

APRIL 15, 2021 UPDATE TO MEMBERS

WVLS Colleagues and Friends,

The next meeting of the Marathon County Public Library (MCPL) Board of Trustees will be on **Monday, April 19 at 12:00 pm.** The agenda and information packet for this meeting are available [here](#). Persons wishing to attend the meeting by computer may join the meeting by using this link <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/414976053> or by calling (Toll Free) 1 877 309 2073 or 1 571 317 3129. The Access Code for the meeting is 414 976 053.

The agenda for this meeting includes this item: **"(10 minutes) Follow-up on timeline for public hearing on system change motion - For Discussion and Possible Action."**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The [February 5 Update](#) (below) shared news that while the Marathon County Extension, Education and Economic Development Committee (Marathon County EEED Committee) had planned to set a date for a public hearing (the next step in a process for Marathon County to withdraw from WVLS), the MCPL Board requested the Committee postpone the public hearing until further notice. The update referenced a [WSAU news post](#) in which Committee Chair Sara Guild said *"she had received an email request from the Library Board in the morning to postpone setting a date for the public hearing. 'They would like to continue conversations at the Library Board level to gather additional information before a public hearing is scheduled.' Guild did not have details about what type of information the Library Board would be gathering regarding the request to change library systems. But she did mention the public hearing issue could come before the Committee again. 'Once the Library Board garners whatever information they are looking for, then at that time it could come back to this committee.*

An earlier update on [January 26](#) announced that the seven-member MCPL Board of Trustees struck down a motion for Marathon County to continue its membership in WVLS in a 3-4 vote. Votes to stay with WVLS were cast by Marathon County Supervisors **Gary Beastrom** and **Michelle Van Krey**, and **Kari Sweeney**, MCPL (resource library) liaison to the WVLS Board. Dissenting votes were cast by MCPL Board President **Sharon Hunter**, and trustees **Scott Winch**, **Dino Corvino** and **Jeff Campo**. The recommendation moves to the Marathon County EEED Committee for further study.

WI Statute [43.18](#) outlines the process for a county to withdraw from a library system. The earliest date Marathon County could withdraw is January 2022, following adoption by 2/3 vote of a resolution by the Marathon County Board of Supervisors at least 6 months prior to the close of the system's fiscal year.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

The Marathon County Public Library System Exploration Information [and Updates page](#) on the WVLS website shares information about MCPL Task Force meetings since January 2020, including WVLS' responses to requested information; WVLS presentations to the MCPL Board prior to the task force process, WVLS reactions to the [December 2020 MCPL Financial Report](#), [October 2020 SWOT Analysis](#) and [September 2020 MCPL Staff Letters](#); and, most recently, the March 2021 DPI [response](#) to questions and concerns raised by the MCPL Board. The WVLS website also shares an extensive list of letters the MCPL Task Force and Library Board, and Marathon County Supervisors have received from Marathon County and area library leaders. Anyone with an interest in MCPL's investigation of systems and future of WVLS should take the time to read this information.

This matter is of grave concern to WVLS member libraries and libraries across the state served through WVLS' partnerships with several other public library systems. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know. I will continue to share news on the system membership process as I receive it.

Thank you,

Marla

Marla Sepnafski, Director
WISCONSIN VALLEY LIBRARY SERVICE
300 N First Street
Wausau, WI 54403
715/261-7250
msepnafs@wvls.org
<http://wvls.org>

MARCH 26 UPDATE

Good afternoon Colleagues and Friends,

As mentioned in the March 12 and February 23 Updates (below), Shannon Schultz, DPI Public Library Administration Consultant, was invited to attend the Marathon County Public Library Board meeting on [March 15](#) to respond to their questions regarding the impact to current WVLS member libraries should Marathon County decide to withdraw.

Following is the list of questions Shannon received. Please refer to this [link](#) for her response.

- What is DPI's role when it comes to library systems?
- What is the role of a library system?
- Do all library systems operate the same?
- What is the role of a resource library?
- Can a library be a resource library to a system it is not affiliated with?
- What happens to all the libraries in Northeast Wisconsin that MCPL is currently serving as a resource library if we change system membership, and what is their step-by-step process to find a new resource library and how much inconvenience would that create for them, or not?
- WVLS and its proxies have been telling the public that our leaving for the SCLS would damage or harm the other WVLS member libraries. Is that true? Please elaborate.
- During the past 30 years, have any other libraries changed systems, and did the remaining libraries survive? Which systems and libraries can you identify that have done so?
- What structural mechanisms are in place to regulate the actions of state agency library systems when a member library chooses to explore its options for system membership? Are there any policies, procedures, or guidelines to inform or regulate the actions of that system, its board members, or proxies in that community? How would an ethics complaint be pursued against a library system for their actions if it were warranted?
- Did the PLSR have to account for the impact of any changes if libraries were to change systems, or if they were merged without consent of a member library?

Also during this meeting, MCPL Director Ralph Illick recommended that the "Statement Concerning Public Library System Effectiveness" in the library's annual report indicate **WVLS "did provide effective leadership and adequately met the needs of the library"** in 2020. Trustee Kari Sweeney made a motion to accept the recommendation, Trustee Gary Beastom seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

The next meeting of the MCPL Board is slated for Monday, **April 19 at 12:00 p.m.**

MARCH 12 UPDATE

Colleagues and Friends,

The next meeting of the Marathon County Public Library Board of Trustees will be on **Monday, March 15 at 12:00 pm.** You may recall that the **February 23 Update** (shared below) reported the MCPL Board planned to invite DPI to this meeting to respond to concerns they have been hearing about how Marathon County's departure from WVLS will impact other libraries.

The agenda and information packet for the March meeting are available [here](#). Persons wishing to attend the meeting by computer may join the meeting by using this link <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/358889285>, or by calling (Toll Free) 1 877 309 2073 or 1 571 317 3129. The Access Code for the meeting is 358 889 285.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

The Marathon County Public Library System Exploration Information [and Updates page](#) on the WVLS website shares information about MCPL Task Force meetings since January 2020, including WVLS presentations to the MCPL Board prior to the task force process, responses to requested information by the Task Force and reactions to the [December 2020 MCPL Financial Report](#), [October 2020 SWOT Analysis](#) and [September 2020 MCPL Staff Letters](#). The WVLS website also shares an extensive list of letters the MCPL Task Force and Library Board, and Marathon County Supervisors have received from Marathon County and area library leaders. Most recently Owen Public Library Director Lorelee Petersen shared her concerns with the MCPL Board. Her letter is shared [here](#). Anyone with an interest in the MCPL Task Force process and future of WVLS should take the time to read this information.

WI Statute [43.18](#) outlines the process for a county withdrawing from a library system. The earliest date Marathon County could withdraw is January 2022, following adoption

by 2/3 vote of a resolution by the Marathon County Board of Supervisors at least 6 months prior to the close of the system's fiscal year.

This matter is of grave concern to WVLS member libraries and libraries across the state served through WVLS' partnerships with several other public library systems. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

Thank you,

FEBRUARY 23 UPDATE

Colleagues and Friends,

The MCPL Board of Trustees plans to invite DPI to its March 2021 meeting to respond to concerns they have been hearing about how Marathon County's departure from WVLS will impact other system libraries.

This action was taken following a discussion during the Board's February 15 [meeting](#) regarding agenda item: Library System Review Process - request to DPI regarding effect of withdrawal - For Discussion and Possible Action.

Jeff Campo made a motion to invite DPI to come before the board to talk about what the effect would be for withdrawing from WVLS, specifically if Marathon County's departure would destroy the smaller libraries in the system.

Sharon Hunter stated, "...I feel strongly we need to continue this process and move on with this process, and by that I mean, educating our patrons and the community, the county board. Sure, we can go ahead and have the public meeting, but if it's not going to go anywhere and it's going to be set backwards, why would we proceed with that? So that's why I'm thinking, let's slow down. If we don't go before the county board this year, we can do it next year. We are in no rush to leave WVLS, but we do need to do some kind of a marketing campaign to help our patrons understand why it benefits them to move with a new system.When we do a contract with WVLS, I feel like they are a vendor. We are contracting with them. They are to provide services to us. And if we are not happy with those services, or if we find another vendor that can do a better job, who will provide us different services, that will help us expand what we want to do, then we have a right to do that."

Scott Winch seconded the motion.

Sharon Hunter then stated "...at the March meeting, if we want, we can decide if we still want to move forward to the county board, or if we want to postpone, and sign the contract with WVLS for another year, and then proceed with moving forward with our motion to leave WVLS."

A roll call vote was taken with all board members voting yes.

Based on discussion, the expectation is that the MCPL Board meeting with DPI representatives will be open to the public. The next meeting of the Marathon County Library Board will be on March 15 at noon.

See also the **February 5 Update** below. If you have any questions or concerns about this matter, please feel free to reach out to me or any member of the WVLS team. Our contact information is available [here](#).

FEBRUARY 5 UPDATE

Colleagues and Friends,

During its [February 4 meeting](#), the Marathon County Extension, Education and Economic Development Committee planned to set a date for a public hearing as the next step in a process for Marathon Co. to withdraw from WVLS. However, earlier in the day, Committee Chair Sara Guild received a request from the Marathon County Public Library Board to postpone the public hearing until further notice.

According to a [WSAU news post](#), Guild said "she had received an email request from the Library Board in the morning to postpone setting a date for the public hearing. 'They would like to continue conversations at the Library Board level to gather additional information before a public hearing is scheduled.' Guild did not have details about what type of information the Library Board would be gathering regarding the request to change library systems. But she did mention the public hearing issue could come before the Committee again. 'Once the Library Board garners whatever information they are looking for, then at that time it could come back to this committee.'"

The next meeting of the MCPL Board of Trustees is on Monday, February 15 at 12:00 p.m.

I will continue to share news on the system membership process as I receive it.