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

**Date** : Thursday, May 2, 2024

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

**Place** : Pollard Memorial Library

Lowell, MA

**Board**

**Present** : Debby Conrad, Chair; Vicky Biancolo, Vice Chair; Karen Traub, Secretary; Timothy Cherubini; Joyce Linehan; Jessica Vilas Novas

**Absent :** Kate Chang; George Comeau, Esq.

**Staff Present:**

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

**Staff Zoom:**

Jennifer Inglis, State Aid Specialist

**Observers Present:**

Lynn Ahlgren, President, Friends of the Pollard Memorial Library; Mary Ann Cluggish, Former Commissioner, Wellesley; Bridget Cooley, Library Director, Pollard Memorial Library; Judith Davidson, Trustee, Pollard Memorial Library; Jack Martin, Communications Manager, Massachusetts Library System; Mary Rose Quinn, Former MBLC Staff, Woburn; Donna Richards, Trustee, Pollard Memorial Library

**Observers Zoom:**

Maureen Amyot, Library Director, Westborough Public Library; Courtney Andree, Executive Director, Massachusetts Center for the Book; Eileen Chandler, Network Administrator, Cape Libraries Automated Materials Sharing (CLAMS); Al Hayden, Acting Director, Peabody Institute Library, Peabody; Dave Slater, Network Administrator, Old Colony Library Network (OCLN)

**Meeting called to order by Chair Conrad**

Chair Conrad called the meeting to order at 10:00 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.

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

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- April 2, 2024, April 17, 2024 (AM), April 17, 2024 (PM) Minutes; #7- Discussion and approval of correction to the due dates of the FY2025 State Aid to Public Libraries Program“Determining Eligibility for a Waiver of the FY2025 Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR)”; and

#13- Adjournment.

Commissioner Traub seconded.

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

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

**The motion passed.**

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

**April 2, 2024**

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

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

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

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

**April 17, 2024 (AM)**

Chair Conrad asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 17, 2024 (AM) Special Meeting as presented.

Commissioner Linehan moved and Commissioner Vilas Novas seconded to approve the minutes from the April 17, 2024 (AM), Special Monthly Meeting as presented.

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

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

**April 17, 2024 (PM)**

Chair Conrad asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 17, 2024 (PM) Special Meeting as presented.

Commissioner Traub moved and Commissioner Biancolo seconded to approve the minutes from the April 17, 2024 (PM), Special 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:

As you might have noticed, Commissioner Barros did not attend the Director Interviews in April. She has submitted her resignation. She has significant personal responsibilities that prevented her from being able to fully participate on the Board. James has been told we can hope to have the position filled by June.

Tracey has sent out an email to the Commissioners about Maureen’s Amyot’s starting date. She will be on board July 8 and will be attending the Board meeting that month which is being held at the agency’s offices in Boston. James has graciously agreed to provide remote support to Maureen and the agency between the time of his move in June and her start date. This means the Board will not experience any time during which there will be no Director. I have received some very positive feedback from librarians in Massachusetts about Maureen’s appointment and also some comments about how lucky the Board was to have such qualified candidates for the position.

I attended the Massachusetts Library System Monthly Executive Board meeting on April 8, the day of the equinox when all public librarians were on the phone telling patrons they no longer had any equinox glasses. I also attended a meeting of the Massachusetts Library Association Legislative Committee on April 19 during which time there was some talk about follow up advocacy events for the spring and fall. I also attended the monthly meeting of the MBLC Executive Board on April 23.

A lot of my time during this past month was spent working with my local Friends group in organizing and conducting a large book sale – our big spring fundraiser. During the sale I managed the payment station since I am most comfortable with the system we use for noncash payment, and I had an opportunity to talk to several customers as well as the book sale volunteers. A topic which came up fairly consistently was the use of eBooks vs print books and a lot of people were format agnostic. For those who use or prefer eBooks a fairly constant complaint was how long they had to wait for popular books on Libby and once I told them about the cost and limitations libraries face licensing eBooks and downloadable audiobooks, they were uniformly appalled. I just read that Rhode Island is filing legislation to regulate pricing of titles in these formats when sold to libraries. I don’t know if it is similar to that filed by Representative Balser, but I do know that Eileen Dyer who was co-chair of the Massachusetts Library Association Legislative Committee is now very active with the Rhode Island Library Association. It would not surprise me if there are strong similarities between the bills.

I also read that Maryland just passed a Freedom to Read bill which has been signed by the Governor. This bill states that materials in school and public libraries may not be removed because of the origin, background or views of the author and not for partisan, ideological or religious disapproval either. It also calls for school libraries to create a procedure to review titles that may be challenged but must remain available on the shelves during the process.  The legislation adds protections against retaliation for library staff who follow the law. A violation of the law could lead to loss of state funding. I hope that Massachusetts will be able to pass similar legislation soon.

The Massachusetts Library Association’s annual conference is taking place May 6th and 7th at the Framingham Sheraton. Governor Healey is a keynote speaker on the morning of May 6th and there will be a photo op for the Commissioners following her talk. If you plan on attending, be sure to sit in the front with your fellow Commissioners. I will let James and staff speak about the hearing scheduled for May 7th on H4459 An Act relative to strengthening Massachusetts' economic leadership which includes the funds for the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program. It will be a very busy beginning to next week.

**Commissioner Activities**

**Commissioner Biancolo**

* April 17, 2024: Participated in the final interviews of candidates for the position of director of the MBLC at the agency offices in Boston
* April 18, 2024: Attended meeting of CMLA, virtual
* April 18, 2024: Attended the 20th anniversary celebration of the Blackstone Public Library’s Connect with Your Community Night & 20th Anniversary Celebration, recorded congratulations
* April 19, 2024: Attended meeting of MLA Legislative Committee, virtual
* April 23, 2024: Attended meeting of the Executive Board, virtual
* April 24, 2024: Attended Introduction to State Aid webinar w Jennifer Inglis & Cate Merlin

**Commissioner Cherubini**

* April 17, 2024- Attended Director interviews at the MBLC
* Throughout the rest of April, began review of applications for grants through SACL. Meeting of that group is May 14th and I anticipate commissioners will be pleased and excited by the SACL recommendations.

**Commissioner Linehan**

* April 17, 2024: Participated in the final interviews of candidates for the position of director of the MBLC at the agency offices in Boston

**Commissioner Traub**

* April 10, 2024- Western Mass Library Advocates meeting virtual
* April 11, 2024- Mass Library Trustees Association meeting virtual
* April 17, 2024- MBLC Director Interviews
* April 23, 2024- MBLC Executive committee meeting virtual
* April 30, 2024- Digital Commonwealth Annual conference "Building Connections: Pixels and People"

**Commissioner Vilas Novas**

* April 17, 2024- MBLC Director Interviews
* April 26, 2024- Toured the Morrill Memorial Library, Norwood

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Director Lonergan presented the following report:

Meetings/activities highlights since the last monthly Board meeting:

* April 8— Massachusetts Library System (MLS) Executive Board meeting, virtual
* April 9—Introductory meeting with new A&F Analyst Angela Liang
* April 9— Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) meeting/webinar: “State Library Agencies and AI Technologies”
* April 10— Council of State Library Agencies in the Northeast (COSLINE) meeting, virtual
* April 11— Presented virtually as part of COSLA session for new(er) chiefs on “Working with the Institute of Museum and Library Services”
* April 17—Attended MBLC Director Interviews and Discussion
* April 18—Meeting with Timur Yontar, Director of Capital Budget, Exec. Office of Administration and Finance (A&F)
* April 19— MLA Legislative Committee meeting, virtual
* April 23— MBLC Executive Committee meeting, virtual
* April 23—Meeting with Boston Public Library President David Leonard and MLS Executive Director, Sarah Sogigian, virtual
* April 25—Meeting with Perkins Library Director Kim Charlson, Head of Worcester Talking Book Library Lee Anne Hooley, Cate Merlin, and Tracey Dimant, MBLC Office
* April 25—COSLA Member Update, virtual
* April 26— Meeting with Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) staff, Rob Favini, Kate Butler, and Celeste Bruno to discuss Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program challenge process, virtual
* April 30—Phone call with Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies staff regarding May 7 hearing on H.4459

Rob will provide a **FY2025 budget update** on the House Ways and Means and House numbers for our budget lines, amendments, etc. during his report.

A [hearing](https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4930) 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, has been scheduled for Tuesday, May 7, starting at 10:00 a.m. at the State House. I plan to testify in person (limited to two minutes) and will provide written testimony with more detail on our need for the bond authorization and background on our program.

We are coordinating with Molly Fogarty, the Director of the Springfield City Library and Nicole Daviau, the Director of the Porter Memorial Library in Blandford to have them testify as part of a remote panel later in the hearing and to provide written testimony. We will discuss this and other advocacy efforts for the bond authorization during our board meeting in Lowell.

Tracey, Cate, Andrea, Heather, and I met on April 18 with **Timur Yontar, Capital Budget Director at A&F**. We met partially to introduce Cate and Heather to Timur (we also let him know the MBLC will soon have a new director). We discussed H.4459, possible timing for a hearing and passage of the bill and needed advocacy efforts. Timur told us that A&F would be able to cover our next grant round with another bond authorization if for some reason our authorization hasn’t passed in time to make awards this fall, or if the authorization doesn’t pass at all. He also let us know A&F would make up the difference if our authorization isn’t for the $150 million requested. Having said that, it’s still very important that we work with the library community on advocacy efforts to support the $150 million for the MPLCP in H.4459.

**Deerfield Groundbreaking**: The Tilton Library in Deerfield has scheduled their groundbreaking ceremony for the [renovation and expansion of their building](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/www.tiltonlibrary.org/building-project/__;!!CPANwP4y!WBhaAh_KPty9TfxkN3Q8NdNOIFDyEUh2k58o_vxoeQROV6vyTi008Og3w-CnX7HwdN8Kwwsj3wLxlh7ajWta44kRA8gcsso0Bg$) at 75 North Main Street in South Deerfield for Friday, May 10 at 11:00 am.

**E Rate Update:** MBLC’s E Rate consultant Aleck Johnson delivered this year’s final E Rate training session on Thursday, April 25, 2024. The webinar, *Finishing the Process*, covered the program integrity assurance review process, Funding Commitment Decision Letters, Form 486, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), and invoicing.Planning for the second year of E Rate consulting activity has begun.

In addition to being a resource to the Massachusetts Library community, Aleck and MBLC staff will continue outreach efforts to individual libraries and the Automated Networks. One topic in particular Aleck will be exploring is educating the library community on the use and accessibility of filtering software. As libraries adopt filtering technology, more and more federal funding becomes available to them.

**Digital Equity Update:** MBLC staff is working with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) to mobilize libraries to promote the [Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Challenge Process](https://broadband.masstech.org/bead-challenge-process). This is a crucial step in ensuring the accuracy of data by updating the FCC’s broadband access map. The 30-day window gives stakeholders an opportunity to challenge map data to create a more accurate broadband accessibility picture ahead of MBI’s deployment of $147 million in funding to expand broadband access across the state.

**ACP Update:** In the aftermath of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) losing federal funding [Xfinity](https://www.xfinity.com/support/articles/acp-update) (Comcast) will be giving partial credit of up to $14.00 to participants of the program. The Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act (S.3565 /H.R.6929) was introduced in January 2024 to provide $7 billion in funding to keep the ACP running through 2024. The bills are currently sitting in committee.

**Trial Court Library Services to Prison and Jail Libraries:** On April 22, 2024, Consultant to Special Populations Ally Dowds and Rob Favini visited the Norfolk Trial Court Library in Dedham to meet with librarians from the Massachusetts Trial Court Libraries and the Department of Corrections to discuss ways that trial court library resources can be made available to prison and jail librarians and incarcerated individuals. This was the first in what will be ongoing discussions that will help to fortify corrections libraries with access to resources and reference services from the fifteen trial court libraries across the state.

Lyndsay Forbes will be presenting at the MLA conference with Christi Farrar from MLS on **Touchpoints in Libraries** on Monday, May 6 from 3:30-4:15 p.m. Here’s more detail on the session:

Supporting and nurturing early childhood development through programs and services is a critical part of what public libraries provide for their communities. To support these efforts, staff at the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) and Massachusetts Library System (MLS) became certified Touchpoints in Libraries trainers. This session is an overview of the Touchpoints framework, intended to share foundational information and to help library staff decide if the full training is right for their library. It will focus 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. In this session you'll learn about the history and philosophy of the Touchpoints approach; understand the value of a strengths-based approach when working with families; and learn about the benefits of a reflective mindset.

Communications Director Celeste Bruno has been working with Rachel Masse and Jaccavrie McNeely to develop materials for the MBLC booth at the **MLA Conference**. Database bookmarks were developed that include many topics that libraries have asked for including Learning English/Support for Citizens; Legal Documents; Test Preparation; American Sign Language Learning/Language learning; and kids activities. An E-rate information sheet and a bookmark with information about services to incarcerated people were also developed with help from Kate Butler and Ally Dowds respectively. A highlight of the booth will be the raffle for a signed Bruins jersey.

Preparation for **summer reading** with the Boston Bruins is also underway. The MBLC received 87 applications for the 5 Blades visits that will take place in libraries this summer. The team has narrowed the list down to the top 12 and is working with the Bruins to make the final selection.

The team is also helping to raise awareness about the construction bond bill. The initial press release went out In March when the Governor filed the bill, social media posts that feature impact statements are going out on our channels, the same impact statements are on colorful postcards that will be given out at MLA, and [information](https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/construction/2024-bond-bill.php) is featured on the agency’s website.

**Equity Audit:** As I mentioned last year, the Healey/Driscoll Administration released [Executive Order No. 612 Instituting the Practice of Equity Assessment Government-Wide and Creating the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee on Increasing Equity Through Data](https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-612-instituting-the-practice-of-equity-assessment-government-wide-and-creating-the-inter-agency-coordinating-committee-on-increasing-equity-through-data) in May 2023. Please note the following section:

**Section 3:  Extending Equity Assessment to Additional Governmental Offices.**

Independent agencies and authorities, public institutions of higher education, other constitutional offices, the judiciary, and other public entities are encouraged to work with the Coordinating Committee to participate in equity assessment initiatives and otherwise to adopt practices consistent with those advanced by the Coordinating Committee.

After checking in regularly with the Governor’s Office of Access and Opportunity, we recently received the Equity Assessment Rubric that was developed by the Governor’s Interagency Coordinating Committee. We will be reviewing the rubric and determining how to incorporate it into our plans for an RFP to contract with a consultant to assist the agency with both an equity audit and additional work.

**Staff Update**: The Library Advisory and Development Unit is pleased to announce we hired two people in April.

Alysa (Al) Hayden, most recently the Acting Director at the Peabody Institute Library in Peabody, will be the MBLC’s new Library Advisory Specialist. Al brings a great deal of experience working with boards of trustees and municipal leaders, having served as an assistant director and as the head of a Library Friends group. Her start date is May 20, 2024.

Jessica Branco Colati will be the MBLC’s new Preservation Specialist, also starting on May 20, 2024. Jessica comes to us with a great mix of experience from academia, industry, and the non-profit sectors. Her experience includes working at the Northeast Document Conservation Center and serving as an elected trustee for the Joshua Hyde Public Library in Sturbridge.

**Legislative Report**

Rob Favini, Government Liaison presented the following report:

**Budget Update**The House wrapped up their budget process the week of April 22nd by hearing debating, accepting and consolidating Amendments. On Friday April 26th the House’s $58 billion Fiscal 2025 budget passed 153-4. The next step will be the Senate picking up the budget with their work traditionally wrapping up the week before Memorial Day.

Below are the MBLC budget line amounts passed in the House Appropriation Bill.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **House Passed General Appropriation Bill H.4601** | |  |  |  |
| Board of Library Commissioners | |  |  |  |
| **Budget Line** | **Description** | **Amount Passed** | **FY25 Legislative Agenda Ask** | **Difference** |
| 7000-9101 | Operation of the board of library commissioners | $2,074,268 | $2,095,220 | -$20,952 |
| 7000-9401 | State aid to regional public libraries | $16,817,600 | $17,553,480 | -$735,880 |
| 7000-9402 | Talking book library at the Worcester public library | $711,942 | $711,942 | $0 |
| 7000-9406 | Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library | $4,053,441 | $4,053,441 | $0 |
| 7000-9501 | State aid to public libraries | $17,625,000 | $20,000,000 | -$2,375,000 |
| 7000-9506 | Technology and automated resource sharing networks | $6,475,960 | $6,475,960 | $0 |
| 7000-9508 | Massachusetts Center for the Book, Inc | $420,000 | $500,000 | -$80,000 |

**H.4600 Amendments**H.4600 included over 1000 amendments that were consolidated into seven categories (A-G). The amendments with MBLC budget lines were consolidated into Group A Education &Local Aid/Social Services/Veterans. Consolidation takes place to keep things moving along without having to vote on every single amendment. Just because an amendment is consolidated into a group does not guarantee that an amendment lives to move on to the next stage in the budget process.

Checking budget lines in Consolidated Group A revealed that only two amendments against the MBLC budget lines made it into the final budget. Unfortunately, they were earmarks ($25,000 to Mendon Taft PL and $100K to Tufts Library Weymouth) and not items from the MBLC Legislative Agenda. See the table below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **H.4600 Amendments Status-MBLC Lines** | |  |  |  | |  | |
| **Number** | **Name** | **Budget Line** | **Rep.** | **Amount** | **Accepted in budget** | |
| 216 | State Aid to Public Libraries | 7000-9501 | Higgins | $2,400,000 | No | |
| 255 | State Aid to Regional Libraries | 7000-9401 | Murray | $835,880 | No | |
| 1113 | Massachusetts Center for the Book | 7000-9508 | Sobadosa | $80,000 | No | |
| 222 | Town of Mendon Taft Public Library feasibility study | 7000-9501 | Murray | $25,000 | Yes | |
| 1284 | Tufts Library Weymouth - materials and equipment | 7000-9401 | Murphy | $100,000 | Yes | |
| 1432 | Moses Greeley Memorial Public Library - Roof Replacement | 7000-9501 | Garry | $100,000 | No | |
| 1436 | Tyngsborough Public Library - soundproofing | 7000-9501 | Garry | $30,000 | No | |
| 1437 | Parker Memorial Library Dracut - roof | 7000-9501 | Garry | $100,000 | No | |

As the process moves to the Senate there is no guarantee that amendments in the House Bill will make it to the final budget. An opportunity still exists in the Senate to address MBLC’s Legislative Agenda priorities as amendments can be filed again. We are reaching out to the Library Legislative Caucus to help identify Senators to file these amendments.

**A Note About Earmarks**Earmarks filed on the MBLC’s budget lines create a challenge. They artificially inflate our budget lines and are difficult to impossible to pay out due to how the lines are defined in statute.

Earmarks to 7000-9501 State Aid to Libraries artificially inflate our budget line complicating budget discussions for upcoming years and impact our distribution formula. The State Aid to Public Libraries line is in statute, intended to distribute local aid to municipalities who are certified to participate in the program by meeting statutory and regulatory requirements. Funding is distributed based on formulas for three grants:  the*Library Incentive Grant***,**the*Municipal Equalization Grant***,**and*Nonresident Circulation Offset.* Adding earmarks to this linedisrupts established distribution formulas.

Earmarks to 7000-9401 State Aid to Regional Libraries line is a Cherry Sheet line, with the funding going to the two entities in that line (the Massachusetts Library System and the Library for the Commonwealth). As this is in statute, it may not be legally possible to process the earmark out of this line.

**An Act Regarding Free Expression Update**[S.2528](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S2528) and [H.4229](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H4229) *An Act Regarding Free Expression* was discharged from the Joint Education Committee to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development on March 25, 2024. The move from Education to Tourism was designed to keep bills having to do with similar topics together in one committee.

House Chair of the committee Rep. Mindy Domb’s staff is working on strengthening the bill by making it complement [S.2447](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S2447) and [H.4235](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H4235) *An act Protecting Against Attempts to Ban, Remove, or Restrict Library Access to Materials*. The goal is still to release the bills by the June 1st deadline, however there may be an additional short extension if needed. If the June deadline is not met the bills will have to be refiled in the next legislative session. The silver lining to this scenario is that when refiled, the bills will be stronger and ready to go much earlier in the legislative session.

**Discussion and approval of correction to the due dates of the FY2025 State Aid to Public Libraries Program “Determining Eligibility for a Waiver of the FY2025 Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR)”**

Jennifer Inglis, State Aid Specialist, presented the following correction to the due date of the FY2025 State Aid to Public Libraries Program “Determining Eligibility for a Waiver of the FY2025 Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR)”.

**FY2025 STATE AID TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES PROGRAM**

**DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR A WAIVER OF THE FY2025 MUNICIPAL APPROPRIATION REQUIREMENT (MAR)**

The Board of Library Commissioners will consider requests for waivers of the FY2025 Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) from municipalities that demonstrate fiscal hardship. Requests for waivers must include the following documentation and must be received by the MBLC State Aid and Data Coordination Unit **with a postmark no later than October 4, 2024:**

1. a signed *Petition for Waiver of the FY2025 Municipal Appropriation Requirement.*

**And…with a postmark no later than November 8, 2024:**

**For Municipalities applying for a waiver of the FY2025 MAR that met full requirements (no waiver) of the FY2024 MAR):**

2. a completed *FY2024/FY2025 Total Municipal Operating Budget Worksheet*, and

3. supporting municipal budget document(s) (such as copies of warrant articles or summary pages from the municipal budget), listing for FY2024 and FY2025 both the total operating and departmental budgets for the municipality,

4. a statement from a senior municipal official:

a. citing the fiscal hardship surrounding the municipality’s inability to meet the FY2025 MAR,

b. explaining the municipality's FY2025 budget process regarding the library,

c. providing evidence that any reduction to the library budget is not disproportionate relative to changes in other municipal departments and the overall municipal budget.

5. a cover letter from the library director and trustee chair, with enclosures if appropriate, explaining the library's FY2025 budget process and reasons why the community did not comply with the FY2025 MAR. (Examples of enclosures include: narratives from municipal officials describing the fiscal situation, text of referenda.)

**For Municipalities that received a waiver of the FY2024 MAR, in addition to documents 2-5 as listed above:**

6. a Five Year MAR Waiver Plan (for Year Two) or an update (for Years Three-Five) written by a senior municipal official in conjunction with library director and trustees.

**NOTE: Municipalities are limited to 5 consecutive fiscal years as a waiver applicant. Commissioners have the discretion to request that any waiver applicant present their petition in person.**

**The Waiver Review Process**

According to Massachusetts General Laws, c.78, s19A:

No city or town shall receive any money under this section in any year when the appropriation of said city or town for free public library services is below an amount equal to the average of its appropriation for free public library service for the three years immediately preceding, increased by two and one‑half per cent of said average. Said board may, upon petition of a community, waive aforesaid requirement upon demonstration of fiscal hardship.

The number of waivers available for FY2025 will not be determined until the budget language is final for FY2025.

1. Petitions for a waiver will be reviewed by the Board of Library Commissioners at their January 2025 meeting.

2. All petitioners for a waiver determined to have a disproportionate cut to their budget must present their petition in person at the January 2025 meeting.

3. All petitioners for a waiver who received a disproportionate cut in the prior fiscal year must present their petition in person at the January 2025 meeting.

4. The Board will review FY2025 MAR Waiver Petitions based on:

a. evidence of municipal fiscal hardship, and

b. demonstration by the municipality that the library’s budget was not disproportionately reduced.

5. The Board will vote on the petitions for waivers of the FY2025 MAR at their February 2025 meeting.

6. The Board will hear any appeals of the denial of an FY2025 MAR waiver at their March 2025 meeting.

7. The Board will act on any appeal at their April 2025 meeting.

8. The FY2025 State Aid to Public Library Program officially concludes at the conclusion of the April 2025 Board of Library Commissioners meeting.

**Initial Approval of Policy: February 7, 2002**

**Revision of Policy: October 6, 2022**

**FY2025 Approval Date: May 2, 2024**

**State Aid Policies are reviewed annually.**

Commissioner Vilas Novas moved and Commissioner Linehan seconded that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners approves the correction to the due dates of the State Aid to Public Libraries Program “Determining Eligibility for a Waiver of the FY2025 Municipal Appropriation Requirement (MAR) as presented in agenda item 7.

**Update and discussion about advocacy for $150 million for the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP) in H. 4459, An Act Relative to Strengthening Massachusetts’ Economic Leadership**

Director Lonergan and Library Building Consultant Andrea Bono-Bunker presented the following information:

On March 1, Governor Maura Healey filed H.4459, *An Act relative to strengthening Massachusetts' economic leadership* (also known as the [Mass Leads Act](https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-healey-files-mass-leads-act-to-grow-economy-support-businesses-attract-talent)). The bill provides $150 million to support the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP).

**Why this funding is so important:**

* To continue the program and to award projects from the 2023-2024 competitive grant round in which 27 libraries submitted letters of intent. Applications are due in May and awards are to be announced in October 2024.
* Many of the Commonwealth's public libraries were built 100 years ago, before technology and COVID changed the way people live, work, and use libraries and for populations much smaller than they serve today. The MPLCP helps modernize and adapt library buildings.

**What's happening today in the MPLCP:**

Since the last grant round seven years ago, significant changes have been made to the [MPLCP regulations](https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/construction/files/MPLCP-regs-final-2022.pdf) to streamline the process, reduce the waitlist, and combat climate change:

* One pared-down application, reducing the up-front cost for municipalities
* Reduction of the grant process timeline by two years, mitigating escalation impact
* More assistance to municipalities with smaller populations and capacity with a Small Population Grant Type for municipal populations less than 2,500
* Greater emphasis on economic and community need in scoring applications, and need-based increases to base grant awards
* Three pathways to obtain the Green Library Incentive, which rewards libraries for eco-friendly buildings
* Regulations and design guidelines supporting resilience, renewable energy, and the elimination of fossil fuel usage

**What else you need to know:**

* The MPLCP has been in existence without interruption since 1987. The MBLC has awarded a total of 253 municipalities with over $500 million in grants for 236 library construction projects and almost $3 million in grants for planning and design projects.
* The MPLCP has assisted over 70% of the Commonwealth's municipalities with planning and design and/or construction funding. Over 50% of those projects are nearing 30 years since completion. Changes to population, services, infrastructure, and climate may indicate the further need for MPLCP services, in addition to needs of libraries that have never participated in the MPLCP.
* MPLCP projects create construction jobs in local communities during the library building phase.  Municipalities continue to see economic growth in the areas surrounding the new library long after the projects are completed. Learn more about the transformational impact recently completed projects have had on their communities on the [Building Literacy: Public Library Construction podcast](https://www.buzzsprout.com/995062).

**Report from Massachusetts Library System**

Jack Martin, Communications Manager, Massachusetts Library System presented the following report:

MLS Updates – MBLC Meeting May 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 Events**

* Sarah Sogigian, Jane Stimpson, and Christi Farrar will all present at the Massachusetts Library Association Conference next week.
* Their presentations, respectively, will cover:
* The Browse, Borrow, Board program
* How Libraries can Address AI-generated Disinformation
* Touchpoints in Libraries
* The Impact of Anti LGBTQ+ Challenges to Youth Collections, Services, and Staff
* Our team will also exhibit at the vendor hall, so we hope to see you there!
* 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 11:48 A.M.

Karen Traub



Karen Traub

Secretary