

December 17, 2020

Dear Ms. Hunter,

This letter is being written on behalf of Oneida County Library Board (OCLB) Trustees to express our concerns regarding the MCPL Library System Task Force process and upcoming system membership decision by the Marathon County Public Library Board.

Oneida County has been affiliated with what is now WVLS since 1961 when Wausau's library anchored the Wisconsin Valley Library Regional Reference Service. The OCLB was established by the Oneida County Board of Supervisors in 1973 to provide general oversight of equitable public library service for all county residents, as well as a platform for coordination among the Minocqua, Rhinelander, and Three Lakes libraries. We recognize our responsibility for quality library service does not end at the county line and includes maintaining a healthy regional consortium of library partners. Our interaction with WVLS is overwhelmingly positive and we have full confidence in the professionalism of WVLS staff.

All but one of the county board appointed OCLB members, which include two Oneida Co. Supervisors, are current or former library board trustees for one of the county's three libraries. In addition to OCLB President, I personally also serve as WVLS Board of Trustees Vice-President and as a Minocqua Public Library Trustee. My personal professional training as a licensed CPA with significant corporate experience, as well as my Deputy Treasurer duties for the Town of Minocqua (\$3.9M budget) have taught me to pay close attention to the details of all library related financials. This includes the complex WVLS budget which has been routinely audited and executed to the highest accounting standards during my 10 years on the WVLS Board.

OCLB members have discussed the MCPL Library System Task Force process with the directors of our three libraries and thoroughly explored documents posted to both the MCPL and WVLS websites. It is our understanding that a MCPL Task Force recommendation will be made December 21, followed by a short meeting scheduled in January to approve a written report. The MCPL Board will take up the report for discussion in January. As Oneida County Library Board Trustees we come to you with the following observations:

- MCPL does not have a strategic plan laying out specific future goals and objectives crucial to informing the system membership decision. Without a strategic planning process and resulting guidance document in place, it is impossible to determine what success looks like. OCLB is required by state statute to update its Plan of Service every 5 years. We wonder how a large resource library can fully function without one – much less aspire to greatness – irrespective of library system affiliation.
- The Task Force process as it has evolved is no substitute for an honest problem-solving process between MCPL and WVLS administrators. In November 2019, the MCPL director stated, *"we are not aware of any service issues we seek to resolve at the present time."* After 11 months and 10 hours of Task Force meetings, it appears more emphasis may have been placed on *not seeking to resolve* any service issues with WVLS rather than defining the issues themselves. The reasons for exploring system change in general, as well as for leaving WVLS to join SCLS in particular, have remained unclear and confusing. We wonder why an open invitation from WVLS leaders to MCPL leaders to identify and discuss their concerns has so far been declined.
- Analysis of Task Force documents indicates significantly higher costs through SCLS membership for every MCPL mission critical library service. We understand that for the December MCPL Task Force meeting MCPL administration will provide a draft budget outlining the financial impact to MCPL should Marathon County decide to withdraw from WVLS. We wonder why this comparison document is being prepared by MCPL employees who have made no pretense of objectivity where leaving WVLS is concerned, rather than requesting an outside third party perform a comprehensive cost benefit analysis.

The courtesy of your reply would be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Pat Pechura, Oneida County Library Board President; on behalf of Oneida County Supervisors Bob Thome and Tom Kelly (also a Rhinelander library trustee), Dianne Blicharz and Paul Kaiser (current and former Three Lakes library trustees), Jean Mejerle (Minocqua library board president), and Dennis Carriere (Rhinelander library board president).