

Potomac LAC Meeting Minutes

Dec 6, 2022

LAC Member Attendees

Gael Cheek, Co-chair

Wei Lu, Co-chair

Don Libes, Secretary

Sylvia Diss

Rosemarie Lentini

Patty McGrath

Absent

Fred Olowin

Other Attendees

Patrick Fromm, Regional Mgr, Rockville Region: Potomac, Aspen Hill, Rockville, Twinbrook

Jim Montgomery, MC Library Board (MCLB) Liaison

Edie Wingate, Friends of the Potomac Library (FOPL), President

Jacqueline Etelson, ex-member, board of FOL Potomac

Jeanie Montgomery, assisting FOPL transition

Names and abbreviations (unofficial, for convenience and clarity)

FOLMC: Friends of the Library, Montgomery County (old)


OneFOL: One FOLMC (new)

FOLP: Friends of the Library, Potomac Chapter (old)

FOPL: Friends of the Potomac Library (new)

Chair and Member Updates

Meeting held via Zoom. Gael called meeting to order at 7:17pm. Agenda previously distributed by Wei via <https://groups.io/g/plac>

 2022 12 06 Potomac LAC Agenda.doc

[Fred Olowin has not attended for 1 year. According to LAC Handbook: "Voting LAC members are expected to attend and participate in all LAC meetings and when possible to notify the LAC Chair prior to the meeting of any absence. A voting LAC member who misses more than 50% of the confirmed meetings will be removed from membership. The MCLB may waive the removal for illness, emergency, or other good cause."]

Minutes from Previous LAC Meeting

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Gael moved to approve minutes from previous meeting with no changes. Approved.

Patrick Fromm, Branch Manager Report

Refresh is coming along

Timeline is unchanged, reopening remains Feb-Mar.

Library staff will take responsibility for re-opening festivities. Expect politicians to show up. LAC should attend - at least enough to staff a table. Opportunity to find more LAC members and to interact with patrons in general.

Potomac will be getting a branch supervisor: Natisha Harper

She will be on-board as of Dec 19 but detailed elsewhere until Potomac re-opens.

Patrick will continue attending LAC meetings.

The "branch supervisor" title is new and akin to the old "manager" title. Natisha will be physically present at the branch and will have most responsibilities. Patrick will retain a few responsibilities but left them unclear.

Friends of the Potomac Library

Revisited FOLP/FOPL and OneFOL/FOLMC issues:

- Background split history
- Possible futures
- Status of FOPL
- Kitchen funding
- Chinese collection funding
- Davis
- Book sales
- FOPL has money; Unable to donate it.

Because much of this discussion was the same as the previous meeting, it is omitted here. See previous Minutes for details on bulleted material. Notes that bear repeating or are new:

Gael: FOPL is offering money to improve outside benches.

Patrick: Ethically bound not to solicit \$ from groups we don't have a relationship with. I can only ask MC or FOLMC for funding. Anything more than \$100 requires approval from Anita. Edie should contact MCPL.

Edie: FOPL does not want to give money to OneFOLMC. Davis Library FOL is shutting down and Anita is accepting their \$. FOLP has saved money for 5 years for refresh and now is being told money cannot be accepted. Money for kitchen has been given to MCPL. We thought it was more than enough. Then heard that it wasn't enough. But no one has asked for more even though we have it. FOLP also allocated money for 2 sets of chairs.

Patrick: We have a “formal relationship” with OneFOL. Not with FOPL. Cannot send a letter of need to FOPL. However, LAC can alert me to needs.

Jeanie: Have any other branches gotten that type of recognition?

Patrick: Yes, several branches did not turn money over to OneFOL.

Jeannie: Why do you expect MCPL to recognize individual FOLs if MCPL only wanted one FOL.

Eddie: MCPL wasn't behind that decision. FOLMC was.

Eddie: Could FOL give money to LAC to dispense?

Jim/Patrick: No. Statutory prohibitions.

Don: My understanding is that Anita is not willing to talk to FOLP.

Patrick: Don't know that that's true.

Don: Should LAC send a letter to Anita asking that MCPL formally recognize FOPL?

Gael: Let's first consider Maryland Delegate Lily Qi's letter to Anita asking about MCPL's involvement in the decision of the dissolution of the branch FOLs. It also specifically asked about Potomac and its funding including the ability of MCPL to accept that funding.

Jim: Anita's response said “we are examining issues” and I have not heard of the conclusion of that legal examination. Anita could not accept \$ until conclusion.

Jim: LAC could send a letter asking for status of legal examination.

Gael: I will forward the Lily Qi letter and response to LAC mail list.

Don: Let's revisit the proposal to send a letter from the LAC to Anita after we have read the letters.

James Montgomery, MCLB Liaison Report

Next board meeting is Dec 14.

Jim: County Executive public meetings for funding have been taking place. We're getting a good understanding of Elrich's view of early childhood prep and education. Strong priority.

More coming from education side; divorced from library side. MCLB's major advocacy problem is to connect libraries to early childhood prep and ed; And to improve recruitment to support it.

Sylvia: A woman at Leisure World spoke about a program from 30 yrs ago. Can we focus on that?

Patty: Flabbergasted to hear # of vacancies. If I had that many vacancies for 1 yr, I would have been fired. But we have funding!

Patrick: Hiring has sped up. We are filling vacancies as fast as county structures will allow. (See previous Minutes.) Appointed a new director for HR.

Natisha Harper - new title but essentially the same responsibilities as the old manager position. The field manager (Patrick) will retain some “community responsibilities.”

Don Libes, Status report for Potomac Library Mail Lists

Don's presentation attached here:

In the LAC Handbook, LACs are described as the “eyes and ears” of the Montgomery County Public Library (MCPL) system and it is through LAC observations and suggestions that the Montgomery County Library Board can advise MCPL management about what needs improvement.

However, we have repeatedly considered questions that we don't have good answers, too, except in our own personal experience. We don't know what most library patrons are thinking. We don't have a way of asking them.

The LAC has a contact page but I'm unaware of anything ever having come through it. And the LAC lacks any kind of mechanism for communicating in the opposite direction. For example, we have no way of asking people for their opinions or anecdotes or suggestions.

Our previous liaison suggested ideas such as we

- Spend time observing at the branch and taking notes
- Talk to patrons, attendees at programs,
- Attend non-library functions and engage as a library representative.
- Post questions to neighborhood mail lists.

We've also discussed the difficulty of publicity for events using neighborhood mail lists, local newspapers like the Almanac, websites like Nextdoor, magazines such as Potomac Lifestyle. Friends of the Library also had difficulties with publicity and were told by the MC Friends that there were restrictions which events could be advertised by the branch FOL.

We also looked into MCPL's own newsletter which has remarkably limited circulation. According to James Donaldson, MCPL's Asst Dir for Collections and Technology, county lawyers do not permit opt-out mechanisms so MCPL, Potomac Library, etc., have to expend effort to convince people to subscribe to lists and other organs to hear about events. So that's a partial explanation why so few people ever subscribed to the MCPL's newsletter.

I'm not sure it even exists any more. It was never easy to find on the MCPL website and now I can't find it at all. There are links to social media and perhaps that's superceded the enwsletter. But Potomac doesn't have any social media that I'm aware of. Even the MCPL seems moribund and confusing at best. I looked at MCPL's FB page today for example - of the most recent 10 posts, there 1 comment. The MCPL FB page also has a signup link for a mail list but there's no explanation of what the list is.

In Dec 2020, I presented a plan to create our own mail lists, laid out policy issues, funding issues, alternatives and so on. We approved the plan with several mail lists to start including three lists:

Potomac Library announcements (to which PL, LAC, FOL could post)

Potomac Library discussion (to which any patron could post),

Potomac Library Book Club (for members to discuss books being read or considered)

Additional lists would be possible.

2020 12 02 Potomac Library Communication Proposal

I approached the Friends who thought it was a good idea but did not offer funding. As an alternative, I have set up mail lists using Google's free group service.

So that's where it stands. At this point, I think it makes sense to have us subscribe to the lists ourselves, get comfortable with them, and try them out in a neighborhood and then several neighborhoods before releasing them to the public in general.

I'll shortly post a draft announcement and I'd like each of us to subscribe. Feedback welcome.

Patrick: Jim should look at this to make sure it's ok. Not aware of any branches having done this.

Jim: Please share info.

Don: Will post to LAC mail list.

New business

None.

Next meeting

Not yet scheduled.

Meeting ended 8:20pm