

WESTCHESTER LIBRARY SYSTEM
Trustee Meeting
January 25, 2022 – Approval Pending

The annual Organization & Regular Meeting of the Westchester Library System was called to order by Susan Morduch, President, at 6:05 p.m. and held via Zoom. The quorum requirement was met with the following people in attendance at both meetings of the WLS Board of Trustees:

Board Members present: Andrea Bober, Cathy Draper, Nishat Hydari, Wes Iwanski, Karen Kelley, Jennifer Kothari, Maureen LeBlanc, Jonathan Marshall, Julie Mills-Worthey, Susan Morduch, Francis Okelo, Joseph Puglia, Edris Scherer, Karen Zevin

Board Members absent: Denise Matthews-Serra

Also present from WLS were: Terry Kirchner, Wilson Arana, Patricia Brigham, Rob Caluori, Joe Maurantonio, Elise Burke

Public Library Director Association (PLDA) Representative: Yvonne Cech, Director, John C. Hart Memorial Library & PLDA Second Vice President

ORGANIZATION MEETING

Dr. Morduch called the Organization Meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.; and Karen Zevin, Chair of the Nominating & Board Development Committee, reported that the following candidates have come forward to fill the current vacant trustee positions: Nishat Hydari for WLS District III (Bedford Hills, Chappaqua, Katonah, Mount Kisco) and Jennifer Kothari for WLS District V (Armonk, Bedford Village, Mount Pleasant, Pound Ridge).

The two candidates were appointed on a motion made by Ms. Zevin and seconded by Ms. Kelley. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Hydari and Ms. Kothari were welcomed to the board.

Ms. Zevin noted that the following trustees have agreed to serve as officers. With no nominations from the floor, the proposed slate was presented:

President: Karen Zevin
Vice-President: Francis Okelo
Secretary: Andrea Bober

Ms. Scherer has also agreed to continue as Treasurer. The slate of officers as noted above was approved on a motion by Ms. Mills-Worthey and seconded by Mr. Puglia. The motion was passed unanimously. The oath of office was also administered to the trustees renewing their terms—Ms. Zevin for District I (Croton, Montrose, Yorktown) and Dr. Morduch for District VI (Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Greenburgh, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington)—and will be filed accordingly. Dr. Morduch was thanked for her two years of service as WLS President.

There being no further business, the organizational meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m. on a motion by Ms. LeBlanc and seconded by Ms. Zevin. The motion passed unanimously.

REGULAR MEETING

The Regular Meeting of the Westchester Library System was called to order by incoming President Ms. Zevin at 6:14 p.m.

MINUTES

The minutes of the annual and regular meeting of November 30, 2021, were approved as submitted on a motion by Ms. Draper and seconded by Dr. Morduch. The motion was approved with 12 in favor and 2 abstentions [Ms. Hydari and Ms. Kothari].

FINANCIAL REPORTS

The pre-audit financial report through December 2021 was presented by Mr. Caluori, who noted that the figures were unaudited and subject to change. The audit team is expected to do onsite work at WLS the end of February. The reports were reviewed in detail and accepted on a motion by Ms. Scherer and seconded by Ms. LeBlanc. The motion was approved unanimously. The audit will be done by Dorfman Abrams & Music.

ACTION ITEM

WLS Capital Budget FY2022: Mr. Arana reported that this budget request focuses on needs rolled over from the previous year and some that deal with upgrading older infrastructure identified by the Information Technology (IT) Department. The amounts listed represent the maximum expenditure and a brief description of each project as follows:

\$36,000 – Service Vehicle: WLS owns two vehicles for the use of IT staff to travel to libraries. One vehicle was replaced in 2015, the other in 2012. This request is to authorize the replacement of the older vehicle. This was originally budgeted as a capital project in 2021 but was not able to be completed due to supply chain issues resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

\$153,000 – Primary Server Hardware Replacement: The primary hardware used to operate the virtual desktop and server environment has reached end of life and needs to be replaced.

This new hardware, centralized at the WLS data center in Hawthorne, will ensure that the VDI (Virtual Desktop Infrastructure) systems and virtual servers used by member library and WLS staff continue to operate in a stable and uninterrupted environment.

The Board approved the FY2022 WLS Capital Budget for \$189,000 as submitted on a motion by Ms. Scherer and seconded by Ms. LeBlanc. The motion passed unanimously.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Ms. Zevin noted that the evaluation for the Executive Director was completed and shared with Dr. Kirchner, and there is an abbreviated copy on file. The Executive Committee will start to meet with Dr. Kirchner to make sure the board is kept up to date and both are communicating with each other. A document regarding WLS Committees was shared, and trustees were asked to let Ms. Zevin know of their Committee assignments within two weeks. Each trustee should be on at least one Committee. WLS Committees should follow Open Meetings Law and a Chair should be assigned for each.

Ms. Draper noted that the Nominating & Board Development Committee should facilitate trustee education, which has become more important given the passing of the law requiring continuing education for all library and system trustees. There was a Development Committee, which has not

been active for a few years, who worked with Ms. Brigham and gave an opportunity to come back to the board with ideas about development. When Ms. Draper was on that committee, part of their function was to remind trustees to make a donation and inform them that grant funders do look to see that everyone on the board contributes. It was clear from the numbers for 2021 that there was not full board participation. While it is unclear which Committee should take on this role, it is important to remember that development is part of the board's function. The Executive Committee will review this.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit, Budget & Finance Committees: Ms. Scherer, Chair of the Budget Committee, noted that the Audit Committee is starting its work now and will meet approximately three to four times. The Budget Committee also meets three to four times and will start its work later. Ms. LeBlanc, Chair of the Finance Committee, noted that the Finance Committee meeting will meet with the Chief Financial Officer in advance of the board meetings to review the financial figures and to keep track of the various finance-related questions that come up at board meetings.

Governance Committee: Ms. Draper will continue as Chair. This Committee meets only a few times over the course of the year and is not a monthly type of meeting. The Committee reviews the bylaws and WLS policies annually. WLS will have to start complying with some new laws that will affect the whistleblower policy. Bylaws will require changes to conform with any revisions to WLS operations or changes to standing committee names. Ms. Zevin noted that the new mission and vision statement will need to be updated in the Bylaws. After the current digital equity and inclusion audit is completed, additional changes may be required for the WLS Employee Handbook.

Strategy Committee: Mr. Okelo congratulated and welcomed the new trustees and clarified that the Strategy Committee is not a standing committee but an ad hoc committee. It was created for a specific purpose; and once its mandate is discharged, it is finished. After completing our review of the mission and vision statements of WLS, the Committee decided to look at certain specific goals on which the organization should focus in the next few years. The following were identified: promote equity and access; expand community engagement; and increase infrastructure.

The Committee discussed whether these goals were comprehensive enough and realistic to achieve and include activities that align with the goals of other organizations that work with WLS, such as PLDA and other community partners. The next meeting will be in February; and one more meeting is expected to finalize a comprehensive report that will be presented to the board.

Nominating & Board Development Committee: Ms. Zevin, last year's Chair, noted that board development, as mentioned previously, is becoming more important but the committee name has gotten somewhat truncated and does not necessarily reflect what the Committee does. Whether the name is changed to board education or something else, the members of this committee will have to decide if the nominating function is within the Committee's charge. Currently, the Committee has been focused on trustee gatherings for the WLS and member library trustees. One thing that became clear from a survey done last year is that many library and WLS trustees feel a need to communicate with their peers in order to get more information about how things work in the library community; and meetings were arranged among those trustees who showed an interest. The first official gathering for library and WLS trustees will be on advocacy and is tentatively scheduled for February 23rd. Another suggestion was received regarding creation of a document about WLS and its role and services, which will be done via this Committee, to share with member library trustees.

A comment was addressed by Bronxville Library Trustees President Margaret Mager informing the board that their library had not received a survey invitation to any meetings of member library trustees. The questionnaire was sent over a year ago, and WLS will check their mailing lists to ensure that all member libraries are included. WLS is looking to improve communications and finding ways to better share information with the member libraries, board presidents and both library and WLS trustees.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A copy of the Executive Director's Report was mailed in advance of the meeting.

Dr. Kirchner reported that the New York State budget was released by the Governor, and her executive budget did provide \$2 million more for overall Library Aid than was proposed the year before. Trustees were reminded of the WLS trustee event regarding advocacy at the end of February. The New York Library Association (NYLA) is holding a virtual Library Advocacy Day on March 2nd. WLS is working on details for an event via Zoom, and more information will be sent soon. All were encouraged to participate. Dr. Kirchner will give testimony at a public forum held by the Westchester delegation of the State Assembly regarding the budget early in February. NYLA has had some leadership changes, and they did identify a new Executive Director, AnnaLee Dragon.

Work has begun on the diversity equity inclusion audit that WLS will be undertaking in the next few months. Initial planning has been discussed with the consultants, and part of this process will include reaching out to staff and a few WLS trustees. This will be a good first step to look at where we are as an organization overall and get a better sense of what future directions can be taken to be even more inclusive, not only in operational practices but also in the services offered to the community.

The Mount Vernon Public Library's registration process is still at the local level. The documentation has not been moved forward to the NYS Library Division of Library Development (DLD) yet. WLS did an initial and secondary review to help the library structure what it is that they were going to need to work on. From that information, the library is in the process of submitting their materials to DLD. The timing of submission must allow for State library staff to complete their review by March 31st. The registration certification is basically the document that allows a public library to accept public dollars. Without an active registration, a library is unable to fundraise to support their operations, so this is an important process.

The library is also working on re-submitting the financial sections of their NYS 2020 Annual Report. Because these sections were not accepted by DLD, the incomplete report has triggered a Maintenance of Effort deficiency at the State level. Central libraries and library systems each have a financial review to ensure that they haven't dropped below the 95 percentile of activities compared to the two previous years and they can continue to provide the services that are expected of them, either as a central library or as a library system. The official paperwork has not yet been received but is expected within the next few weeks and will indicate whether WLS may have a reduction in Central Library Aid for the next two years, which would be a 25% reduction, roughly about \$85,000-\$90,000 lost each year. The 2021 Annual Report needs to be filed in March. In order to submit this Report, data from the 2020 Annual Report must be available, so if the previous year's Report is not filed, the current year's Report cannot be filed. This creates a possibility that the Maintenance of Effort

deficiency could be triggered again. A variance could be applied for, but approval is determined by DLD. Should WLS lose funds, the board will discuss how to make up this shortfall going forward.

PLDA LIAISON’S REPORT

Ms. Zevin welcomed Ms. Cech, PLDA 2nd Vice President and WLS Board Liaison. Ms. Cech introduced herself and gave a report of the January PLDA Meeting. President Jennifer Brown, Director of the Field Library in Peekskill, asked for PLDA members to form a committee to review their bylaws and interest in hosting a director retreat in the summer, health-restrictions permitting. One other PLDA concern was regarding the transition that WLS is no longer hosting free email and library websites. WLS IT staff have offered to host conversations regarding this transition. The Equinox Evergreen contract expires in 2024.

Regarding the comments about Mount Vernon Public Library, concern was expressed about Mount Vernon's inability to submit an acceptable Annual Report and the potential impact to all libraries as well as the potential loss of resources.

A discussion was had about how library budgets are allocated in terms of the percentage of budget being spent on e-books. A survey was created to see how this looks across member libraries. With about a third of the libraries responding, the budgets for e-books vary anywhere from 1-2% up to a little over 50%. This is an area that needs further discussion.

OTHER

A question was raised regarding the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds that WLS received from the Federal Government and whether, with that loan being forgiven, there were funds that went back to the member libraries. WLS absorbed different expenses and costs as part of delivering services through the pandemic, so the PPP funds, which were limited as to what they could be used for, went to support all WLS services, not just IT services. Any further questions could be addressed to Dr. Kirchner.

ADJOURNMENT

Having completed its agenda, the Board adjourned its meeting at 8:08 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Puglia and seconded by Ms. LeBlanc that passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Andrea Zuckerman Bober

Andrea Zuckerman Bober
Secretary