



Antigo Public Library
617 Clermont Street
Antigo, WI 54409

715-623-3724
www.antigopl.org

August 13, 2020

Dear MCPL Library System Task Force and MCPL Board of Trustees:

I am writing on behalf of the Antigo Public Library, which serves all of Langlade County with three locations and multiple outreach sites. This letter is a follow up to two letters approved by the Antigo Public Library board to MCPL board president Sharon Hunter dated September 12 and October 17 of 2019. Those letters highlighted the excellent service my library and county has received from WVLS, while questioning what issues MCPL was having with WVLS as well as the organization and transparency of the Task Force process itself. We were troubled, as MCPL annual reports on file with DPI indicate that there have never been any issues with service from WVLS.

To date, there has been no reply from the MCPL board or Task Force, and the central questions raised by Antigo Public Library almost a year ago have yet to be addressed in the Task Force process.

Per the September 12 letter:

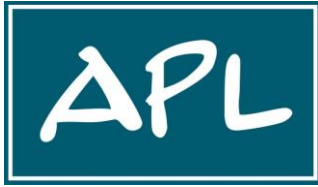
I am unaware why MCPL would consider leaving WVLS, as it provides excellent service to its member libraries for the cost of its membership. Knowing how much it takes for me to attend WVLS meetings, which is an hour away, just in mileage reimbursement per year, I'd imagine the travel expenses alone for MCPL staff to travel to Madison for meetings would require a very large budget.

If there are any unaddressed issues within MCPL as to why they would even consider leaving WVLS, I'd encourage MCPL board leadership to investigate those specifics in further detail before making a decision which would devastate the services I am currently able to offer my patrons, and the patrons of all my fellow system libraries.

Per the October 17 letter:

Since the minutes of the MCPL board have been opaque as to what is occurring, I'm writing on behalf of the Antigo Library Board of Trustees to request information as to why this move is being considered and what the criteria are for MCPL board to have chosen to possibly leave WVLS for SCLS. Specifically, in regard to the decision-making process and how this decision will impact the other six counties which rely on MCPL as their resource library. As MCPL is the resource library for WVLS, of which Langlade County is a part, this change would radically alter library service to all residents of Langlade County as well as the other six counties within the WVLS system.

After reviewing the agendas and minutes of the Task Force released to date, I find it shocking that there has been no attempt to assess the pros and cons of potential service impacts or request public input from Marathon County residents, MCPL staff at all locations, or the directors, trustees and citizens from the 24 other libraries in Clark, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida and Taylor Counties. No surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, personal interviews or other feedback have been conducted. MCPL staff interviews were mentioned at the July Task Force meeting, but do not appear on the August agenda



where we are given to understand discussion and comparison of the two systems may lead to a possible recommendation to the MCPL board.

WVLS has requested to address the Task Force and MCPL board regarding any service concerns several times both before and during this process, yet this has not occurred either. On November 8, 2019 the MCPL Director responded to an inquiry from the WVLS Trustee board president, “we are not aware of any service issues that we seek to resolve at the present time.” I don’t know if there is a lack of professional decorum or systematic failure to communicate involving MCPL administration, but this should have been addressed well before potentially wasting the time of everyone involved on the Task Force, governing boards and professional staff of both systems. I fail to find record of any service issues or WVLS failures subsequently uncovered during the six 60-minute Task Force meetings to date.

I also find it curious that MCPL’s strategic plan is missing from this process. Both WVLS and SCLS were required to submit “Mission Statements, Vision, Values, etc.” But I haven’t seen anything comparable (including the insufficient MCPL Attributes and Outcomes) detailing that library’s future plans, goals or unmet needs to which either system can address problem solving skills or service assists. Without that important piece, the process to even consider leaving WVLS appears incomplete and unfocused. It’s roughly analogous to picking a new contractor for a capital project without a detailed RFP telling all potential bidders “This is what we want and/or need.”

Furthermore, judging from the publicly available documents provided by WVLS and SCLS detailing the services offered by each system, the move to SCLS looks to be a marked increase of approximately \$66,192 for Marathon county residents to receive SCLS’s basic service level. With declining state, county, and city revenues I fail to see how this is a fiscally responsible, or community focused move. (<https://wvls.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SCLS-and-WVLS-Responses-to-Task-Force-Financial-Questions-May-2020.pdf>) and (<https://wvls.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Updated-Cost-Comparison-SCLS-WVLS-June-2020.pdf>)

The increased service levels being touted by SCLS in May would cost MCPL another \$105,037. How would any of these increased costs for service be balanced? Staff reductions at MCPL seem to be the most obvious as SCLS should have staff on hand which would duplicate the services currently offered by MCPL staff. These additional expenditures may also lead to decreased services for patrons at MCPL locations.

According to 2019 Annual Report data, there is an obvious service reduction for Marathon County library patrons with a move to SCLS resulting in fewer materials available per person. This is a per capita decrease for electronic items 5 ebooks per person, and an overall materials decrease of 6.8 items per person. Longer wait times and reduced selection of materials for patrons is not a service improvement. (<https://wvls.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Second-DLT-Spreadsheet.pdf>)

The taskforce decision will not only affect Marathon County residents, but will also affect over 146,000 people in the six other counties WVLS serves. I believe that the lack of public comment time available during Task Force meetings has had a chilling effect on those impacted who deserve to have a voice in their library service. As librarians and trustees we are called to serve our patrons and communities to



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the best of our abilities and if we disallow public input in our decisions we have fundamentally failed those we are supposed to serve.

I currently serve on the WVLS committee charged with developing a new weighted voting model for our libraries. MCPL staff was expected to have a seat on this committee but declined to give input at the last minute even though they had previously indicated interest. The committee's recommendation giving MCPL a large voice within WVLS goes next month to the V-Cat Steering Committee comprised of rotating members from the WVLS board and member library directors. By contrast, the weighted voting model presented to MCPL by SCLS clearly diminishes Marathon County's influence and local control.

I am asking the Task Force to avoid a hasty decision until they can meet with the WVLS board to discuss the impetus for moving forward with this seemingly unfounded and drastic change. The fiscal uncertainty that the pandemic is causing local governments necessitates careful consideration. The Antigo Public Library staff appreciates the expertise and resources that the MCPL staff provides to our library and community and would like these relationships to continue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dominic Frandrup MA-LIS – Director
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WVLS involvement:
V-Cat chair: 2020
V-Cat co-chair: 2019
LAC President: 2020
LAC Vice-President: 2019

Current V-Cat committees:
Cooperative Circulation
Database Advisory
Discovery Layer
Voting Models