



Maryland State Library Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 9/11/2024

The Maryland State Library Board met in regular session on Wednesday, September 11, 2024 at 10:00 AM.

The following members were in attendance:

Kristen Pironis, Chair

Mychelle Farmer, Vice chair

Nicholas Brown-Cáceres

Wilson Parran

Lynn Wheeler, Professional Librarian

Brittany Tignor, representing Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL)

Kimberly Cowles, representing the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

Dr. Beatriz Hardy, president for Congress of Academic Library Directors (CALD)

Teonja Jung, president of the Maryland Library Association (MLA)

Darcell Graham, Interim CEO of the Enoch Pratt Free Library (EPFL)

Also in attendance were:

Morgan Lehr Miller, State Librarian

Dr. Tamar Sarnoff, MSLA Chief of Public Library and State Networking Branch (PLSNB)

Mary Ramos, Assistant Director of the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD)

Donna Liberto, MSLA Chief Financial Officer

Timothy Pratt, MSLA Communications and Legislation Manager

Renee Croft, MSLA Library Facilities Program Manager

Mandy Hutchison, Assistant to the State Librarian

Lynae Polk, Assistant Attorney General

Absent were:

Dr. Mega Subramaniam, Associate Dean of College of Information

Melissa Riccobono, Patron of the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD)

John Owen, Director of the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD)

Call to Order

Ms. Pironis called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM.

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Pironis began the meeting by acknowledging the transition of State Librarian from Irene Padilla to Morgan Lehr Miller. She also acknowledged her attendance at the Maryland Association of Counties Conference and the attendance of many MSLA staff members.

Ms. Pironis introduced the new board members as follows:

Kimberly Cowles – Representing the Maryland State Department of Education
Dr. Beatriz Hardy – Current President of Congress of Academic Library Directors
Teonja Jung – Current President of Maryland Library Association

Following introductions, Ms. Pironis officially congratulated the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD) for the 2024 Library of the Year Award from the National Library Service (NLS).

The meeting then moved to approve the June 12, 2024 Minutes.

Approval of the June 12, 2024 Minutes

Ms. Pironis asked if there were any corrections required for the June 12, 2024 Minutes. Dr. Beatriz Hardy indicated (2) corrections were necessary (the correction of someone's last name and title).

Ms. Pironis requested a motion to approve the minutes with the corrections that Dr. Beatriz Hardy noted. Vice Chair Mychelle Farmer made the motion. Member Nicholas Brown-Cáceres seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Annual Acknowledgement of Board Bylaws and Ethics Policy

The revised ethics policy was approved in the last board meeting. Ms. Pironis requested new members sign and return the acknowledgements of the Board Bylaws and Ethics Policy to Mandy Hutchison, Assistant to the State Librarian.

The meeting transitioned to discussing the State Librarian's Report.

Reports

State Librarian's Report

Ms. Miller addressed the contents of the materials distributed in the board package, highlighting the revised format for this and upcoming board meetings. There were no comments or questions concerning the information presented in the board package or the updated meeting structure.

LBPD received further recognition as the Library of the Year. Additionally, LBPD plans to record readings of the Black-Eyed Susan books. Ms. Miller will be reading one of the titles and has extended an invitation for other board members to participate in the recordings.

Ms. Miller commended the Hatchlings program, led by MSLA Youth Services Coordinator Carrie Sanders. This initiative aims to connect new parents with education and resources related to early childhood education and practical learning experiences. The program has gained national recognition as a pilot initiative.

Over the past two months, Ms. Miller has been actively engaging with various partners, including the Eastern Shore Regional Library, leadership of the Maryland State Department of Education, staff at the Deaf Culture Digital Library, as well as providing orientation to new legislative and budget analysts within the state.

The partnership with the Department of Education will be a point of focus for strengthening the relationship and collaboration. One of the mutual goals of both agencies will be improving reading proficiency in the state.

MSLA has established meetings with a legislative liaison and policy analyst from Governor Moore's office on a regular basis. They have connected MSLA with other partners throughout state government, including the First Lady's Office, the Lieutenant Governor's Office, the Office of Service and Civic Innovation, and the Governor's Office of Overdose and Outreach Response. During MACO, Ms. Miller met with Eric Luedtke, Director of Legislation for Governor Moore's Office and Helen Grady, the Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management.

Ms. Miller has met with Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr regarding the Freedom to Read Act and funding family literacy and engagement programs throughout prison libraries, as well as Delegate Dana Jones who sponsored the Freedom to Read Act.

Ms. Miller highlighted additional future possibilities for the Maryland State Library Agency moving forward.

There were no questions for the State Librarian's Report. Member Nicholas Brown-Cáceres commended MSLA for its innovative communication strategy and outreach efforts, effectively utilizing social media to educate the public and various stakeholders about libraries in Maryland.

Executive Team Reports

Chief Financial Officer Donna Liberto provided an overview of agency funding appropriations and expenditures. She also addressed the budget requests for a new position and additional funding for the Deaf Culture Digital Library. MSLA successfully submitted its Operating Budget for FY 2026 by the deadline of August 30th. Furthermore, MSLA has received 24 audits from various library systems, including three regional libraries, and is currently engaged in conducting a desk review for each audit.

There were no questions. Ms. Miller offered insights concerning the overall fiscal climate in the state of Maryland, as well as the implications for the agency's budget. Additionally, she overviewed the request for supplementary funding for the Deaf Culture Digital Library.

Dr. Tamar Sarnoff, Chief of PLSNB, addressed the submission of letters of intent for two grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). One grant pertains to enhancing

library trustee training and support, while the other focuses on the Reading Buddies Program from Cecil County, with the aim of expanding it into a statewide initiative. This program involves community volunteers serving as literacy mentors, engaging in weekly one-on-one reading sessions with children to support a local literacy eco-system.

Dr. Sarnoff described the state's focus on data-driven strategies, highlighting that MSLA is leveraging the expertise of its Research and Evaluation Coordinator, Laura Hicks, to create surveys aimed at collecting statistical and research-based data. This information will be instrumental in shaping the future strategies and objectives of MSLA.

The allocations for the 2025 LSTA competitive grant awards have been finalized, and Dr. Sarnoff provided insights into the distribution of these funds, detailing the libraries and various programs that benefited. There were no inquiries raised during the discussion; however, Chair Kristen Pironis and member Brittany Tignor offered insight concerning the federal grant application process.

Mary Ramos, the Assistant Director of the LBPD, introduced the new requirement from the National Library Service mandating parental signatures for library cards issued to individuals under the age of 18. In response, Ms. Miller has requested that Assistant Attorney General Lynae Polk investigate whether this requirement conflicts with any existing privacy laws in Maryland. Currently, LBPD serves approximately 150 youth with library cards who would be impacted by this new requirement. Member Brittany Tignor raised a question regarding the efforts of county library systems to integrate their library card processes with different school libraries, inquiring about the potential impact of this requirement on those programs. Comments were made by Ms. Miller regarding concern requiring students who are blind or low vision having a different standard of access. LBPD advocates as well as the Chiefs of State Library Associations have sent letters to the Librarian of Congress addressing these concerns.

The LBPD is in the process of recording Black-Eyed Susan Award winning books. Ms. Ramos addressed the significance of these books and emphasized the necessity of making them available in an accessible format, as historically, youth with blindness and low vision have lacked access to these picture books.

LBPD is currently planning a renovation of its facility, which has been in existence for over three decades and is in need of structural repairs and improvements, as well as public area enhancements. Furthermore, both the building and its furnishings will adhere to ADA compliance standards. There were no comments. There were no questions pertaining to the Black-Eyed Susan recordings or the redesign.

Renee Croft, Library Facilities Program Manager, announced the grand re-opening of the Catonsville Library. Notably, this event marked the first occasion in the history of the capital grant program that the ceremony was attended by our DBM Capital Budget Analyst and his supervisor. MSLA provided half the cost of the renovation (approximately \$3.5 million) through the General Assembly's allocation in the County Library Capital Grant program.

Ms. Croft overviewed FY26 project proposals for the County Library Capital Grant program. In total, MSLA received ten funding requests. A particularly noteworthy aspect is that among these ten projects, three are dedicated to the establishment of new library buildings in communities that currently lack access to public library services.

There were no questions or comments for Ms. Croft.

Timothy Pratt, the Director of Communications and Legislation, reported that the DCDL Departmental Bill was submitted on August 30th. Mr. Pratt overviewed some of the other legislative considerations happening at the state and county level, including library board regulations, the Freedom to Read Act, and the extension of the legislated capital grant match for Garrett County. There were no questions or comments regarding the legislative updates.

MSLA has revised its public communication approach and is currently assessing and enhancing its social media content and email newsletters. Mr. Pratt presented the data and engagement metrics related to these communication modifications, highlighting particularly successful social media initiatives, such as the grand re-opening of the Catonsville Library and the post concerning the Maryland 250 Commission. In summary, MSLA's outreach has consistently grown since the appointment of Mr. Pratt as Director of Communications and the subsequent adjustment of MSLA's communication strategy.

There were no questions. Comments were made from the Chair regarding the positive impact of increasing visibility of MSLA.

The board took a recess at 11:26 AM.

The board reconvened at 11:31 AM.

Presentations

Morgan Lehr Miller gave a presentation on MSLA's Mission & Budget Alignment with the 2024 Moore-Miller State Plan.

MSLA is able to connect and advance every aspect of the Governor's plan including child poverty, setting up Maryland's students for success, creating an equitable, robust, and competitive economy, connect Marylanders to jobs, creating safer communities, making Maryland desirable and affordable for all, advancing infrastructure, ensuring world class health systems for all, making Maryland a leader in clean energy, and making Maryland a state of service.

There were no questions or comments.

Board Discussion

The Chair addressed the committee structure of the Board, reflecting on past practices and outlining future directions. It was emphasized that committees will be essential for providing more frequent feedback to MSLA than the current quarterly board meetings allow. This approach will enhance the Board's engagement and enable it to offer more effective guidance.

Regarding meeting format and locations, the Chair highlighted the significance of engagement, geographic representation, and participation. Consequently, meetings will continue to be held in a hybrid format, with a minimum of two meetings conducted in person, while offering a virtual option for members who are located at a distance. Member Mr. Parran proposed a potential location for in-person meetings and expressed support for the initiative to convene in person at least twice a year. Ms. Miller suggested utilizing the MSLA office to provide members with the opportunity to meet the staff who are not present at board meetings and to learn more about the

other activities of MSLA. Ms. Tignor noted that in-person meetings must still include a virtual option for remote members, as fully in-person gatherings would limit participation from all board members. Mr. Brown-Cáceres expressed his support for the current meeting format, advocating for reduced in-person reporting and increased engagement and participation from board members.

The Chair will collaborate with Ms. Miller and the Vice Chair to determine future meeting locations and formats.

Member Updates

Dr. Mega Subramaniam submitted a written report with updates. The Chair summarized the report for other board members.

Other Business

MASL is having their conference October 18th and encourages the public to attend.

No comments or questions.

Ms. Miller introduced the revised Freedom to Read regulation. MSLA's regulation initially encompassed both school and public libraries. Although the Board had previously approved the first revision, subsequent reviews by legal counsel and discussions with MSDE necessitated that the school library portion of the regulation fall under MSDE's section of COMAR. The draft regulation for the Freedom to Read Act has been revised to exclude the public-school component from MSLA's jurisdiction, placing it solely under MSDE. MSDE has expressed a commitment to expedite this process. It is anticipated that the regulations from both agencies will be aligned and mutually supportive.

Ms. Miller requested the Board's approval of the revised regulation for publication. There were no questions raised. Board member Lynn Wheeler introduced the topic of collaboration between MSLA and MSDE. Ms. Miller noted that MSLA does not possess legal or policy authority over school libraries, a point that was reiterated by Assistant Attorney General Lynae Polk. Ms. Miller emphasized and outlined the growing collaboration and partnership between the two entities since she has stepped into her role at MSLA and discussion ensued. The Vice Chair expressed approval of the renewed collaborative efforts between MSLA and MSDE, highlighting the importance of unity between the agencies in achieving shared missions and objectives. Ms. Tignor stated that as long as the regulations between the two agencies are philosophically aligned, it is acceptable.

MSDE representative Ms. Cowles provided additional context concerning drafting the Freedom to Read Act Legislation, expressing that MSDE is supportive and aligned with MSLA's version of the regulation.

The Chair requested notification from MSLA when the regulation goes out for public comment.

The Chair requested a motion to approve the updated version of the Freedom to Read regulation. Ms. Jung motioned. Ms. Farmer seconded.

The motion passed with unanimous approval, with none opposed.

Public Comment

None

Executive (Closed) Session

See separate notes.

Executive session statement was read by the Chair.

Executive Session:

Recorded vote to close the meeting

Date: 9/11/24

Chair requested motion to move into executive session at 12:19 PM

Motion to move into executive session: Ms. Wheeler. Mr. Parran seconded.

Time Executive Session Start: 12:20 PM

Time Executive Session Complete: 12:27 PM

Location: Zoom virtual meeting

Members in favor: Unanimous

Opposed: None

Abstaining: Teonja Jung, Beatriz Hardy

Adjournment

The Chair requested a motion to adjourn at 12:27 PM

Mr. Parran made the motion. Ms. Tignor seconded.

Unanimous approval, none opposed

The State Library Board Meeting adjourned at 12:28 PM.