



Antigo Public
Library
617 Clermont
Street
Antigo, WI 54409

January 14, 2021

Dear Marathon County Public Library Board,

The members of the Antigo Public Library Board of Trustees appreciate the challenge you face in making the momentous decision whether to remain in the Wisconsin Valley Library Service as its resource library or transfer to the South Central Library System. As fellow library trustees we understand the decisions we make in service to our library patrons affect their daily lives and the fabric of our communities. It is therefore important to seek input from and listen to the citizen stakeholders whose patron experience will be affected by our actions. We share a large responsibility.

The MCPL Task Force Final Report states: *While the needs of other WVLS member libraries and the library community as a whole was considered, the Task Force's goal was to determine what was best for MCPL and the people it serves.* November 16 Task Force minutes quote member Frisch: *There is no mention in the charter about us engaging in public comments, public hearings, public input, or surveys of other counties. I'm going to have the conclusion that although the letters provided us with some background information that we need not consider them because it is not included within our charter or our direction. These are now available in our records and available to the Library Board of Trustees and County Board.*

Please consider our letter. Were the APL Board about to make a similar decision for the residents of Langlade County, we would have a difficult time coming to a conclusion without appropriate data and public input. We would also find it impossible to cast aside any consideration of how our decision could affect our county neighbors and entwined patron communities. Clear reasoning and consideration of all viewpoints must be openly communicated with library patrons and associated stakeholders, especially when an institution belongs to a regional consortium partnering beyond the seven WVLS member counties with adjacent regional library systems stretching clear to the Michigan and Minnesota borders.

The APL Board would like to know what patron driven data was considered sufficient by the three MCPL Task Force members who decided joining SCLS "was best" for the people that MCPL serves. We have examined the materials posted to both the MCPL and WVLS websites and do not find any evidence of public input from either broad polling or other commonly used patron needs assessment tools. We have not seen any press releases explaining potential impact of the move upon patron services using solid data to support the decision. Nor have we spotted any letters to the editor demanding such a change.

- Were any community surveys conducted?
- Were any focus groups formed?
- Are there interviews documented with actual names of Marathon County residents?

The lack of public awareness and input is even more troubling when added to the absence of independent cost benefit analysis, solid research, and thorough examination of how the move would change the library patron experience for Marathon Co. residents. WVLS has provided data to challenge unsubstantiated comments and opinions, but the discrepancies raised have so far been largely ignored. We look forward to seeing the MCPL Board perform due diligence during the next phase of deliberation accompanied by transparent communication to the wider library community.

Sincerely,

Linda Szitta, President, Antigo Public Library Board of Trustees