**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS monthly regular meeting**

**Date:** Thursday, March 4, 2021

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

**Place:**  Zoom Meeting

**Present:** Mary Ann Cluggish, Chair; N. Janeen Resnick, Secretary; Deb Abraham; Vicky Biancolo; George Comeau; Debby Conrad; Stacy DeBole; Mary Kronholm

**Absent:** Les Ball, Vice Chair

 Mary Kronholm joined meeting at 10:31 A.M.

 Stacy DeBole left meeting at 12:00 P.M.

 George Comeau left meeting at 12:30 P.M.

**Staff Present:**

James Lonergan, Director; Liz Babbitt, State Aid Specialist; Celeste Bruno, Communications Director; Andrea Bunker, Library Building Specialist; Kate Butler, Electronic Services Specialist; Maura Deedy, Library Advisory Specialist; Tracey Dimant, Head of Operations & Budget; Rob Favini, Head of Library Advisory and Development; Paul Kissman, Library Information Systems Specialist; Rachel Masse, Assistant to the Director; Matthew Perry, Communications Specialist; Mary Rose Quinn, Head of State Programs / Government Liaison; Aparna Ramachandran, Data Analyst/ IT Support Specialist; Lauren Stara, Library Building Specialist

**Observers Present:**

Jeanne Cianciola, Trustee Chair, John Curtis Free Library, Hanover; Roberta Flashman, Trustee, Ashby Free Public Library; Ron Gagnon, Executive Director, North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE); Catherine Halpin, Collaborative Library Services Coordinator, Boston Public Library (BPL); Alysa Hayden, Assistant Director, Peabody Institute Library, Peabody; Nicole Langley, Library Director, Stoneham Public Library; Marie Letarte, Library Director, Bigelow Free Public Library, Clinton; Jeannette Lundgren, Network Administrator, CW MARS, Inc.; Rob MacLean, Library Director, Weymouth Public Libraries; Tara Mansfield, Library Director, Salem Public Library; Brittany McDougal, Director, Oxford Free Public Library; Krista McLeod, Library Director, Nevins Memorial Library, Methuen/ Board Member, Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB); Cate Merlin, Library Director, Peabody Institute Library, Peabody; Sharon Shaloo, Executive Director, Massachusetts Center for the Book; David Slater, Network Administrator, Old Colony Library Network (OCLN); Mike Slawson, Library Director, Kingston Public Library; Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director, Massachusetts Library System (MLS); Cathie Sullivan, Assistant Director, Oxford Free Public Library; Harry Roger Williams III, Library Trustee, Oxford Free Public Library

**Meeting called to order by Chair Cluggish**

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

Chair Cluggish stated that she is required to take a roll call of Commissioners to comply for the Open Meeting Law for remote meetings.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Yes | Commissioner Cluggish- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes |
| Commissioner Ball- Absent | Commissioner Comeau- Yes | Commissioner Kronholm- Absent |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Resnick- Yes |

Commissioner Kronholm was not present for the roll call but joined the meeting at 10:31 A.M.

Chair Cluggish also explained that she would be making a motion for a consent agenda. A consent agenda is a board meeting practice that groups routine motions into the consent agenda. If there are no objections, the Chair can declare a motion passed, rather than counting votes for each motion separately.

Chair Cluggish moved to adopt a consent agenda for this meeting for agenda item #2, approval of minutes, agenda 7, approval of municipality for State Aid, and item #16 to Adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Resnick seconded.

Chair Cluggish took a roll of Commissioners for the consent agenda.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Yes | Commissioner Cluggish- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes |
| Commissioner Ball- Absent | Commissioner Comeau- Yes | Commissioner Kronholm- Absent |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Resnick- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

**Approval of Minutes from the regular monthly meeting: February 4, 2021**

Chair Cluggish asked for a motion to approve the minutes under the consent agenda.

Commissioner Resnick moved and Commissioner DeBole seconded to approve, with minor edits, the minutes from the February 4, 2021 Regular Monthly Meeting under the consent agenda.

**Hearing no objection, Chair Cluggish declared the motion passed under the consent agenda.**

**Chair’s Report**

Chair Cluggish presented the following report:

In the past month I participated in or observed the following Virtual Events:

* MLA Legislative Committee meeting
* Building Literacy podcast: Taxes and Capital Projects
* Let's Talk Legislative! event with Celeste, Jan Resnick, Mary Rose, Matt Perry & others
* Completed James Lonergan performance review
* Executive board meeting

I worked with the MLA Legislative Committee to help contact members of the Massachusetts Delegation to co-sponsor the Build America’s Libraries Act in the House of Representatives. It was introduced in the House yesterday, March 3. If passed, the $5 billion Act would fund upgrades to the nation's library infrastructure, especially in underserved communities.

On March 9, James Lonergan and I will testify virtually regarding the **FY2022 Legislative Agenda** in front of the Joint Ways and Means Committee.

I will speak at the end of four Library Legislative Day events with the Call to Action. MLA Legislative Day/s will be held virtually on April 6-7-8.

First, I am delighted to welcome George Comeau back to the MBLC. George has not only served on the Board before, he has served a total of 13 years. George's experience includes serving as Chair during the difficult financial years of 2008-9, when library funding was truly at risk for a very large number of libraries across the state and state funding lines took a huge cut. I'll ask George to further introduce himself during Commissioner Reports.

At last month's meeting, we heard the MAR waiver petitions of 4 municipalities that received disproportionate cuts: Kingston, Hanover, Stoneham, and Oxford. Today, Mary Rose will review their petitions and explain the options, process and ramifications. Commissioners will either grant each of them a Waiver with Reservation or deny them Certification. The possible motions are in your packet. We will vote on each municipality individually.

Just a reminder of the definitions from the page that was distributed during the webinar with Mary Rose and Liz Babbitt.

* Waiver: may be granted to municipalities only if the library is not disproportionately cut.
* Waiver with Reservation: may be granted to municipalities where the library receives a disproportionate cut.

Personally, I have always thought of “Waivers with Reservation” as waivers that are granted *despite* a municipality receiving a disproportionate cut and are granted *despite* the fact that a significant gap exists between library funding and the funding of other departments.

Denying a waiver means a loss of certification; the loss of certification means a loss of State Aid funds, high probability of the loss of reciprocal borrowing, the loss of support through the Small Libraries in Networks Program and more.

A special Congratulations to Lauren Stara and Callan Bignoli on the publication of their book “Responding to Rapid Change in Libraries: A User Experience Approach”. It is not only being sold on the ALA (American Library Association) website, but also available on Amazon. Once again, Massachusetts leads the way!

**Commissioner Reports**

**Commissioner Comeau** spoke about how truly thankful he was to be back working with libraries. He stated “just when I thought I was out, I pulled myself right back in.” He stated how excited he was to be working with the staff at the MBLC and alongside his fellow Commissioners. He said, “Life is richer with libraries.”

**Commissioner Abraham**

* Participated in MBLC’s Let’s Talk Legislative Zoom Session- February 17, 2021
* Attended Massachusetts Internet Connect- February 18, 2021
* Participated in the Proactive Advocacy and Communication with Lori Fisher the Asst. State Librarian for New Hampshire - United for Libraries - February 23, 2021
* Attended Boston Public Library Repairing America series. Neha Sangwan was presenter How to Use the Disruptive Energy of a Pandemic to Make Your Business Thrive - can apply to any organization. An excellent program – a recording will be available soon. I recommend it to all. - February 25, 2021
* Attended Meet the Candidates - Needham local program which was a bit of that proactive advocacy February 27, 2021

**Commissioner Biancolo**

* Participated in BPL’s Repairing America Webinar
* Participated in MBLC’s Let’s Talk Legislative Zoom Session

**Commissioner Conrad**

* Participated in first MLS Board Meeting as liaison
* Participated in MBLC’s Let’s Talk Legislative Zoom Session
* Chatting with State Rep. about Legislative Day and Legislative Agenda

**Commissioner DeBole**

* Attended Library Space at the 2 inaugural sessions of Maura's Trustee Deep Dive Workshops for the month of February by Andrea Bunker and Lauren Stara

**Commissioner Resnick**

* Attended WMLA Board Meeting & Planning Session for 4-County Library Legislative Breakfast
* Participated in Tri-State Summer Reading Conference
* Participated in MBLC Executive Committee Meeting
* Continues to talk to people about becoming Future Commissioners

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Director Lonergan presented the following report:

Meetings/activities since the last monthly Board meeting:

* February 5—MLA Legislative Committee meeting, virtual
* February 8—MLS Executive Board meeting, virtual
* February 10—Council of State Library Agencies in the Northeast (COSLINE) meeting, virtual
* February 10—Schools, Health, & Libraries (SHLB) Coalition “Biden and Broadband” webinar
* February 10—Phone call with Noah McClanan, Deputy Director, Office of Boards and Commissions
* February 11— Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) Nominating Committee meeting, virtual
* February 12—MLA Executive Board meeting, virtual
* February 16—"COVID and Workplace Law: A Practical Primer” webinar
* February 17— “Let’s Talk Legislative!” webinar
* February 18—Mass. Internet Connect Library Training webinar
* February 24—Public Library Director’s Lunch Meeting, virtual
* February 25—Presented as part of COSLA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Engagement Group panel, virtual
* March 1—Orientation/update phone call with Commissioner Comeau
* March 2—Phone call with U.S. Rep. Moulton’s office re: Build America’s Libraries Act
* March 3—Briefing with ALA Office of Public Policy and Advocacy re: Build America’s Libraries Act

Commissioner Cluggish and I will be testifying virtually regarding the **FY2022 Legislative Agenda** in front of the Joint Ways and Means Committee next Tuesday, March 9 as part of their Economic Development/Housing/Labor hearing.

MLA and MSLA will be holding four virtual **Library Legislative Day** events for different regions of the Commonwealth on **April 6-8** (during National Library Week). Members of the legislature’s Library Caucus have been invited to speak at each session. I have been asked to give the legislative agenda briefings and Chair Cluggish will issue a call to action at the end of each session.

ALA will not be having a Fly-in or **National Library Legislative Day** this year. In the meantime, the Public Policy and Advocacy office (PPA) will be doing some targeted outreach with Members of Congress during National Library Week in April as the regular appropriations process gets underway.

We have unofficially heard from A&F that our **construction spending cap** will most likely be level-funded at $20 million for FY2022. Capital Planning and A&F in general are focusing on maintaining existing levels of funding commitments for existing programs, and they do not anticipate many, if any, increased funding lines. We will hear about the FY2022 cap officially in June.

The [**Build America’s Libraries Act**](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.ala.org_news_member-2Dnews_2020_12_ala-2Dwelcomes-2Dbuild-2Damericas-2Dlibraries-2Dact&d=DwMFAw&c=lDF7oMaPKXpkYvev9V-fVahWL0QWnGCCAfCDz1Bns_w&r=0U55ApN2m4A78zFCD70K44pBwwOK_KKmcw2sHEeTgiQ&m=2cdRLtvFeBTSlW93xIofWKQHv-jh_4vVOFtOmo4BMRo&s=MYphlf_D9Q63M8f-N6efkvjTLGjqnlg4FLcg4edIhWw&e=), introduced in the Senate by Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), will be introduced in the House next week by Representatives Andy Levin and Don Young. ALA reached out to MLA and me to ask us to contact our U.S. representatives to ask them to consider co-sponsoring the bill.

As I mentioned in my January report, the legislation would provide $5 billion to would fund upgrades to the nation's library infrastructure to address challenges such as natural disasters, COVID-19, broadband capacity, environmental hazards, and accessibility barriers. Eligible uses of the funding include conducting facilities condition assessments, needs assessments, and master planning; financing new library facilities; or making capital improvements to existing library facilities, including buildings, grounds, and bookmobiles.

Improvements to library facilities could include enhancements to protect health and safety, such as preventing the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating risks from natural disasters; upgrades to broadband equipment and technology hardware; ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities; abating hazards such as mold and lead; and increasing environmental sustainability, such as energy efficiency.

Funding would be distributed through IMLS to state library agencies, which would then award grants on a competitive basis to libraries in each state. Funding would be prioritized to libraries serving marginalized communities, such as high-poverty areas. Additionally, IMLS would provide funding directly to tribal libraries.

We have recently held preliminary internal discussions about how we might potentially use funds from the Build America’s Libraries Act if it becomes law. We have discussed using Build America’s Libraries Act funds for single-purpose projects including for HVAC upgrades, ADA access, and broadband/technology, and would focus on our most underserved and disadvantaged communities.

Massachusetts is one of 15 states that currently have library construction programs, and we would want to be careful not to jeopardize the strong support and funding we currently have for public library construction and renovation in the Commonwealth.

**FY22 LSTA Direct Grant Round Update**: Draft applications were due on Feb 18th. We saw a small number of libraries drop out of the application process. We expect this grant round to remain strong and very competitive. Consultants are now busily reviewing draft applications and meeting with applicants to improve their applications. The draft application review phase ends on March 18, with final grant applications due on April 6.

**Trustee Orientations:** Maura Deedy posted Trustee Orientation recordings on the MBLC YouTube Channel. The orientations are now available on demand with closed captioning. The sessions playlist can be found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8sEE3QSEA0&list=PL2WG1IheuhE_plqv13EvPLzWq_Mz5wEBV>

**Trustee Deep Dives:** Maura launched MBLC’s new Trustee Deep Dives series. These hour-long programs provide an in-depth overview of a topic and provide time for conversation and questions. Sessions will be presented twice a month, during and after work hours. The first sessions, held on February 16 and 24, featured our own Andrea Bunker and Lauren Stara discussing library space planning. The sessions had a combined attendance of 73. Future topics will be on Recruiting New Trustees, Evaluating the Library Director, and Working with Friends.

**Trustees New Director Search Guide Update:** On February 16 Maura convened the first meeting of an ad hoc advisory group to review the project and start with first impressions. The main deliverable will be a newly revised New Director Search Packet, and the committee will work on the text of the guide to ensure EDI best practices are included in every step.

The committee working on this project is:

* Hermayne Gordon, Woburn Public Library staff
* Sara Marks, Trustee of Pollard Memorial Library (Lowell) and current SACL member
* Lisa O’Donnell, Brockton Trustee, HR professional
* Eric Poulin, Simmons SLIS Coordinator, former president of MLA, former board member of MLS
* Nancy Rea, Woods Hole Trustee, and President of MA Library Trustee Association (MLTA)
* Giselle Stevens, Newburyport Public Library Director
* Maura Deedy, Library Advisory Specialist at MBLC

Maura hosted this year’s first **Friends Sharing with Friends Coffee Hour** on February 11 with 27 attendees to talk about Library Giving Day. The Friends of Sunderland Public Library discussed their experience. Library Giving Day started as an idea generated by the Seattle Public Library Foundation. The concept was to create a national day of giving that public libraries would rally around and that the public would embrace. To learn more about it: <https://librarygivingday.org/>

Maura will be facilitating the MLA Annual Conference session: “Does the Mayor Have a Library Card: Understanding Local Government and Making Libraries Important to It” in which attendees will learn about different types of municipal government in Massachusetts, and how to build relationships with elected and appointed leaders. Panelists will share their perspectives as municipal officials and the perspective of working with the library from the municipal side. Panelists include: Nicole LaChapelle, Mayor of Easthampton; Mehreen Butt, City Councilor in Wakefield, and John S. Mangiaratti. Town Manager in Acton.

On February 5, Evan Knight represented “The MBLC and SHRAB” (State Historical Records Advisory Board) at the Massachusetts Historical Alliance’s *Conversations on the Commons*. The meeting brought together representatives from local historical commissions, the Mass State Archives and the library community.

Evan also hosted *MBLC Topics in Preservation: What are your concerns*? on February 12. Twenty-three participants discussed current and future library preservation needs. The discussion will help to inform MBLC’s preservation and disaster response programs.

On February 10, Paul Kissman represented the MBLC by co-hosting “Providing Access to Justice for Public Library Patrons” along with representatives from the Mass. Trial Court Libraries and the Social Law Library. The session is one in a series that outline resources available to libraries and citizens across the state.

Paul also co-hosted MassHire’s Internet Connect webinar with MassHire and the Massachusetts Broadband Institute on February 18. The session outlined MassHire’s program that supplies internet access and computers to the unemployed to assist in job searching and job training.

The FY2022 legislative agenda site is live (<http://mblclegislativeagenda.com/>) and the Communications Team hosted two Let’s Talk Legislative sessions where the library community learned about legislative initiatives and got tips on working with state legislators. Representatives from library agencies and advocacy groups were on hand to talk about their efforts and answer questions:

MLA: Jennifer Harris & William Adamczyk, co-chairs MLA Legislative Committee
MBLC: Commissioner Jan Resnick, Maryrose Quinn, Matt Perry
CMLA:  Brittany McDougal (afternoon session), president CMLA
WMLA: Toni Golinsky-Foisy, president WMLA

There were 87 participants. The Communications Team sent a follow-up email to the library community with information from the sessions.

Reaction to the new legislative agenda has been positive. For example: “This year's legislative materials are stunning and powerfully crafted. Kudos!” Forbes Library Director

The [legislative page](https://mblc.state.ma.us/about-us/legislative-agenda.php) on the agency site was also edited to include all the legislative/affiliate fact sheets, the [Top 5 Reasons You should Care](https://mblc-newsroom-static.s3.amazonaws.com/collateral/official-docs/legislative/8122a0bb_top-5-reasons-to-care-about-mblc-funding_download.pdf), the [Benefits of State Aid](https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-aris/benefits-state-aid.php), and more.

The Communications Team also launched a new version of the [#LibraryLovers](https://www.lovemasslibraries.com/) campaign. Prior versions of the campaign were based on paper valentines, filled out by patrons and delivered to legislators by the MBLC. The two paper-based February campaigns yielded about 8,000 valentines.

This year the team worked with Buyer to create a new website where people could directly upload videos and pictures. The paper valentines were turned into print-friendly versions and coloring sheets for kids. The site can be sorted by library making it easy for local and state officials to see how patrons feel about libraries. Some are touching, some address pandemic issues, some are funny, and for many the pictures say it all.

A link to the valentines is included on the legislative page. The team held two zoom info sessions to introduce the campaign to the library community—62 people participated. Overall the campaign yielded about 200 valentines, much lower than anticipated. It may be that people are oversaturated with online activities, people’s attention is focused on the vaccine, or on any number of pandemic related issues.

Matt and Celeste were also podcast guests on Building Literacy: Public Library Construction. Their topic: [Advocacy Stories: Marketing and Communications Plans](https://www.buzzsprout.com/995062/8008457-advocacy-stories-marketing-and-communications-plans)

The team also worked with the business office to complete the RFQ process for the new three-year marketing plan. Buyer Advertising was selected.
These efforts support communications goals in both the 2021-2024 marketing plan and the implementation plan/strategic goals to:

* Increase librarian and library staff awareness of statewide campaigns and ready-made promotional materials/ Strengthen the Massachusetts Library Community: The MBLC provides support and guidance to help libraries in the Commonwealth thrive
* Increase awareness about the MBLC
* Build a sense of value of Massachusetts libraries/ Build Resilience

**LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

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

There was a Joint Ways and Means FY22 Budget Hearing held for the Department of Revenue (DOR) and Administration and Finance (ANF) to present testimony regarding the FY 2022 budget on Tuesday, March 2. ANF Secretary Michael Heffernan and DOR Commissioner Geoffrey Snyder were joined by the other constitutional officers and statewide officials, including Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin, State Treasurer Deb Goldberg, Attorney General Maura Healey, State Auditor Suzanne Bump, Inspector General Glenn Cunha, and EOTSS Secretary Curtis Wood to discuss the revenue projections and their budget needs for the FY 2022 budget. The MBLC is set to testify on Tuesday, March 9.

The Budget Browser from the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center has helpful information related to the MBLC budget lines from 2001 through the Governor’s FY 2022 House 1 proposal. The chart in this report includes the total of all MBLC budget lines with a column adjusted for inflation and a column with the actual annual appropriation. The link to the “libraries” page in the Budget Browser includes budgets broken down by individual line item as well. According to recent calculations, the MBLC budget lines in House 1 ($33,941,058) represent .0744% of the FY 2022 House 1 total proposed budget of $45.6 billion.

[**https://archive.massbudget.org/browser/subcat.php?id=Libraries**](https://archive.massbudget.org/browser/subcat.php?id=Libraries)

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If the United States Senate passes the House’s $1.9 trillion pandemic relief package through a process called reconciliation, Massachusetts is slated to receive approximately $8.2 billion. In addition to ongoing financial support for health-related priorities, the funds would be made available to cities and towns and small businesses and would continue to support the needs of residents hit hardest by the virus and subsequent economic fallout.

Total Tax collections for the month-to-date period were $889 million, up $255 million or 40.2% versus the same period in February 2020. The increase reflects the change in the start date of the income tax filing season. The month-to-date increase will level off once the State income taxes are filed and the refunds are processed. Income Taxestotaled $736 million, up $333 million or 82.5% versus the same period in February 2020. Sales & Use Taxeswere $74 million, down $11 million or 12.7% versus the same period in February 2020. Corporate and Business Taxeswere $26 million, up $8 million or 40.7% versus the same period in February 2020. Other Taxestotaled $53 million, down $75 million or 58.4% versus the same period in February 2020.

Celeste Bruno and Matt Perry organized two informational sessions in February titled: Let’s Talk Legislative”. In addition to the MBLC presenters, including Celeste, Matt, Mary Rose Quinn, and Commissioner Jan Resnick, speakers representing various library organizations and constituencies from across the Commonwealth shared their experiences and strategies communicating with officials at the state and local levels. Details from the two sessions, summarized by Celeste, are included in this report:

**Let’s Talk Legislative—Information from the sessions**
MBLC **Legislative Agenda**: [http://mblclegislativeagenda.com/](https://urldefense.com/v3/__http%3A/mblclegislativeagenda.com/__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!28ttIpTWlEOwt25beom4Rjlgjf2ZYRhjgP-zzZVcCqN3yMmnbr-ic4AOnWcXpW40eTG2sMs$)

**Top 5 Reasons you should care** about the MBLC Legislative Agenda
[http://mblclegislativeagenda.com/](https://urldefense.com/v3/__http%3A/mblclegislativeagenda.com/__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!28ttIpTWlEOwt25beom4Rjlgjf2ZYRhjgP-zzZVcCqN3yMmnbr-ic4AOnWcXpW40eTG2sMs$)

While the focus of the Legislative Agenda is increasing funding to State Aid, the MBLC creates Legislative **Fact Sheets for all of the state budget lines** including MLS and the Networks. This year’s focus is on library services during COVID. They are available on the legislative page. <https://mblc.state.ma.us/about-us/legislative-agenda.php>

**Massachusetts Library Association** [**https://www.masslib.org/**](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.masslib.org/__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!28ttIpTWlEOwt25beom4Rjlgjf2ZYRhjgP-zzZVcCqN3yMmnbr-ic4AOnWcXpW409V79dWc$)

Contact: Jennifer Harris, co-chair Legislative Committee jenharris62094@yahoo.com
William Adamczyk, co-chair Legislative Committee wadamczyk@ocln.org
 **Legislative Days invitation:
Massachusetts Library Association** and **Massachusetts School Library Association** invite you to join in virtual sessions this April to connect library advocacy and your State Senators and Representatives. These events will take the place of the in-person Legislative Day event again this year. **Click this link to register for a session**: <https://mla.wildapricot.org/event-4169013>

***Save the dates!*** 2021 MLA/MSLA Library Legislative Days, online sessions will be offered on the following dates/times.

* April 6, 10:00 a.m. – featuring Western Massachusetts Library Advocates
* April 7, 10:00 a.m. – featuring Central Massachusetts Library Advocates
* April 8, 10:00 a.m. – featuring libraries from Boston, Metrowest, and North of Boston
* April 8, 11:30 a.m. – featuring libraries from South of Boston, the Cape and Islands

You are encouraged to join a session that corresponds with your geographic area as we are trying to match one or more Library Caucus members from each area to participate in that session. Can’t make your preferred session? Feel free to join another – you’ll get the same overall briefing and talking points on the MBLC Library Legislative Agenda.

**1-hour sessions will include:**

* Welcome and overview

Jennifer Harris, Co-Chair, MLA Legislative Committee

* Regional Welcome & Introduction, WMLA/CMLA (April 6/April 7)
* Legislative Agenda Briefing

James Lonergan, Director, MBLC

* MSLA Briefing

Greg Pronevitz, Director of Outreach, MSLA

* Remarks from Legislator, member of Library Caucus
* Call to Action

Mary Ann Cluggish, Chair, MBLC

* Formal session ends, optional overview of Engage software for those who wish to remain on the call

**Then it’s your turn!** Following the online session email and/or call your legislators!

**Click this link to register for a session**: <https://mla.wildapricot.org/event-4169013>

The legislative priority for the FY2022 budget is to increase State Aid to Public Libraries (Budget Line 7000-9501) AND keep up with inflation under the remaining budget lines. Come prepared! Read more about the [Legislative Agenda.](https://mblc.state.ma.us/about-us/legislative-agenda.php)

Don’t know who your legislators are? Click [here](https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator) to find out.

Click [here](http://cqrcengage.com/alama/) to send an ENGAGE invitation asking your legislator to attend your session.

The **MLA Engage** site makes it easy to get in touch with your legislators: [https://cqrcengage.com/alama/?0](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/cqrcengage.com/alama/?0__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!28ttIpTWlEOwt25beom4Rjlgjf2ZYRhjgP-zzZVcCqN3yMmnbr-ic4AOnWcXpW40Jcuq9hs$)

The **MLA conference** will be May 17,18 and 19 online. The Legislative Committee program with John **Chrastka** from Every Library will be at 9:30 am on Tuesday 5/18.

[**Western Massachusetts Library Advocates (WMLA**](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=western*mass*library*advocates__;Kysr!!CUhgQOZqV7M!28ttIpTWlEOwt25beom4Rjlgjf2ZYRhjgP-zzZVcCqN3yMmnbr-ic4AOnWcXpW40oZxuteY$))
On Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/WMassLibraryAdvocates](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.facebook.com/WMassLibraryAdvocates__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!28ttIpTWlEOwt25beom4Rjlgjf2ZYRhjgP-zzZVcCqN3yMmnbr-ic4AOnWcXpW40hTrR1jc$)
Contact: Toni Golinski Foisy, WMLA President agolinsk@cwmars.org

WMLA is committed to promoting the best in contemporary library service based on the unique resources and needs of libraries in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties. WMLA actively works with legislators, local and state officials to inform them of critical issues affecting western Massachusetts libraries and advocate for essential library funding.

MARCH 12, 2021 at 9:00 WMLA and Berkshire Breakfast Committee’s 4-county virtual legislative breakfast—WATCH for registration DETAILS

Central Massachusetts Library Advocates (CMLA)[https://www.cmlagroup.org/](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.cmlagroup.org/__;!!CUhgQOZqV7M!28ttIpTWlEOwt25beom4Rjlgjf2ZYRhjgP-zzZVcCqN3yMmnbr-ic4AOnWcXpW40RbB0A1g$)CMLA focuses on how best to represent Central Mass libraries, both as library advocates and as a continuing education source for librarians, library staff, and library supporters.
Contact: Brittany McDougal bmcdougal@oxfordma.us

**Coming soon:** Matt Perry’s blog post with tips and tricks shared during the sessions

**Consideration of approval of the municipality meeting the requirements for the FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries based on eligibility established in FY2021 for the Municipal Appropriation Requirement and in FY2020 for the minimum standards**

Liz Babbitt, State Aid Specialist, presented for certification the municipality of North Attleborough that meets the requirements for the FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries program. North Attleborough originally applied for a waiver but they were given more funds, so they no longer need the waiver.

Ms. Babbitt reminded the Commissioners that these awards are half payments. The remainder is paid at the end of the grant cycle. The total first half payment for North Attleborough is $22,910.85.

Chair Cluggish asked for a motion to agenda the minutes under the consent agenda.

Commissioner Conrad moved and Commissioner Biancolo seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners certifies that the community presented in agenda item 7 has met minimum standards of free public library service and awards a FY2021 Library Incentive Grant (LIG), a FY2021 Municipal Equalization Grant (MEG) and a FY2021 Nonresident Circulation (NRC) offset in the indicated amounts, totaling $22,910.85, and authorizes any additional FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries disbursements that may be possible toward the end of the grant cycle.

**Hearing no objection, Chair Cluggish declared the motion passed under the consent agenda.**

**consideration of approval of municipalities requesting waivers for the FY2021 municipal appropriation requirement in the FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries Program within the 10% threshold**

Mary Rose Quinn, Head of State Programs and Government Liaison made this introductory statement about the waivers.

In these unprecedented times, fifty-two municipalities requested waivers of the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR). This number is significant, and in a positive way. The State Aid Unit was anticipating a record number of waiver applications (123 in 2011 during the recession), given the pandemic and the resulting financial crisis. We were extremely encouraged that so many municipalities continued their strong financial support and concern for their local public libraries this year. Two hundred ninety-five municipalities funded their public libraries at or above the MAR. This support is a credit to the great work that libraries do to serve their communities every day, but especially during times of crisis. This ongoing fiscal support will be crucial moving forward as libraries provide essential services and resources to help their communities and residents recover from the crisis.

Of the 351 municipalities in Massachusetts, 350 provide public library services. Only New Ashford has no library and no library services. Three other municipalities do not traditionally apply to the State Aid to Public Libraries Program; Alford last applied in 1988 and Monroe and Savoy have never applied.

With the addition of Tyringham this year (last applied in 1961) and Hancock last year, and with the return of Millville, the MBLC has received the most applicants for State Aid in 60 years.

Of the 347 applicants:

* 295 meet the full requirements and have been certified at the February and March meetings to receive State Aid funding
* 52 municipalities funded their libraries at levels below the MAR and needed to apply for waivers. Of these:
* 18 provided increases to the library budgets
* 8 library budgets receive smaller cuts than the overall municipal budgets
* 13 budget reductions were under 5%
* 9 budget cuts were between 5 and 10%
* And 4 budgets were reduced disproportionately when compared to the overall municipal budget.

There are 48 libraries that were petitioning the Board for a Waiver of the MAR that were below the ten percent threshold set by the Board at the January Board Meeting for not being disproportionately cut in relationship to other departments within their municipality. These 52 municipalities are Adams, Amesbury, Ashby, Avon, Barnstable, Bellingham, Beverly, Boxford, Brockton, Brookline, Buckland, Dracut, Duxbury, Everett, Fall River, Framingham, Gill, Greenfield, Hardwick, Haverhill, Hopedale, Lawrence, Leyden, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Marblehead, Medfield, Montgomery, Newbury, Newton, North Adams, Orange, Palmer, Peabody, Plymouth, Quincy, Salem, Southampton, Walpole, Waltham, Ware, Warren, West Springfield, Weymouth, Windsor, Winthrop, and Yarmouth.

Commissioner Biancolo moved and Commissioner Abraham seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grants a waiver of the FY2021 Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) and certifies that the communities list above in agenda item 8 have met minimum standards of free public library service and awards each a FY2021 Library Incentive Grant (LIG), a FY2021 Municipal Equalization Grant (MEG) and a FY2021 Nonresident Circulation (NRC) offset in the indicted amounts, totaling $1,466,316.55, and authorizes any additional FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries disbursements that may be possible toward the end of the grant cycle.

Chair Cluggish took a roll call of Commissioners.

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| Commissioner Abraham- Yes | Commissioner Cluggish- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes |
| Commissioner Ball- Absent | Commissioner Comeau- Yes | Commissioner Kronholm- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Resnick- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

**The Commissioners took a 5-minute break at 11:08 A.M.**

**The meeting resumed at 11:13 A.M.**

**Consideration of approval of petitions for waivers of the municipal appropriation requirements for the FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries above the 10% threshold**

Mary Rose Quinn, Head of State Programs, presented a brief summary of what each library presented to the Commissioners at the February 4, 20201 Meeting.

**Stoneham (11.35%)**

**• What specifically has been cut or reduced?**

The Stoneham Public Library lost two positions, the FT Assistant Director position and also PT Page position that was open at the time. A third position, a FT Technician position in the Junior Room (children’s area) of the Library was only funded for half of FY21. This position was open at the time and was filled by Feb 1. Furthermore, this position is anticipated to be fully funded in FY 22 (an $23,000 approximate increase)

**• If the hours and materials expenditure requirements had not been suspended due to COVID 19, would the library have been able to meet the standards this year with the municipal budget provided? for hours? For materials?**

The Stoneham Public Library would not have met the Hours Requirement for FY21, as we closed on Fri March 13th and have yet to reopen to the public. The Library is providing our version of curbside pickup, which has included prints and photocopies, notary services, library item pickups, phone reference / readers advisory services, and a number of virtual programs, both done by staff and presented by outside individuals and groups. Our wireless is also on 24/7.

The Stoneham Public Library should meet the Materials Expenditure requirement, as that account line was not cut for the FY21 budget.

In terms of the Hours Requirement, even if the Library were open for appointments, as is the goal as soon as possible, we will lose one evening each week and at least one Saturday a month. Furthermore, there will be approximately 10-12 hours per week where the Reference Desk will not be staffed. The Library only has one FT Reference Librarian, and the Assistant Director previously covered 10-15 hours per week on the Reference Desk.

Currently, Library staff are whittling down our final to-do list of things that need to be done before appointments can be made which will increase the Library’s in person service levels beyond that of many surrounding communities.

**• Any additional information you want to share with the Board**

The priority town-wide during the summer was to maintain safety of staff and residents while continuing to provide a high level of service. The Town Administrator was supportive and willing to meet with myself and Trustees on a routine basis about budget cuts last spring and has met with myself and Trustees other times over the fall and winter as well. It was through these discussions that the single largest adjustment in 2021, the Assistant Library Director position, was mutually decided on. Due to the fiscal climate and the structure of the Library at the time, it was decided that a single larger cut would still allow the Library to provide a high level of service while the building was closed. This cut of $70,000 (approx..), represented the majority of the Library’s total adjustment. The Town and Library continue to evaluate options for the future organizational structure of the Library beyond the pandemic. These discussions have included developing promising staff and the need for additional administrative staff to further develop the technology, branding, management and communication of the Stoneham Public Library. These conversations are ongoing.

The preponderance of departments budgets changed + or – 2 to 3%. Because some of those departments, like Police, Fire, and Public Works, are much larger, the dollar value is drastically different from the percentage for each department. Despite the dramatic budget adjustments needed both in terms of percentage and total dollar amounts for multiple departments, it is worth nothing that these changes throughout the Town were made with the unanimous support of ALL of the following: the Library Trustees, the Stoneham Select Board, School Committee, Finance and Advisory Board, Capital Committee and also the unanimous support at our open Town Meeting.

While we continue to be disheartened by not having our patrons in the building, and despite the challenges the Stoneham Library currently faces, we have many reasons to be optimistic about the future. Library staff signed up to help distribute food and services to at-need populations during the height of the pandemic and assisted many departments during shifting needs as the pandemic developed-their commitment to the community at large and ability to adapt cannot be overstated. The Library’s online presence and creative service deliveries will be new additions beyond the pandemic. Additionally, the Library has filled the Full Time Library Technician position and settled a two-year contract with the Library union.

On behalf of the Stoneham Public Library and the Town of Stoneham, we continue to be grateful for the support of the Board of Library Commissioners and we look forward to continuing our positive and collaborative relationship going forward.

Commissioner Resnick moved and Commissioner DeBole seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grants a waiver “with reservation” of the FY2021 Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) and certifies that Stoneham has met minimum standards of free public library service and awards it a FY2021 Library Incentive Grant(LIG), a FY2021 Municipal Equalization Grant(MEG) and a FY2021 Nonresident Circulation(NRC) offset in the indicated amounts, totaling $16,472.03, and authorizes any additional FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries disbursements that may be possible toward the end of the grant cycle.

Chair Cluggish took a roll call of Commissioners.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Yes | Commissioner Cluggish- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes |
| Commissioner Ball- Absent | Commissioner Comeau- Abstained | Commissioner Kronholm- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Resnick- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

**Kingston (12.45%)**

**Budget Cuts**

As you have seen from our previously submitted documentation, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the town experienced several revenue deficiencies. This included meals tax, room occupancy tax, and payment of other excise and property tax.

As a result of these deficiencies, the Town revisited the FY21 budget to determine where offsetting decreases could be sustained in the community. It was determined that without actionable information about State Aid or the duration of the pandemic, it was necessary to reduce the Library's budget by laying off staff.

At the end of March, the Library was informed that cuts would be made, and in June four of the Library's 10 staff members were notified that their positions were being cut. A fifth position was left open as that employee was about to be hired as Acting Library Director. The following positions were cut:

* 2 full time Library Technicians
* 1 Full time Head of Youth Services
* 1 part time Library Technician

The staff cuts led to a large reduction in Library budget and dropped our total municipal appropriation to $512,438 - a 26.92% decrease from the previous year.

**Impact on Services**

Library services have been severely impacted by the reductions in the Library's budget and subsequent loss of staff members. Without sufficient staff, the Library was unable to maintain our typical hours of operation. Our weekday hours of service were cut by approximately 15 hours a week, and the Library has been closed on Saturdays since the layoffs occurred. If the hours requirements had not been suspended, we would have fallen short of our required hours open. Additionally, with such a limited staff, the Library was forced to decide between opening the building for limited service, or keeping the building closed and focusing only on curbside pickup. With so few staff members at the Library, we could not do safely do both. I determined that with the popularity of curbside pickup that keeping the building closed to the public and focusing on remote services would allow us to serve the most people possible. This meant that for our patrons, regular library services like computer use, copier and fax use, browsing, and in-building programming were not possible.

Without sufficient staff in place, programming for Teens and Children was greatly reduced. With the loss of our Head of Youth Services, and the Library Technician that supported her work, Children's programming and services declined substantially. Additionally, the part-time staff member charged with developing and running Teen services and programs was needed in other areas of the library, allowing her limited time for teen services or programming. The Library staff did the best they could and planned, and ran programs when time allowed. They also enlisted a number of local volunteers to run and manage programs, but overall, the quality and frequency of Teen and Children's programming fell far short of where it should have been for the first half of FY21.

Fortunately, the Library's materials budget remained consistent with previous years. Materials purchasing in FY21 went on as normal and our other services - online databases, eBook and eMagazine services, online newspapers, and more - have been accessible to our patrons throughout FY21.

**Budget and Staff Restoration**

In November 2020, in coordination with the Library Trustees and the Library Foundation, I presented a plan for restoring staff to allow for a return to full services. The initial plan consisted of the following:

* The staff member formerly in the part-time library tech position that was laid off would return and take one full-time library tech position.
* Hire a new staff member for the Head of Youth Services (the staff member that was cut found other employment)
* Hire a new full time Teen and Emerging Technology Librarian in place of hiring a second full time library tech. The staff member who held the library tech position at the time it was cut decided to retire.

The initial plan allowed for the Head of Youth Services and the Teen and Technology Librarian to be hired in a salary range between step 1and step 3. This plan was approved by the Town Administration and unanimously supported by the Board of Selectmen. The Finance Committee did not approve of the plan and took particular issue with hiring above step 1. After further discussions with the Town Administration, the Board of Selectmen, and the Finance Committee, I agreed to reduce the ask to step 1 only, hoping to gain full support of the Finance Committee and present a united front to the public at the upcoming town meeting. Unfortunately, the Finance Committee voted unanimously against restoring the Library budget even after concessions were made.

Funding the three positions from January 2021 through June 2021 at step 1 adds the following to the Library budget in FY21

* Teen and Emerging Technology Librarian - $21,103
* Head of Youth Services -$21,103
* Library Tech - $22,550
* Total: $64,756

Throughout November and into the beginning of December, the Library, with the support of the Foundation and the Trustees launched a public outreach campaign to inform residents of Kingston about the situation at the Library, as well as the consequences if the Town were to lose certification. This included speaking at Board of Selectmen meetings, participating in local TV interviews, and sending out a town-wide mailer with information about library services and how they would be impacted.

At Town Meeting on December 8, 2020, the revised 2021 budget was presented to the town and received a positive vote from residents. The returning staff member taking the full-time Library Tech position started on the 1st of January 2021, and we are currently in the process of interviewing candidates for the Head of Youth Services and the Teen and Emerging Technologies Librarian. I expect to have the positions filled within the next 2 to 3 weeks.

**Meeting the MAR and Library Services**

The restoration of staff will allow the Library to return to full services and open the building safely with some restrictions. Additionally, the hiring of a Teen and Emerging Technology Librarian will help the Library to reach out to and engage a long-underserved population in our community - Teens.

Although I expect services to be fully restored, we will still fall short of meeting the municipal appropriation requirement in FY21. There are several reasons for this.

* The new director's salary is considerably less than the previous director of 29 years
* The new hire for the Head of Youth Services position will be making less than the previous employee in that position who was here for 9 years
* The new hire for the Teen and Emerging Technology Librarian will be making less than the Library Technician of 30+ years that was laid off/retired.
* We did not re-hire a part time (14 hours a week) Library Tech.

Although we have not met the MAR for FY2021, I believe the Town has made a good faith effort to restore Library services. With the new Teen and Technology Librarian, in some ways the Library will be able to adequately serve more of the residents of Kingston than before the cuts. Once the new staff members are in place, I expect the Kingston Public Library to return to a full schedule of virtual programming for all ages, and to open the building (with some limitations) to the public once again.

**Municipal Official Remarks - Carol McCoy Town Finance Director**

As a result of overall budget cuts and the retirement and layoff of several positions, the Kingston Library Department's FY21 Budget was substantially decreased. Efforts to meet the MAR came from our Fall Town Meeting where two of the three of the positions that had been decreased were reinstated for the rest of the fiscal year and beyond. If those positions had been reinstated at the beginning of this fiscal year, the amount of increase to the budget would have been an additional $42,206, which would have had a positive effect on the MAR percentage.

Some extenuating circumstances are as follows: The Retirement of our long-time library director and promotion of Mike Slawson to that position decreased the library budget by approximately $30,000. In addition, only one of the people that were laid off at the beginning of the fiscal year came back when the Town voted to reinstate the budget for the positions at Town Meeting. New hires will be at a lesser rate that those people that were not reinstated.

As a result of the efforts to restore personnel to the library by the administration and the public at large, the Town of Kingston should be granted a waiver of the FY2021 MAR. The Town of Kingston is planning to meet the FY2022 MAR as a result of the rehiring of laid off personnel. No other library budget expenses had been reduced. FY2022 will show a lower personal services budget than that of FY2020 as a result of the aforesaid retirement and new hires for the positions.

Commissioner Resnick moved and Commissioner Conrad seconded thatthe Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grants a waiver “with reservation” of the FY2021 Municipal Appropriation Requirement(MAR) and certifies that Kingston has met minimum standards of free public library service and awards it a FY2021 Library Incentive Grant (LIG), a FY2021 Municipal Equalization Grant(MEG) and a FY2021 Nonresident Circulation (NRC) offset in the indicated amounts, totaling $12,341.59, and authorizes any additional FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries disbursements that may be possible toward the end of the grant cycle.

Chair Cluggish took a roll call of Commissioners.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Yes | Commissioner Cluggish- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes |
| Commissioner Ball- Absent | Commissioner Comeau- Abstained | Commissioner Kronholm- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Resnick- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

**Hanover (12.52%)**

Thank you for granting the Town of Hanover and the John Curtis Free Library an opportunity to apply for a Fiscal Year 2021 waiver.  Admittedly, the reduction to our Library Department budget from Fiscal Year 2020 to Fiscal Year 2021 looks staggering; however, there are a few important points we hope you take into account when examining our budget reduction in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please review the table below.  It outlines Hanover’s Library budget in FY2020, the original budget proposal from the Town Manager submitted on February 1, 2020 in anticipation of a May 4, 2020 Annual Town Meeting, and the budget that was ultimately provided to and approved by voters at the Annual Town Meeting on June 29, 2020.  As the table makes clear, the original budget proposal – prior to the COVID-19 pandemic – increased the library budget by approximately 0.95%, while the budget ultimately approved at Town Meeting – factoring in the COVID-19 pandemic – dropped the library budget by 12.28%.

The two (2) most significant reasons for this reduction to the library budget were, first of all, a decision made by the Town Manager to furlough all library staff (with exception to the Director) from April 23, 2020 until August 3, 2020; therefore, factored into the budget passed at Town Meeting was the anticipated wage savings during this fiscal year as a result of the furlough.  Moreover, the decision to furlough library staff was not made simply as a budget reduction method but a measure that placed the health, safety, and welfare of staff as the primary motivations.  During the time of the library staff furloughs enhanced unemployment benefits available from Congress guaranteed all library staff personnel who were furloughed would be as well-off, or actually better-off, financially as a result, and ensured library staff would not be in the library building until we were able to purchase proper protective equipment and make necessary building improvements prior to their arrival back to work.  Secondly, the budget passed at the Annual Town Meeting on June 29, 2020, froze the hiring of an unfilled Library Technician full-time position in anticipation that the building would likely be closed to the public for all or most of the fiscal year.

Furthermore, this decision, as a cost savings measure to the FY2021 budget enabled us to protect all current library employees from possible budget cuts that could have eliminated jobs. Additionally, library services during our response to the pandemic have been enhanced in a number of ways.  For example, we started a successful curb-side pick-up/drop-off program, and we even funded – via CARES Act monies – a car for use as a delivery service.  It’s fair to say that both of these enhanced services we hope to continue and improve upon once we return to normal (or the “new normal”).  Finally, the FY2022 budget submitted just a few days ago increased the Library Budget back to $600,612 with the full expectation that library services in Fiscal Year 2022 will look exactly like they did prior to the pandemic, with the addition of some of the new service delivery platforms we successfully provided for during the pandemic.

We hope the information provided to you with our waiver presentation provides the Board of Library Commissioners confidence in Hanover’s commitment to library services and that our explanation for a one-year reduction to the library budget is a product of an extraordinary situation and not indicative of any reduction in our desire to provide Hanover residents with exceptional library services now and in the future.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| FY2020 | FY2021 (February) | FY2021 (June) |
| $606,443 | $612,234 | $541,996 |

Commissioner Abraham moved and Commissioner Kronholm seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grants a waiver “with reservation” of the FY2021 Municipal Appropriation Requirement(MAR) and certifies that Hanover has met minimum standards of free public library service and awards it a FY2021 Library Incentive Grant (LIG), a FY2021 Municipal Equalization Grant (MEG)and a FY2021 Nonresident Circulation (NRC) offset in the indicated amounts, totaling $11,632.84, and authorizes any additional FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries disbursements that may be possible toward the end of the grant cycle.

Chair Cluggish took a roll call of Commissioners.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Yes | Commissioner Cluggish- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes |
| Commissioner Ball- Absent | Commissioner Comeau- Abstained | Commissioner Kronholm- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Resnick- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

**Oxford (18.01%)**

Statement by Brittany McDougal, Library Director:

Due to the reduction in the Oxford Free Public Library’s budget, the impact the library has faced in regard to library services has solely been staffing. Due to these cuts, two full-time positions, along with the equivalent of two part-time pages, were eliminated.

While other library services we are offering have been affected this year, it has not been in correlation with the loss of staff positions – they have been affected due to the restrictions of this pandemic. The library has stayed closed not due to being shorter staffed, but out of an abundance of caution that I, along with my Board of Trustees, have taken to keep both our staff and patrons safe. We have been offering lobby pick-up since July 20 to our patrons and are able to offer copying and faxing services along with wireless printing through the lobby as well. The lobby is available 5 days a week with two evenings available. We have put a hold on Saturday hours, until we are ready to begin allowing patrons into the building once again. We continue to offer support over the phone, including reference questions and assistance to patrons when accessing their library account.

If the MBLC had not suspended the hours and materials expenditure requirements for this year, the library would not be able to meet the hours requirement, having been only offering lobby pick-up hours since July 2020 until present and as we know, lobby hours are not considered “open” when reporting. As for the materials expenditure requirements, I do anticipate the library being able to meet these requirements, as the materials line item was not reduced in the library’s budget.

I have been working closely with Town Manager Jennifer Callahan this past year in regards to the library budget and I know we will continue to work together to get the library back on track – this also includes working together to develop a new, future position at the library which will help the library to function in the “new normal”. I would like to thank you for the time you have allowed me to give insight into the library’s current situation and I know Town Manager Callahan will be able to shine more light on the reasoning to why these cuts were made and where she sees the library heading in the future.

Jennifer Callahan, Town Manager:

I would like to thank you and the Commission for allowing the Town of Oxford the opportunity to appear before you to provide testimony to support our request for a waiver of the Fiscal Year 2021 Municipal Appropriation Requirement for the State Aid to the Public Libraries Program. I want to inform the Commission of the recent productive meeting the Town had with the Commission’s Government Liaison, Mary Rose Quinn, to both review the budget reductions which were made and to reaffirm Oxford’s commitment to its public library.

As Town Manager, I want to impress upon the Commission several factors which precipitated the reduction in municipal appropriation this fiscal year and they all relate to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Prior to and after adopting our FY21 Budget, our Finance Team took very seriously the recommendations from state officials to plan on a 20-30% reduction below level funding in local aid due to the negative revenue impacts of the pandemic on the state’s economy. All departments were consulted, and each department head worked with me in identifying budget reductions which resulted in $1.1M being removed from the budget in preparation for the worst scenarios projected. The Library reduction totaled $68,789 and basically accounted for the reduction in workforce of two full-time circulation clerks and part time pages. All of the other positions were maintained, and no reductions were made in any other library line items.

We anticipated these reductions would be temporary in nature and all might be restored after the pandemic impacts decreased in a matter of months. However, the quick dissipation of the pandemic has not occurred as we all had hoped. For Oxford, this has led to unanticipated Covid-19 Pandemic related expenses totaling more than $600,000 in the areas of public health, fire and emergency services, remote schooling and pandemic preparedness. It has also meant our library has remained closed to the public with only curbside service being offered.

Our Library Director, Brittany McDougal, will confirm this current operational structure as well as the staffing plan is supported by the Trustees, library staff and Town Manager in an effort to keep personnel and the public as safe as possible. It is not anticipated that this current status will change prior to the end of this fiscal year. Consequently, Director McDougal, myself and our Finance Director are planning on restoring funding for next fiscal year, but with an eye towards restructuring the former two circulation clerk roles with a new Cataloging & Technology Librarian position. We believe this position will fulfill a more immediate need for the library to address the changing technology demands placed upon it due to the pandemic as well as to be responsible for maintaining all digital resource collections and cataloging materials into the Evergreen System.

In addition to finishing two major capital library projects this past year (a major MHC Building Repair & Green Communities LED conversion) my office made possible by writing and obtaining two successful matching grants, I want to assure the Commission the Town of Oxford remains committed to funding our Library’s operational budget as well. Please know I will be providing for an increase to the Library’s budget in the upcoming FY2022 budget of at least 11%. Also we will be working with Mary Rose Quinn to review our mutual concerns regarding an outlier year for our library expenditures which was used in the MAR formula calculation that the Commission relies upon to determine disproportionate cuts to public libraries receiving state aid. This one year makes the Town’s budget reduction actually look much more severe than it would appear to be operationally for the library to absorb.

In closing, I would like the Commission to know I do not anticipate having to request any waiver for next year’s budget at all. However, I would like to request the Commission grant the waiver for this current fiscal year for all of the reasons I have outlined above and will address personally at the February 4 meeting. I would like to thank the Commission in advance for its thoughtful consideration and hopeful granting of the Town of Oxford’s MAR waiver request for Fiscal Year 2021.

Commissioner Resnick moved and Commissioner Biancolo seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grants a waiver “with reservation” of the FY2021 Municipal Appropriation Requirement(MAR) and certifies that Oxford has met minimum standards of free public library service and awards it a FY2021 Library Incentive Grant(LIG), a FY2021 Municipal Equalization Grant(MEG) and a FY2021 Nonresident Circulation (NRC)offset in the indicated amounts, totaling $13,696.64, and authorizes any additional FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries disbursements that may be possible toward the end of the grant cycle.

Chair Cluggish took a roll call of Commissioners.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Commissioner Abraham- Yes | Commissioner Cluggish- Yes | Commissioner DeBole- Yes |
| Commissioner Ball- Absent | Commissioner Comeau- Abstained | Commissioner Kronholm- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Resnick- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

**Statement from Commissioner Mary Ann Cluggish, Board Chair**

The Board of Library Commissioners recognizes that the FY2021 State Aid to Public Libraries grant round has taken place in an atmosphere of continuing fiscal uncertainty as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Despite these fiscal constraints 295 municipalities have met the Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR). Another 48 municipalities have funded their libraries to within 10% of the reduction percentage in their total adjusted municipal budgets. However, four municipalities, Stoneham, Kingston, Hanover, and Oxford made significant disproportionate cuts in library funding.

When the Board grants a waiver to these municipalities, it is “with reservation”, to indicate that a significant gap exists between library funding and the funding of other departments. This gap usually signals the beginning of erosion of library services for residents of the community. It is imperative that city /town officials work with their libraries to reduce or eliminate these disproportionate cuts in FY2022. Steep reductions in a library budget seriously impairs services provided to residents of the community and it often becomes a major challenge later to regain lost ground for the community and its library.

Ongoing reductions to one library’s budget also signal the erosion of library services beyond just that one community. Not only are the residents of the community impacted; there is a ripple effect of immediate and negative consequences for the surrounding libraries and on the networks that serve those communities, which, in turn, has an adverse effect on the statewide services we all share.

The State Aid to Public Libraries Program is an integral part of the Board of Library Commissioners mission “*to support, develop, coordinate, improve and promote library services throughout the Commonwealth”*.

The MBLC strives to provide every resident of the Commonwealth with full and equal access to library resources regardless of geographic location, social or economic status, age, level of physical or intellectual ability or cultural background. The Municipal Appropriation funding requirement, along with Minimum Standards of Free Public Library Service in the State Aid to Public Libraries Program, is the foundation of equity of access to quality library services across the Commonwealth. Inter-library collaboration and resource sharing is at the heart of this program.

Finally, municipalities that receive waivers with reservation this year will be required to return to the Board next January if they have not made significant increases to their library budgets and are applying for waivers again for FY 2022.

**Presentation and discussion of the FY2022 Plan of Service and Program and Budget for the Massachusetts Center for the Book**

Sharon Shaloo, Executive Director, Massachusetts Center for the Book and Krista McLeod, Board Member, Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB) presented the FY2022 Plan of Service and Budget for the Center for the Book.

Massachusetts Center for the Book is in its 22nd year of operations, chartered as the commonwealth affiliate of the Library of Congress and charged, per our line-item budget language, with developing, supporting, and promoting cultural programming to advance the cause of books and reading and to increase the outreach potential of Massachusetts public libraries.

Ours is the smallest line item under the purview of the Board of Library Commissioners, by a large factor. We believe our best face would be presented in a reporting structure that aligned with the requirements of the Perkins and Worcester Talking Book Programs or the nine networks, and we say that only underscore the difficulty of fitting a small line-item of $225K into a structure developed for multi-million dollar systems such as MLS and LFC. We trust that our document will be read with scale and scope in mind.

With this covering narrative, we submit our proposed budget for FY2022 based on $225,000, an amount that is still 10% below the level of funding that MBLC along with MCB said was necessary to establish funding for a standalone organization back in FY15. This document represents the best of our current thinking about the prospects for activity and interaction during the next 16 to 18 months for an initiative that continues to be drastically underfunded.

The budget begins to work toward executive transition and much-needed organizational change. In FY22, we shall hire a full-time staff person to become versed in the programs and activities of Massachusetts Center for the Book. To accomplish this feat, we are earmarking the modest $25,000 increase we received 6 months into the current fiscal year to cover half of the proposed $50,000 salary for this new position, taking the other $25,000 from the FY 22 appropriation.

This is also a budget that will invest the savings from FY21 (the anticipated balance at close of FY21 and the carryovers on projects that we and partners have found take much longer to complete during the extended quarantine) into a new model for programmatic activity that emphasizes collaboration so as to extend our reach.

Highlights of our anticipated activity:

* We shall continue to administer an annual (albeit streamlined) Massachusetts Book Awards.
* We shall offer Letters About Literature for one more year while we assess the impact of the school shutdown.
* We shall transition Mass Book Trails to a Google platform, reimaging the project as an armchair tourism initiative with greater emphasis on sites than on routes.
* We are increasing our collaboration with Boston Book Festival, continuing to work with them on Mass Book Bites and beginning to plan outreach to, potentially, Indie Authors.
* We are in the process, as well, of establishing programming partnerships with organizations focused on family literacy and on readers’ advisory/reading promotion, which we hope to announce before the close of the current fiscal year and launch in FY22.

Highlights of the affiliated centers for the book network activity:

* We shall continue to nominate organizations for the Library of Congress Literacy Awards. We have been gratified to have had all of our nominations succeed with the national awards committee.
* We shall continue, though in a reduced role nationally, our participation in the East Coast Affiliated Centers for the Book reading promotion activity, Route 1 Reads. This year, we will turn our attention to the cities and towns along Rt 1 in Massachusetts to develop programs that will support an affinity group.
* We shall be in Year 1 of a new biennial agreement with LOC that will focus on increased involvement with our nation’s library in bringing increased engagement opportunities to the local level. Our Executive Director will continue to serve on the Steering Committee for this initiative.
* We shall be involved in National Book Festival, which will be, once again, remote. Building on the knowledge gained from the 2020 festival, we are in talks to develop strategies that will exploit the virtual nature of the festival to localize offerings to a greater extent.

Organizational priorities for FY2021:

* Increase the number of directors sitting on our board
* Fill the first third of seats on an advisory board named the Mass Book Council
* Rationalize the relationship between MCB and MBLC
* Settle the Center for the Book in a supportive and congenial working environment
* Begin to plan for executive transition

The Commissioner will vote on the Massachusetts Center for the Book Program and Budget at the April 1, 2021 Board Meeting.

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

Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director, presented the following report:

**MLS Update to MBLC**

**March 2021**

**Strategic Initiative 1**

MLS ensures its services are sustainable, prioritize member needs, and equitably serve all member types.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goal | Actions | Measurement of Success | **Monthly work toward Goal** |
| MLS ensures service value to all member types. | * MLS will develop a guide to its levels of services, clarifying what benefits are available to each member type; the guide will be shared broadly and in several formats
 | *Member library staff at a broad level will have a greater understanding of MLS services and resources.*  | * Began creation of elements, including MLS live and newsletters.
* Conducting an audit of previously created documents
 |
| MLS will continue to strengthen its partnerships and collaborations to allow MLS to focus on what it does uniquely well.  | * MLS will establish a partnership process, including a rubric, liaisons, expectations, policy and evaluations of current and new partnerships for opportunities and overlap.
 | *MLS will report out annual on the value of their partnerships.*  | * Partner with MBLC to spend CARES Act funding to benefit MLS members.
* Sponsor the Digital Commonwealth Annual Conference (April 2021).
 |
| New Services will be designed to deliver the greatest statewide impact, able to expand and contract due to available funding and need.  | * MLS will create guidelines and criteria for new and established services for value and impact.
 | *As an element of service review or introduction, MLS will be able to detail the impact of the service.* | * Began work on pilot training evaluation project.
* Contracted with NEON CRM to build a customer management system to allow us to track statistics and impact of services.
 |

**Strategic Initiative 2**

MLS empowers leaders to emerge at every level of library service, connecting staff throughout the stages of their careers.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goal | Actions | Measurement of Success | **Monthly work toward Goal** |
| MLS promotes excellence and continuity by providing professional development, conversation and community around leadership. | * MLS develops a process for reaching out to members/training participants, asking them to report on how MLS programs have helped them.
 | *Member library staff recognize the transformative value of building and maintaining a professional network.*  | * Began identifying leadership training topics and possible external presenters.
 |
| Leadership, professional development, and networking opportunities will have flexible offerings in order to include participants from various library types, library sizes, and resources.  | * Linked to S.I.1, G.1: MLS will develop a guide to its levels of service, clarifying what benefits are available to each member type; the guide will be shared broadly and in several formats.
 | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the number of professional development opportunities via type of opportunity, intended audience, training modality and type of library.* | * Began identifying possible leadership trainings in a variety of online formats for staff in formal and informal leadership positions.
 |

**Strategic Initiative 3**

MLS will take the lead in facilitating important conversations, and support member-facing initiatives focused on DEI: diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice work.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goal | Actions | Measurement of Success | **Monthly work toward Goal** |
| MLS will integrate the core values of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and social justice into its policies, practices, procedures, and programs.  | * In collaboration with partner organizations, MLS will explore hiring a coordinator/consultant to support the membership in this work.
* MLS will work to align internal policies and procedures to the tenets of DEI.
 | *MLS will demonstrate both increased resource allocation as well as substantive, visible progress in representation throughout MLS services.*  | * Exploring the option to hire a coordinator/consultant in a contracted role.
* Allocate funding to enhance Commonwealth eBook Collection (CEC) to lower wait lists and ensure a wide representation of creators are available.
 |
| Following the lead of trusted experts, MLS will build awareness in using the DEI tenets with member library staff to identify and eliminate barriers to inclusive library services. | * In partnership with member libraries, research and tailor a DEI evaluation framework for member libraries.
 | *Member library staff are confident in using the core values of DEI with their communities.*  | * Began identifying DEI training topics and possible external presenters.
 |

**Additional monthly notes:**

* Matthew Perry, Communications Specialist at the MBLC has created a Legislative Flyer for MLS (and all MBLC affiliates). Please consider using it as part of your advocacy efforts.
	+ [MLS flyer](https://awarehouse.mblc.state.ma.us/collateral/official-docs/legislative/fy22-mls-affiliate-sheet/)
	+ [All affiliate flyers](https://awarehouse.mblc.state.ma.us/collateral/official-docs/legislative/)
* We hosted our first MLS LIVE! on January 26, 2021. We shared news about our new Action Plan and answered member questions. [View the recording here](https://vimeo.com/504889648). The next session will be on February 23; the topic will be MLS and our partners. [Register here.](https://calendar.masslibsystem.org/event/7387389)

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

Catherine Halpin, Collaborative Library Services Coordinator was unable to stay the entire meeting but submitted the report from the LFC.

**Historical Images Available on Wikipedia**

The BPL has uploaded more than 8,000 historical photographs from its archival collections to Wikimedia Commons. These images include some of the library’s most important photographic collections and contribute to the single largest batch of uploads ever contributed to Wikimedia Commons. By uploading these public domain images, BPL is making them available so that they can be freely used to enhance Wikipedia articles, re-printed in publications, or incorporated in student projects and papers.

The upload is a part of a broader effort coordinated by the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) to increase public access to historical materials from libraries and museums across the country, which has resulted in the single largest batch of uploads to Wikimedia Commons ever contributed.

By uploading content to Wikimedia, BPL is taking its “Free to All” mantra to the next level, surfacing rare archival materials that have been previously unknown or inaccessible, and extending its reach in the digital world. This upload is just the first of BPL’s contributions to Wikimedia Commons; the library will be adding thousands more images periodically throughout the year, including maps, illustrations, photographs, and manuscripts.

**BPL’s Wikimedia page:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Media\_contributed\_by\_Boston\_Public\_Library](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category%3AMedia_contributed_by_Boston_Public_Library)

**Lynda.com migration**

Our Lynda.com subscription was migrated to LinkedIn Learning on Tuesday, March 2. Main points for patrons:

* Current users of Lynda.com will find their course history migrated to the new platform.
* A LinkedIn account is not required to access LinkedIn Learning. Users will still log in with library card and PIN.
* Our Lynda.com subscription offered 7,000 English language courses. LinkedIn Learning will offer patrons access the entire library of over 16,000 courses, including those offered in English, French, German, Japanese, Spanish, Mandarin, and Portuguese.

**BPL Manuscript Card Catalog Now Available Online**

Since the late 19th century, the BPL has labored to build a catalog of its ever-expanding collection of rare and historically significant manuscripts. Under even the best of circumstances, cataloging manuscript collections is slow, methodical work that requires extremely specialized expertise.

As late as the early 2000s, BPL manuscript catalogers were still recording their work on 3 x 5" index cards. Each time a new manuscript was cataloged, all of the relevant information was typed onto an individual card, which was then filed away in the department's manuscript card catalog. Today, this catalog fills 231 drawers and contains nearly a quarter million index cards. It holds so much information that when researchers or librarians need to use the collections, they still turn to this -- the manuscript card catalog.

The Rare Books and Manuscripts Department is happy to announce that they have now taken a major step toward making this unique resource more accessible. They have digitized the entire manuscript card catalog, and images of all the individual cards are now [freely available online](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fr20.rs6.net%2Ftn.jsp%3Ff%3D001UHsk5Fuf2I4JzcnYYtuOAku_pdNzZ4B7GUCm4EkEqaQlv_3Kr69PHvSJy33NgvyCpybNw1AH2b1t2Ar2y5I8nzwOqW1M98AVH7PwRpFI3GMko-P2TkiOI21FU4bLWARPsYctfTUW8TJUPdtJc9t7seZgW24nOdnKmnw788JWgFW_NInDsIP2rQ%3D%3D%26c%3DXm2FShPjMzK-chmgMOK0swjwVoj67D4TC6-SdugTyO4XjN4NE2rF2Q%3D%3D%26ch%3D8zunUtFWJ6mDp0iyTGdNXTm6kDT0_ljBsA2SnJ-5SRzeTw7JFSBQkA%3D%3D&amp;data=04%7C01%7Cchalpin%40bpl.org%7C38f29f7f52ec4d0d59b708d8d9b7910d%7Cfa735c71d7954c01b0ae09fa7415b2b1%7C0%7C0%7C637498729739339530%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&amp;sdata=%2Bp4oy%2BHnaHrFNWWFoZFe4ixZgevpBKiCaqj8y3jQ6l8%3D&amp;reserved=0). With this project now complete, information about nearly every manuscript in the BPL's collections is available online in at least some form, a major first.

**A new online guide to finding BPL manuscripts**

In addition to digitizing the manuscript card catalog, they have also created a brand-new research guide to help people find and use BPL manuscripts. This guide includes:

* Instructions and strategies for searching and browsing the online catalogs
* Information about BPL archives, manuscript collections, and online finding aids
* Detailed information about how to browse, search, and read the digitized catalog cards

<https://guides.bpl.org/manuscripts/cardcatalogs>

**Libraries and COVID-19 Discussion**

Director Lonergan started the Libraries and COVID-19 discussion with informing everyone that we still have not heard from the Department of Health about when librarians would be eligible to receive the vaccine. He stated that teachers will be able to start getting vaccinated next week.

Rob Favini, Head of Library Advisory and Development stated that as of Monday the state went into phase 3, step 2 which means that capacity of spaces went from 25 % to 50%. He believes that libraries are still holding steady at limited access.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**OLD BUSINESS**

**List of documents for the March 4, 2021 Regular Monthly Board Meeting:**

1. Agenda for the March 4, 2021, Regular Monthly Board Meeting
2. Draft Minutes from the February 4, 2021 Regular Monthly Board Meeting
3. Agenda 7, State Aid to Public Library Award
4. Agenda 8, State Aid Review of Libraries within in the 10% threshold
5. Agenda Item 9, Review and Presentations from 4 libraries
6. Stoneham
7. Kingston
8. Hanover
9. Oxford
10. Agenda 10, Presentation of the FY2022 Plan of Service and Program and Budget from the Massachusetts Center for the Book
11. Agenda Item 10, Report from MLS
12. Agenda Item 11, Report from LFC

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Cluggish asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting under the consent agenda.

Commissioner Resnick moved and Commissioner Conrad seconded to adjourn the March 4, 2021 MBLC Monthly Board Meeting.

**Hearing no objection, Chair Cluggish declared the motion passed under the consent agenda.**



N. Janeen Resnick

Secretary