

September 3, 2020

Good morning, everyone...

CHAOS! As the director of the Colby Community Library, this is what comes to mind as I think about the unintended consequences of a decision by Marathon County to withdraw membership from the Wisconsin Valley Library Service.

As you are aware, the Marathon County line divides the City of Colby (and Abbotsford and Dorchester). Should Marathon County decide to leave WVLS, Colby residents will need to affiliate with either SCLS or WVLS.

How does that work? Chaos, with frustrated patrons who live blocks away from the Colby Community Library but would now need to travel to Wausau or a branch locations, will ensue. Many of our patrons are elderly or have families with young children—travel is difficult for them.

Has anyone given thoughtful study to how the citizens in rural areas of Marathon County may be impacted by membership in another system?

Please read the attached letter which details other concerns I have, particularly the economic impact of hundreds of thousands of dollars leaving our area for Dane County.

Thank you.

Vicky L. Calmes, Director  
Colby Community Library

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August 14, 2020

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

The City of Colby straddles the Marathon-Clark County line. As director of the Colby Community Library located in Clark County, I have a unique responsibility to serve people from both counties living right in my city and the surrounding areas.

Truthfully, I am rather alarmed at the possibility of Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) deserting us by leaving Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) to join South Central Library Service (SCLS).

MCPL's role as the resource library for 24 libraries in six other WVLS is important. However, while they have shouldered the resource library responsibilities, the other libraries in the WVLS system have also reciprocated and supported them. Last year, for example, MCPL supplied 54,018 items to other WVLS libraries while receiving 74,107 items from its partnering WVLS libraries! In addition to supplying items to MCPL through inter-library loan, the Colby Community Library directly circulated 27,230 items to Marathon County residents in 2019.

I hope the Task Force and trustees carefully consider the additional cost of MCPL joining SCLS and what impact that will have on all the other libraries in Central Wisconsin. I think people in our area would be surprised to learn that rather than keeping dollars local, this move would shift hundreds of thousands of dollars to Dane County.

I would encourage the Task Force members and MCPL trustees to more thoroughly investigate the "WHY" behind the move contemplated by MCPL administration. WVLS has always been open to discussions about service needs for us at Colby. Has MCPL administration openly shared its needs with WVLS?

The Colby Community Library has had a good working relationship with the Marathon County Public Library and its branches. I would like to continue this alliance, as it has served patrons living in both Clark and Marathon counties well.

With the disruption of usual library services due to COVID-19 precautions, this is a very unsettling time for libraries nationwide. Plunging forward with such an important decision in this time of COVID-19 turmoil could lead to serious unintended consequences for the communities we serve.

I urge the MCPL Task Force and MCPL trustees not to rush into a decision but to take time to allow further discussion to identify and address any unresolved issues. Your decision will have a major impact on the local economy and the livelihood of libraries left behind that will continue to be used by Marathon County residents.

Sincerely,

*Vicky L. Calmes*

Vicky L. Calmes  
Colby Community Library Director