

Potomac LAC Meeting Minutes

June 4, 2024

LAC Member Attendees

Gael Cheek, Co-chair

Wei Lu, Co-chair

Don Libes, Secretary

Sylvia Diss

Sheila Graves

Karen Grimm

Rosemarie Lentini

Michael Namath (virtual)

Roger Williams (virtual)

LAC Member Absentees

Ella Hu (previous two meetings missed also)

Patty McGrath (previous two meetings missed also)

Mary Ammermann

Mallory Starr

Carole Ottesen

Other Regular Attendees

Eric Carzon, Regional Mgr, Gaithersburg Region: Potomac, Gaithersburg, Olney, Quince Orchard

Jim Montgomery, MC Library Board Liaison

Other Attendees

None

Other Absences

Nancy Samson, Branch Supervisor

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)

PL: Potomac Library

MCLB: MC Library Board

Chair and Member Updates

Gael called meeting to order at 7:07pm. Agenda previously distributed by Wei via

<https://groups.io/g/plac>

[2024 06 04 Potomac LAC Agenda.pdf](#)

Laju resigned. [Mentioned in plac email but here for completeness.]

Welcomed new members.

Mary Ammermann, background: young children, interested in children's perspective

Sheila Graves, background: tech and marketing, service with FOLP

Michael Namath, background: unstated

Roger Williams, background: law and business

Mallory Starr, not in attendance

Carole Ottesen, not in attendance

In separation motions, Gael moved to nominate Mary and Sheila as co-chairs. Seconded by multiple members and passed unanimously. Will transition to co-chairs in time for next meeting.

Don expressed interest in stepping down as secretary: "Five years is enough."

No one volunteered as new secretary.

Minutes from Previous LAC Meeting

[2024 03 05 Potomac LAC Minutes](#)

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

Approved unanimously.

Eric Carzon, Regional Manager Report

"I normally provide written report in time for these meetings but will get to it afterward." Gave verbal highlights and addressed email from Gael asking to respond to outstanding issues the LAC has identified.

Read fan mail from person with aphasia.

Reviewed LAC questions about Teen and Senior space with Nancy.

Teens

Michael Joseph, teen librarian is retiring so position is vacant. Hope to fill by internal recruitment which typically takes one month. If not, we will recruit outside which will take much longer.

In the meantime, we expect to continue his programs.

Teen writers and teen advisory groups are on hiatus for summer.

Seniors

No programs specifically for seniors. However, our Weekly Tech Time (WTT), advertised on front sign, is typically attended by 2-4 people, almost all seniors.

Adult book club is similarly attended almost entirely by seniors.

Rosemarie: Is WTT one-on-one? Sounds like it's been expanded.

Eric: [Checked announcement in real-time] Looks like one-on-one.

Sylvia; How does it work?

Eric: Not sure.

Sylvia: Libby and hoopla are confusing. Can WTT help?

Eric: You can ask libby and hoopla questions any time, not just during WTT.

Rosemarie: SeniorPlanet (SP) is nationwide and MoCo has a Silver Spring instance. How about Potomac?

Eric: MC has a few branches working with SP. We'll look into getting SP active at Potomac.

Newsletter, Mail Group, Cards, Miscellaneous

Eric: No firm statistics on number of subscribers to Potomac's newsletter but believe it to be around 2000 subscribers.

Gael: We'd like to promote PL's newsletter and our mail group for patrons. Do you have an update on the flyer that Don drafted?

Eric: Nancy and I are working on the flyer.

[Could not readily identify identity of speaker through Owl, so will say "Anon" from here on.]

Anon: How do you get on the newsletter?

Eric: Online, select home branch when you get a library card - or select it later.

Rosemarie: Have we ever had a campaign to get a library card?

Eric: Yes, every September.

Anon: Can we coordinate with schools?

Eric: We used to but it's too labor intensive. Schools are touchy about privacy. Schools weren't willing to divulge sufficient info and lawyers had to get involved. We produced lots of blank cards that ended up never getting used. Couldn't issue cards at the school; Students had to bring blank cards to library. Huge hassle.

Jim: Can someone get a card over the web?

Eric: Yes but just a digital card. We're working on a service that will issue physical cards.

Don: Is there some benefit to a physical card?

Eric: Physical cards allow checkout of physical materials. We only issue physical cards to people with verified MC addresses.

Don: I keep an image on my phone so it's not really a matter of it being physical. It's really the difference between being verified vs non-verified, right?

Eric: Right. We should use less confusing terms but we've taken to calling them "physical cards" even though that's misleading.

Eric: Some of our equipment isn't good at scanning from phones. We're in the process of upgrading equipment to better scan card images from cell phones. And we expect to be able to scan drivers licenses, too. License scanners will auto-populate names and addresses into our database.

Eric: MCPL is trying to prevent non-MC residents from using expensive MC resources, even including online resources such as ebooks.

Rosemarie: Was at a DC library and they let me register on the spot with an MC address.

Anon: Are digital books costing libraries a lot more than physical books?

Eric: Yes. Eric rehashed issues of how publishers price and distribute books vs ebooks. [Largely repetitive of previous meeting discussions on this topic and MC doesn't do anything unique from other library systems so discussion omitted here.]

Eric: We have partnered with Potomac Community Village with the intent to share talks. Our initial talk will be on sustainable gardening.

Jim Montgomery, MC Library Board Liaison Report

County budget has been approved. MCPL's base budget was funded. However, only 1 of the 3 of its additional requests ("enhancements") were funded.

3 enhancements:

1. Beef up digital collections; Councilmember Jawondo asked to move this to base budget (funded).
2. Refurbishment of world languages, mainly Chinese and Spanish.
3. Enhanced staff training.

2 and 3 were moved to reconciliation procedures which caused problems. In reaction to 10% increase to property tax last year, Council cracked down on new funding and moved all such requests to reconciliation which grew from \$10M to \$100M and, at least for MCPL, none were funded. All votes on reconciliation were behind closed doors so we don't know who voted how. Bottom line: MCPL didn't get \$1M funding for the 2 enhancements.

Jim: Felt like the libraries lost out to MCPS funding requests due to the restructuring and secrecy of the funding process. Libraries are lumped with recreation in the budget. Education has priority over everything. Politicians need to understand that libraries are education, especially with regard to kindergarten readiness. "We need to lobby politicians."

Additional library spending pays off. Education system spends enormous amount of money trying to get kids to catch up to kindergarten readiness. Library improvements would pay off.

Gael: So our efforts could only be for the next budget cycle?

Jim: Sort of. Council could allocate money at any time but it makes more sense to push for next year's budget.

Anon: Is there data?

Jim: Data is hard to come by.

Eric: No studies that directly tie library use to kindergarten readiness. We're hindered by library stress on privacy.

Gael: Can't we aggregate data? We don't need individual data.

Jim mentioned some schools and statistics that implied Gael is correct.

Jim: Next week is Anita's last board meeting. Expect replacement in Sept. No interim has been identified.

July and August, MCLB are off.

New Business

Don described the proposal for a new mail group for discussion between Library Advisory Committees in Montgomery County, Maryland. Group members must be LAC members.

Rationale:

LACs would benefit from hearing from other LACs such as:

What other LACs are doing that is/isn't working;

What other LACs are doing that is innovative;

What other LACs are doing that is effective;

What other LACs are doing that is risky;

How other LACs are addressing issues given restrictions on LACs;

How other LACs are effectively communicating with patrons;

What interesting interactions other LACs are having with officials, patrons, staff, etc.

Minutes from LACs rarely contain this kind of useful information. Instead, most Minutes are skeletal (status reports, refresh reports, announcements of upcoming themes such as "Library Lovers Month", next month's programs, etc.) with little insight as to effectiveness, risk, innovation, and brainstorming.

In addition, synergy from multiple LACs could be helpful for creating suggestions and requests to the MCLB. Without such communication, individual LACs have no idea if concerns are of interest to other LACs or it is not worth communicating to the MCLB if it is not affecting others.

The Potomac LAC is willing to administer the proposed mail list for at least two years which should be sufficient time to see whether it is valuable enough to keep.

Recommendation: MCLB communicates this proposal and the existence of the list to all MCPL LACs. Interested LAC members can join at: <https://groups.google.com/g/lac-mcmd/about>

Don requested Jim present the idea to MCLB.

Jim: Why?

Don: Just to be clear that we have permission. Same reason you gave us for PL's patron discussion list. Plus, we need contact info for other LACs. MCLB can provide contact info.

Jim: Can't you get contact info from LAC Minutes?

Don: LAC Minutes do not contain contact info, presumably for privacy reasons.

Eric: Would be good to have LAC attendees to defend the proposal before MCLB.

Don: We didn't need to defend our other mail group. Jim did it on his own.

Jim: I was lucky; MCLB didn't ask any questions.

Jim: Ok, write it up by next week and I'll present it.

Don agreed to formally draft the proposal.

Meeting adjourned 8:09pm