



214 N. Main Street, PO Box 337  
Loyal, WI 54446  
Phone 715-255-8189; Fax 715-255-8348  
[loyalpubliclibrary.org](http://loyalpubliclibrary.org)

August 13, 2020

Dear MCPL Library System Task Force and MCPL Board of Trustee Members:

My name is Teresa Hall. I am the Director of the Loyal Public Library in Clark County where I have worked for almost five years. I also serve on the Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) Library Advisory Committee (LAC), where public library directors join with school, academic and specialty librarians to provide input to our system's governance structure. (Marathon County Public Library has a permanent seat on the LAC.)

I understand that the Task Force was created to collect, review, analyze, and oversee the collection of data and information to consider the most viable library system for MCPL. Because your decision will affect all of the libraries in our system, I have concerns about the information being collected that is necessary to make such an important decision, as well as troubling questions.

Since I became Director, our Board has had many occasions to use the resources offered by WVLS. I am thankful for the service and guidance they provide to our library. WVLS is strengthening their own resources by expanding their partnerships with Indianhead Federated Library System (IFLS) and Northern Waters Library System (NWLS). WVLS staff welcomes questions from member libraries and tailors services to each library's unique needs. WVLS member librarians also have opportunities to develop leadership skills. I know MCPL has benefitted from its staff working with their peers on numerous WVLS and V-Cat committees, and we value their contributions. I'm having a difficult time understanding why MCPL wants to leave a system in which it has such strong influence on the WVLS Board and its committees. Why has the MCPL Administration and Board not worked with WVLS to communicate their needs or issues? How can WVLS be expected to help if they don't know where the problems lie or where assistance is needed?

During the past 6 months, COVID-19 has completely changed our lives and caused libraries to experience a great level of stress. The librarians in Clark County have tried to work with each other as well as our municipal governments so that our service models could be similar for the greater good of our county. Through it all, WVLS provided supportive information about how our libraries may be affected and resources to handle the changes. They offered weekly online discussions for WVLS member library directors to talk about services, compare policy changes and provide an opportunity to share concerns with our peers. It's become a great bonding experience for library leaders in our system. Unfortunately, I don't recall anyone from MCPL accepting the invitation to join us and share ideas during the 25 "staying together" sessions that have occurred since March.

Another huge challenge libraries will face going forward is financial. Counties and local government are worried about lost revenue. The economy has been hard hit by COVID-19 and people are being encouraged to support businesses in their communities by "shopping locally." I wonder why MCPL would want to send their county's money to Dane County? How does that stimulate your own economy?

Is the South Central Library System (SCLS) in Madison going to be as emotionally or financially supportive to MCPL staff and citizens while times are so unsettled? Will SCLS be in a better position to understand the MCPL needs and services than the WVLS staff located in MCPL's main Wausau branch?

When the Task Force meets on August 17, after just six hours of discussion including the January organizational meeting, will all the members' questions and doubts be answered? How will pushing a decision so quickly to join a different system benefit MCPL during a time of turmoil? Are the new MCPL Board members going to vote on the same day without the benefit of reviewing all of the data and information gathered since September 2019 or understanding the history of WVLS and its services?

Please remember this decision not only affects the 9 libraries within Marathon County; it also affects the library services of everyone in the six other WVLS counties and the partnerships we have with other systems.

Sincerely,

Teresa Hall, Director