

Library Advisory Board Minutes: April 9, 2024For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) met virtually on Tuesday, May 7, 2024. The meeting began at 5:03 pm.

Board members present were: Clare Wilkinson, David Jarvis, Domiè Newton, Hazel Burke, Jade Chan, Kate Fleming, Kelsey Fong, Kristi Ketchum, Madison Riethman, Megan Parrot, and Taryn Sauer.

Cassie Duprey, Mabel Reed, Lizzie Martinez, and Nikia Kae Solbjor were unavailable.

Staff members present were: Annie Lewis, deputy director; Jen Studebaker, community services director; Jon Worona, director of innovation & technology; Katie Shifley, finance and facilities director; Kirby McCurtis, location services director; Maddelyn High, management analyst; Shawn Cunningham, director of communications and strategic initiatives; Sonja Ervin, equity and inclusion manager; and Vailey Oehlke, director of libraries.

Commissioner Lori Stegmann, District 4, Multnomah County; and Jeff Renfro, county economist; were also in attendance.

WELCOME & CHECK-IN

Meeting attendees joined the virtual meeting either via video or phone and participated in a warm-up exercise in virtual breakout rooms.

UPDATES FROM LIBRARY LEADERSHIP

Library Director Vailey Oehlke shared recent systemwide updates, including:

- A reminder that a decision was made early on during bond budget planning that the library would not be able to stand up temporary locations in every area during bond-related closures, due to the need to preserve funds for new permanent buildings. Library location staff and bond team members closely examine building use and patron traffic to understand how to provide some level of service continuity during closures. For example, in the case of Belmont Library, where more holds are picked up than at Central Library, a temporary holds pick-up location with limited service is planned to accommodate volume. While for St. Johns Library, which is not a heavy circulating library, no temporary location will be developed. Oehlke asked that if LAB members have questions or hear concerns from their communities, to please direct those patrons to the Director's Office.

- Oehlke also reiterated the library's approach to and focus on safety and security, in light of the county's current [90 Day Fentanyl State of Emergency](#) declaration. The library's approach is holistic, and includes trained staff and Library Safety Officers, contracted security officers, and a number of different positions focused on infrastructure and specific expertise like social work. A partnership to offer peer support specialists at libraries is coming online soon. Folks have a constitutional right to access the library, and managing library spaces to help folks feel welcome and to also address serious incidents effectively when they happen can be a challenging balance. Oehlke reminded that, since 2019, MCL has increased safety and security expenditures considerably. Director of Location Services Kirby McCurtis, who oversees library locations and security, added that the library's model is always evolving as we learn the best ways to help people use library spaces successfully. Resources like peer navigators and resource counselors build relationships, provide critical support, and can help interrupt issues before they happen for folks in crisis. MCL also continues to work toward meeting security-related audit recommendations, creating a full scope security vision. Oehlke thanked McCurtis for her leadership; as well as Equity Manager Sonja Ervin, who helps the library apply an equity lens to managing spaces; and to the county attorney's office, which offers legal guidance.

GOODBYE VAILEY!

Meeting attendees and guests spent time recognizing and saying goodbye to Library Director Vailey Oehlke, [who retires in June](#) after 15 years as director and more than 27 years at MCL.

BOARD BUSINESS

Meeting minutes for the April 9, 2024 meeting were approved.

LAB liaison Maddelyn High shared that Gabie Mbenza-Ngoma had to step off the board for personal reasons and LAB now has five total open spots to fill during its current recruitment.

LAB committee members then broke into groups to discuss next steps for committee work.

ACTION ITEMS + CLOSING

The meeting adjourned at 5:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Maddelyn High, director's assistant
Multnomah County Library, Oregon