

August 15, 2020

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

My name is Sonja Nelson Ackerman. As a professional librarian for 41 years, I served children and families in public and school libraries, 22 of those years for the Marathon County Public Library. In retirement, I'm finding great satisfaction keeping in touch with the library community through my current role as a member of the WVLS Board of Trustees.

I have followed the process of the Task Force with interest, attended several meetings, and kept up with the documents that have been shared. I was amazed to note on the Task Force Agenda for Monday there is an item "Possible recommendation to the Marathon County Public Library Board of Trustees." After only 6 one hour meetings, how can just one more hour possibly answer the remaining questions that have not been thoroughly discussed, much less reach a conclusion to recommend to the full MCPL board in back-to-back sessions?

These are a few of my concerns:

- From the beginning of this process I have found the absence of solid discussion nailing down the MCPL administration's reasons for this exercise to be unfulfilling. If there was any communication about a lack of service or a dissatisfaction over a particular issue, it is not found in the public records beside offers from WVLS Board President Tom Bobrofsky to sit down with WVLS and MCPL to try and resolve any issues. There has been no comprehensive analysis of the information presented to the Task Force thus far.
- As a Marathon County taxpayer and MCPL patron, I find the prospect of my local dollars going to Dane County counterintuitive. The cost of ILS transfer of records, implementation of service changes, staff retraining, and general disruption of services to the public do not balance whatever the perceived, as yet unarticulated, advantage might be. **Bottom line: an exit from WVLS to SCLS would take jobs and money out of Marathon County's economic pocketbook.** Should the Task Force disagree with this conclusion, then Marathon County residents need to see documentation showing the results of thorough study and decision making.
- This proposal and so far incomplete investigation has occurred during unprecedented times for our communities and libraries. As the PLSR plan evolves and the COVID-19 issues stress library staff and local government budgets, is this the right time to make this monumental change?
- As the resource library for WVLS, Marathon County Public Library has historically embraced the opportunity to provide leadership and inspiration for North Central Wisconsin. A renewed partnership in innovation and collaboration would yield great outcomes for both organizations. The combined talents of the MCPL staff together with WVLS member library staff and WVLS system staff are already collaborating in many ways to do amazing things!
- The consequences of an MCPL departure from WVLS would impact libraries throughout central Wisconsin, and disrupt collaborative agreements with neighboring systems. These relationships have been fostered for more than 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns as you take time for a comprehensive look at all the information that has been furnished. I hope you will decide that the partnership between MCPL and WVLS is a valuable commodity that is too rich to set aside.

Sincerely,

Sonja Nelson Ackerman
830 Fulton Street
Wausau, WI 54403
715-573-1830