

August 13, 2020

Hi Mark,

In your email to Marla and Marty, you indicated that the MCPL Task Force would like each to briefly speak on the question, "How does your system address their leadership role in working with their member libraries, and how do you build strong relationships with those member libraries." Your email mentioned that the MCPL Task Force would then like to ask each person questions followed by a discussion and possibly a recommendation to the MCPL Board.

On behalf of the WVLS Board of Trustees and staff, I want to state that WVLS takes the MCPL investigation of joining another system very seriously. There is a lot riding on the outcome of this process, not only for the citizens of Marathon County, but also for WVLS staff representing the interests of the 98 libraries we serve across the upper half of the state through the LEAN WI partnership with NWLS and IFLS. We believe WVLS staff presentations to the MCPL Board from September-December 2019 and responses to questions raised by the MCPL Task Force from January-July 2020, have generated a better understanding of the WVLS operation, its unprecedented collaborations and partnerships with other systems and agencies, and the services it provides its member libraries.

As the one hour meeting on Monday, August 17, may sunset the work of the MCPL Task Force, the final responses from each system could not be more important. For this very reason, I request any questions intended to be asked during the meeting be given to WVLS and SCLS ahead of time to allow adequate time to respond in writing. While informal conversations may seem reasonable, prepared questions and answers provided in writing, brings clarity and transparency to the process, eliminates surprises and confusion, reduces misinformation and inaccuracies, gives Task Force members time to thoughtfully review responses, and ensures that questions and answers become a matter of public record.

There have been a lot of twists and turns in the MCPL Task Force process thus far, and the unexpected changes brought to the August agenda are perplexing. Also unclear is how an undocumented informal conversation between system directors and MCPL Task Force members is an appropriate closure for the investigative process at this juncture. Given the thoroughness and diligence with which WVLS staff have approached this process thus far, it would be a disservice to the entire Task Force process to participate in an off-the-cuff Q&A instead of allowing adequate space and time for written questions and responses. Task Force members should be given ample time to review SCLS and WVLS responses before making a final decision, following open discussion at a meeting that also includes ample time for public comment.

For these reasons, I have advised Marla to provide written responses to the MCPL Task Force questions as she is able, and not to partake in impromptu, verbal responses. If you have any questions or concerns about this directive, please let me know.

In closing, I wish to again extend the WVLS Board of Trustees' invitation to the MCPL Board and staff to attend one of our board meetings. We would appreciate any opportunity to talk with MCPL leadership about ways in which WVLS can support the library's efforts to provide the best service possible in Wausau as well as the smaller, rural communities across Marathon County. The Marathon County representatives on the WVLS Board are also on call to lend assistance and support as needed. Attached are copies of the November 5, 2019 invitation from me, WVLS Board President, to MCPL Director Ralph Illick and his November 8, 2019 response to me. Copies are also available here: <https://wvls.org/mcpl-system-exploration/>

Respectfully,
Tom Bobrofsky, President
WVLS Board of Trustees