

August 12, 2020

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

My name is Lorelee Petersen and I am the director of the Owen Public Library in Clark County. I am writing to you with concerns about MCPL's impending decision of whether to stay with Wisconsin Valley Library Service or join the South Central Library System. I realize that the upcoming decision is not directly my business. I do hope you realize that our library and our library system will be greatly affected by MCPL's decision. Therefore, I feel compelled to address this issue.

WVLS has told us that a Task Force was formed to gather information and explore options. It's certainly a good idea to organize and review all the facts before making such a big decision. I can't help but wonder though, if enough time has been given to the Task Force so that they can make a good recommendation? And even if the Task Force has had sufficient time, are you giving the library board enough time to consider the recommendation? If MCPL decides to leave WVLS, this is a decision that you will have to live with through several years of flux and long after.

I also can't help but wonder, if moving to a different library system will have enough benefits to make it worth the upheaval of leaving the present system and the well-developed relationships that have been established here. To my knowledge, no problems with WVLS service or personnel have been brought forward that would warrant leaving the system over. Is it possible that differences could still be resolved if MCPL administration and WVLS worked together?

While the prospect of changing systems would be a major one at the best of times, it seems even more daunting now, in our present state of pandemic, economic turmoil and general uncertainty as to what the future will bring. At a time when economic hardship is hovering over us, does it make sense to divert money from Marathon County to Dane County? How will that serve your community?

In WVLS, Marathon County has the largest library and the largest system. You are the big fish in our small pond. MCPL is a leader and standard setter. In SCLS, MCPL will be on the edge of the system, far away from the movers and shakers in the Madison area. Do you think that is a good trade?

I hope you will consider what I have said and see the wisdom of tabling this decision, at least during the present uncertainty of the pandemic and its effects on the economy. Perhaps the library board and library administration will rethink trying to work out any differences with WVLS. If you have ever seen the HGTV show "Love it or List it," you know that most families choose to "love" their renovated home over listing it and moving to a new home. The reason for that is obvious. Moving is a lot of work. The advantages gained from a new home must be big to make it worthwhile. Is the Task Force and Board really, truly sure this move will be worthwhile? Once you begin the process, it will be difficult to turn back. The decision is yours to make, and I hope you will not rush into it in haste only to regret it at leisure.

Thank you for hearing my concerns.

Sincerely,
Lorelee Petersen
Director

Owen Public Library