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

**Date** : Thursday, June 6, 2024

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

**Place** : Palmer Public Library

Palmer, MA

**Board**

**Present** : Debby Conrad, Chair; Vicky Biancolo, Vice Chair; Karen Traub, Secretary;

Kate Chang; Timothy Cherubini; George Comeau, Esq.; Joyce Linehan

**Board :** Jessica Vilas Novas

**Zoom**

**Staff Present:**

James Lonergan, Director; Heather Backman, Library Building Specialist; Andrea Bono-Bunker, Library Building Consultant; Kate Butler, Library Information Systems Specialist; Tracey Dimant, Head of Operations & Budget / Business Office; Susan Faiella, Accountant; Robert Favini, Head of Library Advisory & Development / Government Liaison; **Al Hayden,** Library Advisory Specialist; Rachel Masse, Assistant to the Director; Jaccavrie McNeely, Electronic Services Specialist; Cate Merlin, Head of State Programs

**Staff Zoom:**

Jennifer Inglis, State Aid Specialist; Uechi Ng, Administrative Assistant; Lilli Sutton, Administrative Assistant

**Observers Present:**

Farah Ameen, Trustee, Jones Library, Amherst; Courtney Andree, Executive Director, Massachusetts Center for the Book; Lee Edwards, Trustee, Jones Library, Amherst; Tamson Ely, Trustee, Jones Library, Amherst; Ejgene Goffredo, Trustee, Jones Library, Amherst; Lynn Griesemer, Amherst Town Council; Fay Halsale, Trustee, Palmer Public Library; Mary Kronholm, Former Commissioner; Stephanie Maher, Director, Palmer Public Library; Jan Marcinier, Trustee, Palmer Public Library; Mike Moran, Trustee, Palmer Public Library; Sandra Noonan, Trustee, Palmer Public Library; Jan Resnick, Former Commissioner; Sharon Shaloo, Great Barrington; Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director, Massachusetts Library System

**Observers Zoom:**

Maureen Amyot, Westborough Public Library; Ellen Anselone, Finegold Alexander

Matthew Blumenfeld, Amherst resident; Ira Bryck, Amherst resident; Seán Burke, Amherst resident; Nancy Campbell, Amherst; Claudia Canale Parola, Amherst; Amber Cano-Martin, Amherst; Richard Carpenter, Amherst resident; Eileen Chandler, CLAMS; Mary Ann Cluggish, Former Commissioner; Elena Cohen, Senator Jo Comerford's office; Senator Jo Comerford; Louis Conover, Amherst; Toni Cunningham, Amherst; State Representative Mindy Domb

Kelly Erwin, Jones Amherst; Kent Faerber; Meg Gage; Melissa Giraud, Amherst; Carol Gray, former Jones Library Trustee; Christine Gray-Mullen, Vice Chair Jones Library Building Committee; Hilda Greenbaum, Amherst; Ginny Hamilton, Friends of the Jones Library System, Amherst; Mary Heyer, Amherst; Arthur Keene; Maura Keene; Janet Keller; Maria Kopicki, Amherst resident; Guy Lanza; Nat Larson, Amherst; Kathy Lanza, Amherst; Deb Lee Leonard, Jones Library/Town of Amherst; Jeff Lee, Amherst resident; Janice Lefebvre; Marie Letarte, Bigelow Free Library, Clinton; J Paul Lisseck, Amherst; Kay Lisseck, Amherst; Rachel Loeffler, Berkshire Design Group, Amherst Jones Library; Betsy Mathews Amherst; Peggy Matthews-Nilsen, Amherst resident; Janet McGowan, Amherst resident; Sigurd Nilsen, Amherst resident; Jim Oldham, Amherst Resident; Rani Parker, Amherst; Robert Peirent Amherst Special Capital Projects Coordinator; Josephine Penta, Finegold Alexander; Carol Pope, Amherst; Josna Rege, Amherst resident; Janet Ryan – Amherst; Anita Sarro, Amherst resident; Cathy Schoen; Sharon Sharry, Jones Library, Amherst; Jennifer Shiao, Amherst; Hetty Startup; Lily Stowe-Alekman, Office of State Representative Mindy Domb; Jennifer Taub, Amherst; Adrienne Terrizzi, Amherst; Lydia Vernon Jones; William Waldron; Kurt Wise, Amherst resident

**Meeting called to order by Chair Conrad**

Chair Conrad called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M.

**Roll Call of Commissioners**

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

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Commissioner Cherubini- Present | Commissioner Linehan- Present |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Present | Commissioner Comeau- Present | Commissioner Traub- Present |
| Commissioner Chang- Present | Commissioner Conrad- Present | Commissioner Vilas Novas- Present Zoom |

Chair Conrad explained that she would be making a motion to comply with 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 Conrad moved to adopt a consent agenda for agenda items #2- Approval of Minutes- May 2, 2024; #7- Consideration of a FY2025 Grant Round for 7000-9506, Library Technology and Resource Sharing, including Telecommunications for Resource Sharing, Resource Sharing Program, Network Infrastructure, and Small Libraries in Networks; #8- Consideration of a FY2025 Grant Round for 7000-9506, LEA eContent grants and #14- Adjournment.

Commissioner Chang seconded.

Chair Conrad asked for a roll call vote of the Commissioners for this motion.

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|  | Commissioner Cherubini- Yes | Commissioner Linehan- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Comeau- Yes | Commissioner Traub- Yes |
| Commissioner Chang- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Vilas Novas- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

**Approval of Minutes from the regular monthly meeting:**

**May 2, 2024**

Chair Conrad asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 2, 2024 Monthly Meeting as presented.

Commissioner Chang moved and Commissioner Linehan seconded to approve the minutes from the May 2, 2024, Regular Monthly Meeting as presented.

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

**Chair’s Report**

Chair Conrad presented the following report:

May proved to be another busy month starting off with a fabulous Massachusetts Library Association Conference capped off by an inspiring speech given by Governor Maura Healey. We have never had a governor so supportive of libraries and she obviously knows what libraries are about. I have heard that this conference broke attendance records and the room was packed for her speech.

On May 13 I attended the May meeting of the Massachusetts Library System Executive Committee. The meeting included a presentation by Optima – the company with which MLS contracts for delivery service. Delivery represents a large part of the MLS funding which of course is a line item in the MBLC budget and is one of its most visible services. The partnership between MLS and Optima has proven to be tremendously successful, allowing MLS to provide a delivery service to libraries across the Commonwealth at a fraction of the cost of other delivery services. Millions of items are transported per year. When I talk to library patrons the ability to borrow items from any library is one of the most popular services offered by local libraries – my dentist was even raving about it just last week. I would recommend that Commissioners attend one of the Optima open houses when they are held to see how efficiently items are processed and shipped.

I also attended several meetings of the Massachusetts Library Association Legislative Committee. The Committee is planning several events to be held before the annual budget advocacy season, one of which will be a one-day training session for librarians, trustees and friends on how to be an effective advocate. I hope that some of the Commissioners can attend this which is tentatively scheduled to be held in October at the Worcester Public Library. Even if you are an experienced advocate, it is always helpful to hear the concerns from the librarians on the front lines.

I, along with other Commissioners, attended the Center for the Book Letters about Literature Awards program held at the State House on May 21. This is the first time since Covid that this was an in-person event. I was so impressed and touched by the young people when they read their letters to authors about how their book touched their lives. The pride demonstrated by the parents and teachers in attendance was wonderful to see. I was on an elevator with a teacher who talked about how important this program is to her. This is a demonstration of the wonderful work done by the Center for the Book and highlights the need to advocate for more robust funding for its program.

I attended the Executive Committee meeting on May 28th. On June 1st I attended the groundbreaking at the Swansea Public Library as the town begins the renovation and addition to the building. This was my first groundbreaking, and it was so exciting to see the community come together to celebrate the initiation of this project. It was a particularly special event for me as I worked with that library for more than 29 years and I know that the library has experienced some hard times in the past, including loss of certification at one point. It is a good example of how a library can recover from the worst of circumstances to be able to achieve widespread town support for a major project.

According to the by-laws the Commissioners elect new officers at the July meeting. The nominating committee is chaired by the current secretary, Commissioner Karen Traub. I am appointing Commissioner Comeau and Commissioner Villas Novas to serve on the Nominating Committee. They will be presenting the slate of officers next month at which time a vote will be taken. Officers begin their term in August.

I would be remiss if I didn’t note that this will be the last Board Meeting for James. I know I speak for the other Commissioners when I recognize his hard work and dedication. He steered the Board through the unsettled times of the Covid pandemic, worked diligently at creating partnerships with both library and other types of organizations, and has represented the interests of the library community effectively and successfully during his tenure. Not to be flippant, but his will be large shoes to be filled. This was said at a luncheon after our May meeting but on behalf of the past and current Commissioners with whom he has worked, I wish to thank James for everything he has done, and I hope he enjoys a wonderful retirement. He has earned it.

**Commissioner Activities**

**Commissioner Biancolo**

* May 6-7: Attended MLA Annual Meeting & Conference in Framingham
* May 16: Attended “Tap Into Grants and Statewide Contracts to Support Your Environmental Programs!” webinar. I had no idea the breadth of resources available to municipalities. I was heartened to learn that 295 communities in Massachusetts have been designated “green communities,” and almost all are working on finding clean energy solutions that reduce long-term energy costs and strengthen local economies.
* May 21: Attended the Mass Center for the Book Letters about Literature celebration at the State House in Boston. A lovely event, and I encourage everyone, if possible, to attend next year. Listening to middle schoolers read their letters to authors, living and dead, was restorative.
* May 22: Attended MBLC & MBI BEAD Challenge Process Overview; I hope all libraries involve their communities in correcting the map. We all know there are many dead and gasping connectivity spots across the Commonwealth. This is an equity issue, so I encourage everyone to do their best to support this work. The benchmark for broadband set by the FCC is 100/20 (100 Mbps (megabits per second) download and 20 upload).
* May 28: Attended meeting of the Executive Board, virtual
* May 29: Attended meeting of CMLA, virtual:
  + Dr. Erin Redihan of Salve Regina University will be surveying public library workers in New England libraries about morale and burnout; she is hoping to be ready to circulate that survey in mid-June.
  + In lieu of a legislative breakfast this year, the Worcester Public Library is planning to hold a “Stand with Libraries” event, on December 5 from 5:30-8:30pm, after the library is closed. Member of the WPL board of directors, former Senate President Harriette Chandler, will be inviting Senate President Karen Spilka to keynote the event, and all legislators as well as all library directors will be invited. The intention of the evening is to help librarians start building relationships with legislators. The layout will be tables and chairs rather than rows of seats, so people can talk, and tables will be scattered around the space so libraries will have an opportunity to showcase something cool they are doing or have done at their library. Equity as a theme will be woven through the short program, and save the date emails will be coming this summer.
* June 3: Attended MLA meeting on the advocacy season.

**Commissioner Cherubini**

* May 6th & 7th:  Attended the Massachusetts Library Association Conference
* May 7th:  Attended the kickoff event for the Massachusetts Center for the Book Mass Kids Lit (Program entitled: "Kidlit Beyond Borders: A Conversation with Rajani LaRocca, Hannah Moushabeck, and Mary Wagley Copp")
* May 14th: Observed meeting of MBLC's State Advisory Council on Libraries (SACL) during which grant applications were reviewed, with recommendations expected to the Commissioners for our July meeting
* May 21st:  Attended the Massachusetts Center for the Book recognition ceremony for honored participants in its "Letters About Literature" program

**Commissioner Linehan**

* May 5 & 6: Attended MLA Conference
* May 15: OpEd printed in the Dorchester Report about the Mass Leeds Act
* May 17: Attended event in Lowell with the Lt. Governor advocating the Mass Leeds Act

**Commissioner Traub**

* May 5 &6: Mass Library Association annual conference
* May 9:   MBLC Public Relations committee meeting virtual
* May 10: Tilton (Deerfield) Library groundbreaking
* May 15: Western Mass Library Advocates meeting virtual
* May 21: Mass Center for the Book Letters about Literature recognition ceremony
* May 24: Celebration for Colrain’s Griswold Memorial library IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Service

**Commissioner Vilas Novas**

* May 2: Digital Equity Challenge in Lowell
* May 6 & 7: Attended MLA Conference
* May 9: Spoke to Legislators about the Construction Bond Bill
* May 22: Challenge MBI- Morse Library Bookmobile in Natick
* June 3: Attended Digital Equity Meeting

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Director Lonergan presented the following report:

* May 3—Meeting with Sen. Comerford, Rep. Domb, and staff to discuss Jones Library, Amherst construction project, virtual
* May 6 & 7—Attended Massachusetts Library Association Annual Conference in Framingham and presented “State of the State/MBLC Update”
* May 7—Testified during Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies hearing on H.4459, Governor Healey’s *Mass Leads Act*, State House
* May 13— Massachusetts Library System (MLS) Executive Board meeting, virtual
* May 21—Attended Mass. Center for the Book’s *Letters about Literature* event, State House
* May 22—Mass. Broadband Institute & MBLC Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Challenge Process webinar
* May 28—MBLC Executive Committee Meeting
* May 30— Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) exit interview, virtual
* June 3—MLA Legislative Committee/MBLC FY2024 Legislative Year Recap, virtual
* June 5—All-day transition meeting with incoming MBLC Director, Maureen Amyot, MBLC Office

Rob will provide a **FY2025 budget update** on the Senate numbers for our budget lines, amendments, and next steps for the budget during his report.

A hearing of the **Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies** on [H.4459](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H4459), *An Act Relative to Strengthening Massachusetts’ Economic Leadership*, which includes $150 million for our construction program, was held on Tuesday, May 7, at the State House. Here’s a link to the recording of the hearing: <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4930>. I testified at around 2:31 into the hearing; and Nicole Daviau, the director of the Porter Memorial Library in Blandford and Molly Fogarty, the director of the Springfield City Library, testified remotely as a panel starting at 4:05:45. They did a great job explaining the importance of MPLCP funding for their very different communities.

**MPLCP 2023/2024 Grant Round**: We have received 22 applications--20 standard and 2 small population. Applications were due May 30th, but the official closing date is June 16, when all the hard copies of the signed application certification forms and the certified votes are due.

**Digital Equity Update:** The federal BEAD (Broadband Equity Access and Deployment) program enters a new phase with the opening of the Challenge Submission Period lasting 30 days from June 20 - July 20. The challenge process is open to local governments, tribal governments, non-profit organizations, and internet service providers to ensure the accuracy of internet availability data and maps for the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) to deploy $147 million in funding to expand broadband access across the state. Participants in the challenge will help provide a precise picture of broadband needs in Massachusetts.

To help support the challenge the MBLC hosted an MBI BEAD Challenge Webinar on May 22nd. Participants learned about the challenge process, the timeline, who is eligible to submit challenges and the types of challenges that can be submitted. You can view a recording of the webinar here: <https://vimeo.com/949931590/03eae5dd2d?share=copy> and learn more about the BEAD Challenge Process on MBI’s webpage: <https://broadband.masstech.org/bead-challenge-process>

**FY2025 LSTA Direct Grant Program Update**: The State Advisory Council on Libraries (SACL) met on May 14th at the MBLC offices to review and vote on this year’s grant recommendations. 15 grants were reviewed with 10 receiving a recommendation for approval by the Commissioner with a total amount of $180,775. Commissioners will vote at the July 2024 board meeting on the grants recommended by SACL.

**Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth:** For many years, the MBLC has been working with the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth to disseminate information to the Massachusetts library community. The Commission is an independent state agency that advises others in state government on effective policies, programs, and resources for LGBTQ youth.  The Commission releases a yearly recommendations document.

On May 28th Ally Dowds attended a reception at Boston City Hall to celebrate the release of Commission's 2025 Fiscal Year Recommendations, honor youth leadership scholarship recipients, and recognize new Commission members. The annual recommendations highlight the work that has been done and what still needs to be accomplished to better support LGBTQ youth in the Commonwealth. The MBLC participated as one of 19 state partners featured in the [2025 Recommendations Report](https://www.mass.gov/doc/mclgbtqy-annual-recommendations-fy-2025/download). In the coming year the MBLC will work with the Commission on LGBTQ Youth on the following recommendations:

* Develop and disseminate a new recommended LGBTQ book list in partnership with the Safe Schools Program for all libraries in Massachusetts.
* Partner with the Commission and communities to equip Massachusetts librarians with conflict resolution skills, talking points, and protection to handle anti-LGBTQ protests against programs and book challenges.
* Support libraries with LGBTQ-inclusive programming.
* Collaborate with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to align efforts on addressing book challenges, protests, and hate crimes against schools and school libraries and staff.

**MLA Annual Conference Session Recap:** Lyndsay Forbes presented a session with MLS’s Christi Farrar at MLA’s Annual Conference in Framingham. The session, *Touchpoints in Libraries*, provided an overview of the Touchpoints frameworks and focused on how Touchpoints can support the library’s goals of being family friendly and providing high quality, engaging, family focused and developmentally appropriate early learning services that support family strengths and nurture young children.

The MBLC has reserved a booth at the **Boston Book Festival**. Because of construction at Copley Square, there are a limited number of spots, but we were able to secure one. The festival will be held on October 26 in front of the Boston Public Library’s McKim Building. It’s a great opportunity for the MBLC to connect directly with the public. Commissioners are welcome!

**Finally**, on a personal note, this is my last report as the director of the MBLC. In my cover letter applying for the MBLC director position back in early 2017, I said “I am excited about the possibility of returning to the MBLC and contributing to the important work the agency has been doing since 1890 to improve library services and to provide equal access to library resources for all residents of the Commonwealth.” It has been a privilege and an honor to have worked with the Commissioners, MBLC staff, and our library community to do this work over the last seven years. My best wishes to you all.

**Legislative Report**

Rob Favini, Government Liaison presented the following report:

**Budget Update**

On May 23, 2024, the Senate passed their version of the budget bill, [S.2800](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S2800.pdf). The table below compares MBLC’s budget lines as passed in the latest Senate bill to the House’s budget bill, [H.4601](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H4601.pdf):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Final FY25 House and Senate Budget** |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **MBLC Line** | **H.4601** | **S.2800** |
| 9101 Operation of the board of library commissioners | $2,074,268 | $2,074,268 |
| 9401 State aid to regional public libraries\* | $16,817,600 | $19,000,000 |
| 9402 Talking book library at the Worcester Public Library | $711,942 | $678,040 |
| 9406 Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library | $4,053,441 | $3,860,420 |
| 9501 state aid to public libraries\*\* | $17,625,000 | $20,000,000 |
| 9506 For the technology and automated resource sharing networks | $6,475,960 | $6,169,480 |
| 9508 For the Massachusetts Center for the Book | $420,000 | $420,000 |
| Total | $48,178,211 | $50,127,940 |
|  |  |  |
| \*9401 House includes $100K Weymouth earmark | |  |
| \*\*9501 House includes $25K Mendon earmark |  |  |

In the next step in the process the House and Senate appoint three members each to a "Conference Committee" to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate proposals. One member of the minority party must be appointed by each branch. The Conference Committee reports a final compromise bill to the House and Senate for a final vote of acceptance in each branch.

**Senator Oliveria’s Budget Amendment Speech**

A highlight of the Senate debate was remarks made by Senator Jacob Oliveira in support of the budget amendment he filed, and passed, to increase funding to MBLC’s 9401 State Aid to Regional Libraries line. His remarks demonstrated the need for funding and an astute understanding of the role that libraries play in the communities they serve. Senator Oliveira’s remarks begin at around the 34-minute mark of this video: <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Sessions/Detail/4924/Video11>

**Intellectual Freedom/E Book bills**

At the time of writing this report the Bills that we have been tracking around intellectual freedom and E books have not moved out of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development.

S.2447/H.4235 An Act protecting against attempts to ban, remove, or restrict library access to materials and H.3239 An Act empowering library access to electronic books and digital audiobooks still have a reporting date of June 1, 2024. While S.2528/ H.4229 An Act regarding free expression has a reporting date of June 28, 2024.

With time running out in this legislative session, these bills may not make it out of committee and will not be brought to a vote. If this happens, we anticipate that these bills will be refiled next session. One bill to pay particular attention to if moved to next session is Rep. Balser’s H.3239 An Act empowering library access to electronic books and digital audiobooks. Rep. Balser is retiring this session, and the bill will need a new Presenter to file the bill next session.

**Consideration of a FY2025 Grant Round for 7000-9506, Library Technology and Resource Sharing, including Telecommunications for Resource Sharing, Resource Sharing Program, Network Infrastructure, and Small Libraries in Networks**

Kate Butler, Library Information Systems Specialist presented the four FY2025 Telecommunications, Resource Sharing, Network Infrastructure, and Small Libraries in Networks Grants.

1. FY24 Telecommunications for Resource Sharing ($450,000)
2. FY24 Resource Sharing Program ($2,100,000)
3. FY24 Network Infrastructure ($400,000)
4. FY24 Small Libraries in Networks ($400,000)

The total for these four grant rounds is: $3,350,000.

**Telecommunications for Resource Sharing** provides offsets to the ongoing costs that networks bear for providing broadband connectivity, dedicated data lines and shared Internet service to their members. Telecommunications for Resource Sharing also provides ongoing support for the cost of Internet service for smaller libraries that are not part of a network.

The **Resource Sharing Program** grant recognizes that libraries in networks are contributing to the overall universe of materials available to all residents of Massachusetts by facilitating interlibrary lending using network technology. The grant also supports 75% of the ongoing costs for the eCard registration and renewal platform used by networks.  
  
The **Network Infrastructure** grant provides funding to each network based on the network’s size in number of outlets. These funds allow the network to accomplish large equipment replacement projects, software-as-a-service costs (SAAS), and related system costs on its own timeline.

The **Small Libraries in Networks** (SLIN) grant allows networks to directly offset annual membership costs for public libraries in municipalities under 10,000 population.

Chair Conrad asked for a motion to approve the FY2025 Grant Round for 7000-9506 under the consent agenda.

Commissioner Traub moved and Commissioner Comeau seconded to approve the four FY2025 grant opportunities, to be funded out of account 7000-9506 as described in the accompanying fact sheets: Telecommunications for Resource Sharing, Resource Sharing Program, Network Infrastructure, Small Libraries in Networks totaling $3,350,000.

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

**Consideration of a FY2025 Grant Round for 7000-9506, LEA eContent grants**

Jaccavrie McNeely, Electronic Services Specialist, presented the LEA Grants to the Board.

The **Library eBooks and Audiobooks (LEA) Content grant** provides networks participating in the LEA program with additional funds to purchase sharable eContent. These funds will directly support the continually growing demand for eBooks and Audiobooks across the Commonwealth.

**Background**

Three networks (SAILS, OCLN and Minuteman) piloted a new inter-network lending model with the vendor OverDrive beginning in the winter of 2017-18. The pilot allowed, for the first time, patrons of one network to check out eBooks and Audiobooks from the collection of another network. Over the course of the next year, the remaining automated networks having OverDrive collections joined the program. By May 2019, with the on boarding of the final two networks, the Library eBook and Audiobook (LEA) lending program was available statewide. In addition, the SAILS network serves as the access point through which MassCat members and unaffiliated libraries may participate. MLS manages these participants.

**Purpose**

The LEA program creates a statewide eContent system more closely approximating how books and other physical materials are shared. However, the current marketplace for digital books bears little resemblance to that for physical books and media. Prices and license periods for eContent are in constant flux, and often trend in ways harmful to library budgets. The LEA Content Grants funding will significantly supplement networks’ own collection development purchases, will help reduce hold queues and patron wait times, and increase the breadth of the collection.

The LEA Networks’ OverDrive platform fees will also be covered by grant funds as part of their participation in this program. Said fees will be paid out of account 7000-9702 (LSTA). For the Boston instance of OverDrive, BPL will be the LSTA grant recipient rather than MBLN.

**Procedures**

Each network provides MBLC with title and holdings counts of their shareable OverDrive collection, and both the network spending and individual library spending on shareable content for the previous three fiscal years. Items which are not shareable via LEA -- eMagazines, cost per circ, simultaneous use products, and non-shareable OverDrive Advantage copies -- are not eligible for inclusion. Awards will be calculated with a common base amount for each network, with the remaining funds apportioned based on their provided data: 50% for total spending and 50% for holdings.

All funds must be spent on eContent that is shareable through the LEA program and must be fully expended by the end of the fiscal year in which they are awarded.

Commissioner Biancolo moved and Commissioner Linehan seconded to approve the FY 2025 grant opportunity, funded out of account 7000-9506, as described in the accompanying fact sheets: Library eBooks and Audiobooks (LEA) Content. The Board authorizes any additional FY2025 7000-9506 disbursements that may be possible toward the end of the grant cycle.

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

**Consideration of approval for a Deadline Extension Request from the Jones Library in Amherst**

The following letter was received from Sharon Sharry, Director, Jones Library, Amherst.

With this letter, we are respectfully requesting an extension to our deadline to sign a contract with a General Contractor from June 30, 2024 to December 31, 2024,

On April 26, 2024, our project received only one General Contractor (GC) bid from Fontaine Brothers, Inc. in the amount of $42,742,000, even though six GCs had been prequalified, and the filed sub-bids came in on April 9, 2024 $83,966 UNDER budget. Fontaine's bid is 18% higher than our budgeted construction amount of $36,251,900. Because of this result, the Attorney General has ruled that we may go out to bid again.

Our team has investigated why the one bid was so high. Several reasons have been suggested:

* Lack of competition - estimates are based on having five bidders
* Timing of our bid - Contractors had a lot of backlog for the "summer slammer" projects lined up and interested Contractors had reached their bond caps, thus could not bid on our project (i.e., September is a better time to solicit bids); Contractors knew this project needed their "A­ teams," but they were already deployed
* The project Is complex (e.g., historic preservation/abatement; sitework)
* Number of addenda
* The timeline is aggressive
* The site is tight
* BABA requirements (e.g., CLT)

Our team proposes the following timeline:

* June 7, 2024 - Contract with FAA for additional design work to reduce costs
* Summer 2024 - Design less-expensive Library which maintains both the programmatic requirements and the community's vision
* Mid-September 2024 - Re-bid (including permitting; prequalification process; locating interim space; contracting with a moving company; maintaining contact with potential bidders)
* Early November 2024 - Open bids
* December 2024 - Sign contract with General Contractor
* December 2026 - Grand Opening

Andrea Bono Bunker presented the following information to the Commissioners.

I bring before you a request from the Town of Amherst for a six-month extension to their third milestone deadline of June 30, 2024 due to receiving a sole bid at 18% higher than their estimate and appropriation this Spring.

For our Covid-era projects, we have seen various delays at various stages that have necessitated extension requests, which have all been granted. It is within our regulations that the Board may entertain extension requests for milestones with extraordinary circumstances. The most recent extension request for this third milestone of signing a contract with a general contractor took place last June and was granted for the Sharon Public Library, which had no bidders in their initial cycle due to issues with language and terms in the bid documents. Ultimately, they received one bid, which was 5% higher than the estimate, and accepted it. Deerfield, which like Amherst is a renovation/expansion project, bid their project this Spring, had a sole bidder, and came in approximately 10% above estimate. During that same bidding period, Swansea received four bids and came in almost 13% below estimate for their addition/renovation project. The amount of bidders does matter, as competition between general contractors usually creates more competitive numbers. In both Deerfield and Amherst, the sub-bidders for the trades came in below the estimates, as they were bidding in a competitive environment, but the general contractors knew they were without competition.

In our program, the Town has ultimate control over the design and construction process, as they act on behalf of the majority will of the community and are also the contracting authorities for their OPM, architect, and general contractor. Through votes necessary to secure local funding, the community indicates their support for a given project. In the case of Amherst, there have been three affirmative formal votes in the last three years at the local level:

Town Council vote to accept the provisional award and appropriate local funding in April 2021

Referendum vote to affirm the Town Council vote in November 2021

Town Council Appropriation increase vote in December 2023

To be clear, a Board vote to approve this extension request would give time for the municipality to explore its options and for the municipality to decide if there is a path forward. In that exploration, we have been assured that the programmatic elements required through the accepted building program will not be diminished or eliminated in any capacity.

I will turn it over to Sharon Sharry, the Jones Library Director, who joins us virtually. I believe we also have members of the Town Council and the Trustees present as well as the architects.

Before the Commissioners took the vote they opened the meeting to public comment. It was stated that Commissioners read all letters that were submitted before the meeting.

After hearing the comments Commissioner Conrad asked the Commissioners if anyone would like to make a motion.

Commissioner Comeau moved and Commissioner Biancolo seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grants an extension of the deadline to sign a contract with a general contractor to the Town of Amherst for its library construction project for the Jones Library to December 31, 2024.

Chair Conrad asked for a roll call vote.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Commissioner Cherubini- Yes | Commissioner Linehan- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Comeau- Yes | Commissioner Traub- Yes |
| Commissioner Chang- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Vilas Novas- Yes |

**Report from Massachusetts Library System**

Sarah Sogigian, Executive Director, Massachusetts Library System presented the following report:

MLS Updates – MBLC Meeting June 2, 2024

* Before diving into our updates, I’d like to extend best wishes on behalf of the Massachusetts Library System to Consultant Kristi Chadwick, whose last day at MLS is May 10. We thank Kristi for her dedication to Massachusetts libraries for the past ten years, and we wish her the best of luck as she takes on her new role as director of the Ballston Community Public Library in New York at the end of May.
* The Basic Library Techniques (BLTs) course for Administration is in Beta testing and should be ready for launch within the next couple of months.
* This is the second of four BLT courses that are being updated for the Learning Management System (LMS).
* Hillary Washburn (Instructional Designer & Learning Management System Administrator) is leading this project and working with Envision Performance Solutions.
* The Pathways to Inclusion: Strategies for Diverse Library Workforce Development RFP launched on March 25, with a close date of May 10: [https://masslibsystem.org/blog/2024/03/25/pathways](https://masslibsystem.org/blog/2024/03/25/pathways/)
* The purpose of this project is to identify ways both MLS and other employers of library workers can increase the appeal and accessibility of a career in libraries to individuals from underrepresented groups.
* As a reminder, all MLS member public libraries have access to the Employer’s Association of the NorthEast’s HR hotline. This service is available at no cost to the library.
* You can find more information about this service by visiting Guides Dot Mass Lib System Dot Org Slash Cats and navigating to the “HR Services” tab.

[guides.masslibsystem.org/cats](https://guides.masslibsystem.org/cats)

* Please feel free to share this information with your public library colleagues.
* Hillary Washburn (Instructional Designer & Learning Management System Administrator) and I have been consulting with Perkins Access to continuously improve the accessibility of the communications, documents, and services provided by the Consulting & Training Services Department.
* Jane Stimpson (Consultant) hosted Rebecca Tolley to present a webinar titled “An Introduction to Trauma-Informed Services for Libraries” on March 27 and had 91 attendees. This webinar was recorded and is available on our Vimeo channel.
* In March, we approved 21 grant applications and received 32 evaluations.
* 100% of participants agreed that their respective grant program is helping them accomplish their learning goals.

**Upcoming Event**

* Finally, the MLS Member Annual Meeting is being held on Monday, October 28, 2024, from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Devens Common Center. All workers at MLS member libraries are invited to attend. We plan to share more details, including registration information, in the coming weeks.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 12:19 P.M.



Karen Traub

Secretary