Western Mass Library Advocates

Thursday, August 16, 2018

Hatfield Public Library

9:30 am

Members present: Lynn Coakley, Eliza Langhans, Joe Rodio, Dan Paquette, Katherine Hand, Nora Blake, Deb Kern, Mary Anne Antonellis, Mike Moran, and Betty Johnson

Guest – James Lonergan, MBLC Director

Minutes from previous meeting tabled.

No Treasurer report this month

One new member

Libby Post program – Eliza will work on publicity

Discussion with James

WMLA is very pleased with MBLC staff. Great access by phone, quick email response, new hires are as responsive as seasoned staff.

The MBLC is planning a state-wide one day Trustee institute in addition to the upcoming trainings.

MLTA has offered to support the institute. MLTA used to be a stronger, more active organization.

Gregor Trinkhaus-Randall has retired. Rosemary Waltos has retired. Interviews for those positions are underway.

WMLA wants to be supportive of advocacy efforts and would like to hear how we can do better. James said WMLA is a model for effective advocacy.

The MBLC is hoping to focus on a multi-year strategy to increase funding to state aid to public libraries and the line that funds the MLS.

MLA is talking about doing outreach to candidates.

WMLA could do a congratulations letter to the winners of the primaries. The text could include the following sentiment:

“Congratulations on being on the ballot. We hope you will take some time to focus on libraries.”

New Construction bond bill – they are hoping to ask for $250 million. There is currently a $20 million annual cap on release of funds from the last bond. They are hoping to raise the cap to $25 million per year.

This will be part of the legislative agenda for the coming year.

MLS director search was unsuccessful. The job will be advertised again late this year or in January. The MLS will do outreach throughout the state asking what do people want to see in the MLS and from a new director.

Discussion about relationship between the MBLC and MLS. James asked Betty to share some information about how the decision to move from six regions to the current MLS structure happened.

The regions were “your library’s library.” We don’t have that experience anymore.

Small libraries need support and respect. WMRLS provided wonderful support for small libraries. That is sadly lacking now. WMLA has been advocating for small libraries since its inception.

James asked the WMLA members, How can the MBLC help and help MLS as well.

MLS is a membership organization and our libraries are all members.

Changes to State Aid minimum requirements - expenses for public computing are now allowable as materials. Larger libraries can spend less on materials because they are open more hours. Library service has evolved and how do we have our standards and requirements reflect that.

Eco-system report

Lots of data has been gathered and the info has been gathered on a website. It is a snapshot of library use across the state. Each library can compare its data to other towns and draw conclusions from the data.

How will the MBLC use the data, will it affect how construction funds are distributed?

How do we use the data to compensate the libraries who are going above and beyond in their services without penalizing the others?

Massachusetts has one of the strongest library systems in the United States.

The Commissioners are doing a good job advocating for libraries across the state.

Meeting adjourned 11:20.