

Westchester Library System
Annual Meeting
November 19, 2020 – Approval Pending – DRAFT

The 61st Annual Meeting of the Westchester Library System (WLS) was held on Thursday, November 19, 2020. Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

Executive Director Terry Kirchner welcomed all, and a brief video was shown that shared reflections from various libraries regarding the challenges faced during the outbreak of COVID-19 and the many ways in which they adapted to serve their communities. Alternative approaches were found to ensure that the people in Westchester County had access to materials, programs and services. A year ago no one could have imagined that the normal staffing plan would have a portion of the staff working from home and the majority of the programs being held on Zoom rather than in person. Yet once again public libraries emerged as leaders at embracing the power of technology to create new learning and engagement opportunities.

In early 2020, the plan for achieving a successful Census self-report initiative in Westchester County was designed around the public computers and physical spaces of the member libraries being used to support those individuals needing assistance with the Census survey. In March, just a few weeks away from Census Day on April 1st, those plans were no longer valid due to COVID-19. A new digital strategy was implemented to support the Census efforts. Working together, WLS and the member libraries helped Westchester County exceed its 2010 self-response rate by 1.4% to reach a county-wide rate of 69.3% -- higher than the national rate of 67% and the New York State rate of 64.2%.

Even with the physical buildings closed or with limited access, 2020 was an active year of politics at the local, state and federal levels. The member libraries and WLS helped to promote efforts to encourage and support voter registration; to work with nonpartisan organizations like the League of Women Voters to provide learning opportunities about candidates' positions; and where possible, to serve as a polling site. The 2020 voting rate was at an all-time high, and the member libraries and WLS played an important role in supporting democracy.

The member libraries and WLS also worked hard to reduce the social isolation, fear and loss that individuals experienced during the pandemic. As schools converted to at-home digital learning, employers required individuals to work from home and individuals desired to connect with family and friends, not having an internet connection and/or a laptop caused a huge disadvantage. Even in Westchester County, a large digital divide exists that limits who has access to the Internet. WLS and the member libraries found ways to expand WiFi connections and circulate hotspots and Chromebooks, while also helping those with a smart phone better understand how to use the device to connect to the apps that would serve them best.

This past year WLS and the member libraries worked together to craft the future road of IT services. Three audits were completed to review overall operations, the network and the VDI environment. Feedback from these audits has been invaluable as the IT staff, with guidance from PLDA and the WLS Board, creates a more customer-oriented technology environment that will provide additional security and stability, while also providing flexibility for member libraries to decide what services they want to obtain from WLS or a third party vendor. A strong, reliable and affordable technology infrastructure is key to the ongoing success of the member libraries and WLS, and our goal is to reshape the WLS infrastructure so that we can better help every member library serve its community.

WLS President Dr. Susan Morduch opened the WLS Business portion of the Meeting* to order at 9:35 a.m. by consensus; introduced the WLS Trustees in attendance.

MINUTES OF THE 2019 ANNUAL MEETING: The minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting were approved on a motion made by Edris Scherer and seconded by Karen Zevin. The motion passed unanimously.

ELECTION OF NEW TRUSTEES: Ms. Zevin, Chair of the WLS Nominating & Board Development Committee, proposed the following slate of trustees who were nominated by their represented libraries and are willing to serve:

District X [Port Chester, Rye Brook, Rye City, Rye Town]
Andrea Bober (to a full term ending December 31, 2025)

District XIII [Mount Vernon]
Julie Mills-Worthey (to a full term ending December 31, 2025)

District V [Armonk, Bedford Village, Mount Pleasant, Pound Ridge]
Vacant (to a full term ending December 31, 2025)

There being no nominations from the floor, the above Trustees were elected to the WLS Board of Trustees on a motion by Karen Zevin and seconded by Jonathan Marshall. The motion passed unanimously.

The business portion of the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m. on a motion by Maureen LeBlanc and seconded by Karen Kelley. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Kirchner noted that WLS and the member libraries made a positive impact on the quality of life for all Westchester residents. As the COVID-19 virus appears to continue, all were encouraged to remain united and strong and to work together to provide quality library services for every resident in Westchester County.

Respectfully submitted,

Elise Burke
Recording Secretary

*WLS Trustees in attendance: Andrea Bober, Cathy Draper, Wes Iwanski, Karen Kelley, Maureen LeBlanc, Jonathan Marshall, Susan Morduch, Francis Okelo, Julie Mills-Worthey, Joe Puglia, Edris Scherer, Bernie Seiler, Karen Zevin