshop, the plan framework went to staff for input.
* October: Meeting 1 of the Vision/Mission/Values working group
* Abby Straus, M&B, Facilitator
* Andrea Bunker
* Celeste Bruno
* Evan Knight
* Gina Perille
* October: Meeting 2 of the Vision/Mission/Values working group. The Vision/Mission/Values document was shared with staff and SPC for input.
* November: Draft plan sent to affiliates
* November: Draft strategic plan sent to BLC

Community Engagement

* Goal: To include diverse voices from across the commonwealth—and within the organization—so that the plan reflects the perspectives and needs of the all the people served by the MBLC.

Community Engagement Workshops

These workshops were attended by library directors and staff, trustees and Friends, affiliates, such as MLS, the networks, MLA, MSLA, etc., and MBLC staff.

1. February 18: Mashpee Public Library
2. February 18: Boyden Library, Foxborough
3. February 19: Minuteman Library Network, Natick
4. February 19: Shrewsbury Public Library
5. February 20: Lawrence Public Library
6. March 11: MLS, Northampton This meeting was rescheduled to an online workshop held on April 23 due to the state shutting down for COVID‐19.

Focus Groups

* March: Public Library Ecosystem Report Committee
* April: Automated Network Executive Directors and Network Reps
* May: State Advisory Council on Libraries (SACL)
* June: Board of Library Commissioners
* June: MA Friends/Trustees

Interviews

Interviews were held in the month of March.

1. Alex Reczkowski, Director, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield
2. Becky Plimpton, President, CMLA
3. David Leonard, President, BPL
4. Esme Green, President. MLA
5. Jessica Vilas‐Novas, Director. Lawrence Public Library
6. Joe Rodio, Director. South Hadley Public Library
7. Kim Charlson, Director, Perkins Library
8. Laura Luker, President, MSLA
9. Lee Ann Hooley, Director, Worcester Talking Book Library
10. Nora Blake, President, WMLA
11. Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director, MLS
12. Sharon Shaloo, Executive Director, Massachusetts Center for the Book
13. Tim Cherubini, Executive Director, COSLA
14. Will Adamczyk, Director, Milton Public Library and MLS board member

**WHAT WE HEARD**

Social Issues Providing Challenges

* Diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice a top concern
* Polarized political environment and decline in civility
* Growing disparities: income, access to technology, access to health care and healthy food
* Anxiety growing, especially in young people
* Homelessness
* Immigration – disinformation about immigration and immigrant families
* Substance abuse
* Fake news and disregard of science
* Concern about use of big data and privacy
* Accessibility to information for differently abled people
* Decline in the understanding of common good and the value of the public good
* COVID‐19 amplifying many existing issues

Challenges for Library Community

* Uncertainty about the future of/for libraries
* Continuing confusion about the roles of MBLC, MLS, etc.
* Lack of awareness about the role of libraries today and their services
* Increasing need for non‐traditional services in communities, e.g., social services
* Struggle with shift in value of libraries from serving individuals to serving communities
* Increased urgency to provide equitable access to technology
* Need to look through a different lens to focus on accessibility for everyone – “a place where patrons can be their best selves”
* Need for innovative approaches to funding
* The traditional approach to advocacy doesn’t address the changing conversation about why libraries are important
* Mismatch between the credentialing side and what’s needed. How do we make space for non‐traditional librarians?
* Concern that “everything is Boston‐centric”
* School libraries are poorly served

What MBLC Does Well

* MBLC Staff: Excellent and supportive staff, technical expertise, space planning support
* Resource Sharing/Technology: eBooks & eContent – support and coordination, databases, digitization, preservation work, ComCat, ARIS software, Ecosystem software, statewide delivery system, summer reading program
* Grants: LSTA program, construction program, SLIN grants
* Collaboration: MLA, supporting school librarians with MSLA, state planning agencies, arts and culture community, MLS
* Training/Continuing Education: Trustees and Friends training, statewide certification, workshops, disaster preparedness
* Advocacy/Funding: Focused and balanced funding priorities, advocating for increased funding, legislative agenda, legislative breakfasts, state aid for public libraries, centralized advocacy, public relations materials

What Can Be Improved

* Grants: Construction grants for smaller projects, grants for school libraries, eliminate waiting list, grants for academic libraries
* Technology: Consulting for website design/accessibility, statewide licenses for eContent, support eRate, “circuit riders” to provide tech support to smaller libraries
* Facilities: Space planning resources, post construction support (staffing, more patrons, etc.), flexible construction & design guidelines
* Reporting: ARIS report (burdensome, particularly for smaller libraries), circulation numbers (include inhouse use), reduce admin workload for small libraries, generate useful/actionable reports for staffing & salaries
* Programs: Databases for public libraries, community of interest for academic libraries, statewide coordination of temporary experts on trending topics, guidelines for managing increasing expectations for libraries to do more with less, statewide library card, legal support for challenges, continuing education especially for trustees/school librarians
* Marketing/Outreach: Clarity around services/resources of MBLC, MLS, MLA; better understanding of what MBLC does & what its services are, advocate for school libraries, library engagement sessions with MBLC, in‐person state updates at regional/network meetings, who commissioners are and what they do
* Funding/Finance: More awareness of library costs & value, how they are funded, state aid formula, how databases are purchased
* Staff: Availability of MBLC staff for training, getting to know MBLC staff, staffing organization, more site visits
* Other: Diversity among commissioners, more access to commissioners by libraries, library advisory services regarding policy questions

**Strategic & Implementation Plans**

1. Strategic Plan (Complete)
* Strategic level roadmap for MBLC
* Vision, mission, core principles
* Goal areas
* Strategic objectives
1. Implementation Plan (In process)
* Detailed roadmap for achieving objectives in the strategic plan
* Includes: Budgets, staff who will accomplish the tasks, timelines, review dates and completion targets, and measurable indicators that will let us know when a task has been successfully completed and an objective met

**THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

**Goal 1: Strengthen the Massachusetts Library Community**

*The MBLC provides support and guidance to help libraries in the Commonwealth thrive.*

Objectives:

1. Provide advice and guidance to libraries and their communities
2. Working with affiliates and partners, ensure that the Library Community is informed about and supported in taking action to achieve equity, diversity, and inclusion
3. Working with affiliates and partners, ensure that library trustees, directors, librarians, and staff receive the training they require and the tools they need to sustain and adapt their services, collections, programs, and facilities in support of their communities’ evolving needs and conditions
4. Provide a variety of grant opportunities to libraries of diverse types and sizes, ensuring equitable access by all communities to grant funds

**Goal 2: Cultivate Partnerships for Mutual Benefit**

*The MBLC develops robust relationships in support of libraries and their communities.*

Objectives:

1. Continue to clarify the roles of library‐related affiliates and partners in Massachusetts and communicate these roles to libraries, library advocates, legislators, and governing authorities
2. Identify and cultivate traditional and non‐traditional partnerships

**Goal 3: Develop Sustainable Resource and Funding Streams**

*The MBLC works to ensure that libraries have the resources they need to serve their communities.*

Objectives:

1. Work with advocates, partners, and affiliates to secure sustainable state funding for all MBLC budget lines and for the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program, and to secure sustainable federal funding to support the MBLC’s programs and services
2. Work with partners and affiliates to achieve maximum effectiveness of resources through alignment of effort and efficient use of funds
3. Lead the exploration of alternative monetary and other resources that can help support libraries in Massachusetts

**Goal 4: Advance Equitable Access to Resources**

*The MBLC facilitates access to physical and digital tools and resources for libraries and library users of all abilities throughout the Commonwealth.*

Objectives:

1. Ensure equitable access to statewide electronic library resources
2. Promote excellent connectivity and technology infrastructure, training, and support frameworks to equitably meet the needs of library users in Massachusetts

**Goal 5: Build Resilience**

*The MBLC supports libraries in preparing for and adapting to a changing world.*

Objectives:

1. Lead statewide exploration of the future of libraries in Massachusetts and the conditions in which they may be operating
2. Develop alternative, adaptive service models and methods for continuity in disruptive times and support libraries in doing the same
3. Support the Massachusetts library community in learning about and implementing sustainable practices, including adaptable physical facilities

**Goal 6: Build Capacity at the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners**

*By developing the capacity of staff and board, and by improving our culture and ways of working, the MBLC increases its ability to fulfill its mission.*

Objectives:

1. Strengthen the MBLC Board and staff with the tools and training they require to operate efficiently and effectively
2. Identify and provide opportunities for individual and team development for MBLC staff and leadership
3. Optimize MBLC’s culture, structures, and ways of working together
4. Ensure that MBLC advisory bodies represent diverse library stakeholder constituencies
5. Ensure that all activities of the MBLC support equity, diversity, inclusion, and racial and social justice

**Chair Cluggish called for a vote**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Abstain | Commissioner DeBole- Abstain  | Commissioner Ochsenbein- Not present  |
| Commissioner Ball- Abstain  | Commissioner Kronholm- Yes | Commissioner Perille- YES |
| Chair Cluggish - YES | Commissioner Madell- Not Present  | Commissioner Resnick- YES |

Director Lonergan suggested that the wording from the motion from the last plan that was approved in August 2017 be considered: “The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners adopts the Strategic Plan: FY2018-FY2020 presented at the August 3, 2017 meeting and subsequently revised to incorporate limited edits by the Commissioners.”

**Remarks from Roland Ochsenbein**

I have reviewed the strategic plan again in its final draft form and also the expanded version in the Excel spreadsheets. I think the goals and objectives are solid, reflect broad and thoughtful input, and are well tuned to the most important issues of our time. I think the first page of vision, mission and core principles is powerful in its brevity. I would urge the board to approve the motion to adopt the core plan as presented.

That it not say that the plan is complete. I think that the implementation part of the plan, as shown in the expanded spreadsheet, needs additional review and substance.

In my mind the key to this plan is thinking of an “objective” not as an end state to be attained but rather as a strategic priority. While some objectives may in fact reflect end states (“identity and clarify roles…”), most it seems to me are more accurately described as key ongoing efforts (“support libraries and regional/statewide organizations in their advocacy efforts"). In this light then, I think that the “action items” become the key to making this plan work on a practical basis, and they are also the key to providing a hook to accountability.

The action items, in theory, should be combinations of specific activities that, if performed successfully, are collectively likely to result in achieving or advancing the associated objective. You can report out progress on the overall plan by reviewing the action items–was the action item accomplished, yes/no; did it advance the objective as expected, yes/no. As such, I think this is an area that needs more work. In some cases, the action items proposed now are simply a restatement of the objective, and in other cases I think that even if all the included action items were completed, successful attainment of the objective may not be assured. I think the action item category for each objective needs to be thought of as “what are ALL the most important specific things we can or need to do in order to achieve the desired outcome as described in the objective.” And they can be flexible and adjusted on the fly to respond to changing conditions and circumstances.

In my view, it is critical to get this part right because it gives daily direction as to where to focus and how to prioritize resources, and it provides a way to report out progress on the plan.

**Commissioner Remarks**

Commissioner DeBole asked about the process and giving feedback. Ms. DeBole stated that she misunderstood the reason for this meeting. She thought this was the opportunity for the Commissioners to come together as a group and discuss the plan and then vote in January.

Commissioner Abraham put the following statement into the Zoom chat to be added to the mission statement.

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners promotes equitable access, advances innovation, strives for excellence, and fosters resilience in libraries, across the Commonwealth through advocacy, funding, guidance, partnerships and the coordination of statewide services. adds are strives for excellence and advocacy removes as a state agency.

MBLC Staff who were on the team to write the mission statement felt “as a state agency: is extremely important because we are a state agency and that is what is clearly the difference between us and MLS.”

Chair Cluggish asked Commissioner Perille if she would amend her original motion.

Commissioner Perille moved and Commissioner Resnick seconded to approve the Strategic Plan: 2021-2025 presented at the December 17, 2020 meeting and subsequently revised to incorporate limited edits by the Commissioners

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes | Commissioner Ochsenbein- Not present  |
| Commissioner Ball- Yes | Commissioner Kronholm- Yes | Commissioner Perille- YES |
| Chair Cluggish - YES | Commissioner Madell- Not Present  | Commissioner Resnick- YES |

**The motion passes.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Cluggish stated that the Governor has made cuts to the Perkins and Worcester Talking Book Libraries, Library Technology and Resource Sharing , and Mass Center for the Book lines please contact him to override vetoes on these items.

**List of documents for the December 17, 2020 Special Board Meeting:**

1. Agenda for the December 17, 2020 Special Board Meeting
2. Draft MBLC 2021-2025 Strategic Plan
3. Draft Strategic Plan Framework

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Commissioner Resnick moved and Commissioner Kronholm seconded to adjourn the December 17, 2020 Special Meeting of the Board of Library Commissioners at 2:40 PM.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes | Commissioner Ochsenbein- Not present  |
| Commissioner Ball- Yes | Commissioner Kronholm- Yes | Commissioner Perille- YES |
| Chair Cluggish- YES | Commissioner Madell- Not Present  | Commissioner Resnick- YES |



N. Janeen Resnick

Secretary