



Montgomery County Library Board

June 8, 2022

ATTENDEES: Briskin-Limehouse, Christman, Duval, Levine, Lighter, Manubay, Pant, Roberts, Fiery, Miller, Montgomery, Schiff

STAFF: Anita Vassallo, Director, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Regina Holyfield-Jewett, Recording Secretary

GUESTS: Pam Saussy, President, Board of Trustees, Friends of the Library, Montgomery County (FOLMC); Ari Brooks, Executive Director, FOLMC; Kate Frades, Civic Design Lead, Montgomery County Office of Innovation

The meeting was called to order by Chair Roberts at 7:07 PM

INTRODUCTIONS:

- Roll call of Board members; guests were introduced.

MINUTES AND LAC APPLICATION APPROVALS:

- The minutes from the May 11, 2022, meeting were approved.
- The following LAC application was approved:
 - Maggie Nightingale – Jablonski

PRESENTATION: Friends of the Library, Montgomery County Restructure

Pam Saussy, President, Board of Trustees, FOLMC and Ari Brooks, Executive Director, FOLMC

- Thank you for the invitation to speak briefly about the ONE FOLMC structure and address the questions submitted earlier by the Library Board.
- In review of the questions, several themes were identified: the decision making process in creating ONE FOLMC; how funding MCPL programs and other needs will work; when and how book sales will resume; a desire to better understand FOLMC and MCPL and the relationship between the two separate entities, and transparency and accountability.
- It is critical to keep the mission FOLMC in mind. Many questions can be answered when the role and purpose of FOLMC is understood. The mission statement of a nonprofit is approved by their board of trustees. To ensure everyone is on the same page, we will review FOLMC's mission and vision statements.
 - FOLMC Mission and Vision statements:
 - Vision: Everyone in the County values, benefits from and supports Montgomery County Public Libraries.
 - Mission: To strengthen, promote, and champion Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), for it to better serve the learning interests and needs of the diverse and changing communities of the County, by

- Raising funds to enhance and supplement library programming, equipment, and services;
 - Increasing public awareness of library resources and connecting local communities with their branch libraries;
 - Creating volunteer opportunities for County residents to support MCPL;
 - Engaging with the County's library support community to address the ongoing needs of the library system, and advocating for MCPL's budget to the County government.
- Any activities outside of the mission for those that were outlined in FOLMC's governing documents, would be considered noncompliant with FOLMC's mission.
 - The Library Board and FOLMC have separate and distinct purposes. As indicated on MCPL's website: The Library Board's purpose is to make recommendations to the County Executive on matters that affect or that pertain to the Public Library system. The LACs provide branch managers with input from their respective communities and represent the users of your local library branches and communities.
 - The FOLMC Board of Trustees unanimously voted to discontinue the independent chapter model. This decision entailed on unchartering or disaffiliating with the independent chapter 501(c)(3)s. The business decision to create a new one FOLMC model was driven by an extensive years-long business review that exposed both fiduciary and liability risks that threatened the long-term viability of the whole organization. Despite efforts over many years to resolve these risks within the current chapter model, it became clear based on legal recommendations, as well as confidential internal and external reviews with chapter leaders and MCPL, that this was the only path forward to eliminate these risks.
 - Essentially, we had a set of distributed entities operating independently that varied from branch to branch, over which we had no concrete authority and for which the FOLMC board was held legally responsible.
 - This new centralized volunteer model will allow FOLMC to better serve our mission to support all of our Montgomery County public libraries with financial and volunteer support by creating a more unified, efficient and streamlined organization. We greatly value and appreciate all of our hard working dedicated volunteers.
 - One benefit of simplifying our model is that it will allow our volunteers more time to directly help the libraries by removing many of the burdensome administrative and financial duties necessary under the old structure.
 - Over the years, FOLMC staff and board members have worked to enhance two way communications, including these actions: hired a chapter liaison to FOLMC staff; developed the friend to friend chapter newsletter; created a position, FOLMC board, chapter liaison and then a board committee - Chapter Liaison Committee; established a quarterly chapter leadership call, which was hosted by the Chapter Liaison Committee; and instituted an annual chapter meeting to get people together, share best practices, provide training.
 - FOLMC staff held several individual meetings with chapter leaders during each of these steps, FOLMC board members and staff listened to chapter concerns, which encompass sustainability, mission alignment, and questions regarding meeting legal requirements created by the County, State and federal government. FOLMC staff advised and trained chapters on the legal requirements with uneven results.
 - Based on chapter actions, some of which were uninsurable, and inactions which were non compliant with federal, state and sometimes local laws, and the parent FOLMC requirements as well as confidential input from stakeholders, ONE FOMC was identified as the only path forward.

- ONE FOLMC was announced to the chapters on March 19th, and all chapters were invited to meet individually with FOLMC staff to review the new structure and to join one FOLMC so that they could continue to support their local branch libraries. They were all also provided with written materials, including FAQ checklists and templates to guide them through the process of dissolution, should they choose to do so. Our bylaws do not authorize FOLMC to officially dissolve any chapter; we could only uncharter them. As previously mentioned, this was our only path forward, but it was coupled with laying out a new pathway for chapter volunteers to engage with us under one FOLMC and continue carrying out book sales and other program activities as desired by MCPL - not all chapters chose to participate in these meetings.
- There were many questions around the dispersement of funds. All funds designated for a specific branch, whether donated or raised through a book sale, will remain designated for the use by that branch per donor intent. If a donor gives FOLMC money, and they specify they would like their donation to benefit a certain branch, FOLMC has the legal and ethical responsibility to ensure that happens.
- FOLMC, as a separate entity, does not receive approval from the library director for our organizational expenses and programs. However, all requests \$100 and above, that come from MCPL branches, do undergo a funding approval process that the library director can speak more to, if anyone is interested in that MCPL process.
- The way the funds are dispersed is that a branch manager identifies a need. If it's a performer, they'll schedule a program and do all back end approval that MCPL requires for requests \$100 and above. They fill out an online form and include the approval from the director and any invoices or receipts. The FOLMC administrative team processes the request and makes disbursements on a weekly basis. Branch managers and the director are updated on a regular basis on their respective current funding levels; this will start for all branch managers quarterly (this did not previously happen for all branch managers).
 - There are some items that MCPL has identified as not being funded by FOLMC. Many of these items have ethics implications around them. So for example, we don't fund sunshine funds, staff personal milestones such as birthdays, ongoing staff appreciation, or individual memberships for staff.
 - If a branch goes through the process of identifying a need, and it's approved by the library director, \$100 or above, we process those requests.
- The other big category is the book sales. That is the number one activity that people think of when they think of friends of the library. It's actually been identified by volunteers as one of the most meaningful experiences that they have because they get to actively work to raise enhanced funds for their branch, which is the purpose of those book sales - to use the donations to MCPL to extract value from them and then turn them into enhanced funds for the benefit of MCPL.
- FOLMC is currently working with MCPL on a branch by branch basis for those chapters that have joined ONE FOLMC to resume book sales with FOLMC volunteers.
 - There is an application process. The application is online at folmc.org. We've also recruited through flyers that were given to branch managers, and we're recruiting on social media as well.
 - All branch, book sale volunteers will be FOLMC, not MCPL volunteers. Montgomery County government holds FOLMC responsible for our volunteers. Therefore, FOLMC needs to be able to direct and train volunteers and approve the oversight of their activities. Volunteers must understand and agree to their responsibilities in order for this to be an insurable activity.

- Currently, the deputy director of FOLMC is managing our volunteer program, but we are actively recruiting a volunteer manager who will oversee the volunteer program, including training, appreciation, recruitment and all of those activities. First training of book sale leads, who have met initial requirements, did occur in late May.
- Book sales will operate very similarly to the way they did in the past with teams of volunteers receiving, sorting, stocking and merchandising books. With funds going to support that specific branch at which they were raised.
- FOLMC will also work towards the long term goal of identifying MCPL's expressed needs. For example, MCPL indicated that gardens at certain branches are that had previously been maintained through our chapter is something that they would like us to continue to do.
- The next theme is transparency and financial management. Our website does include core organizational information like our bylaws, articles of incorporation, and all of our financial statements (audited financial statements and annual report). Our IRS form 990 can be found on GuideStar.
 - For the third year in a row, FOLMC has been awarded the Platinum Seal for transparency by Guidestar.
 - We have a contracted accounting for an added layer of reconciliation. We also have a finance and audit committee that reviews our quarterly financials, has budget oversight, monitors our financial reserves and engages in an annual independent audit.
 - The Board of Trustees has the ultimate job to ensure that funds are raised and spent according to our mission.
- ONE FOLMC ensures there is one point of entry for our donors so their intent is clear. Previously with 17 independent groups, that was not always clear. ONE FOLMC ensures there's one process for accessing those enhanced funds. It also ensures that there's adequate oversight of funds that we did not have under an independent chapter model. ONE FOLMC respects the role of the Library Board and the LACs to advise and give input on library services. ONE FOLMC also respects the professional library staff to use that feedback to create library services that benefit the public. ONE FOLMC aligns all of our human resources, our Board, our staff and our volunteers to serve one mission.
- There were other questions/statements received that should be addressed by MCPL. One of the statements indicated that a function of an FOL was to serve as an informal intermediary between branch staff, particularly library assistants and branch managers. Another statement was that the function of an FOL chapter was to have daily interaction with library staff. Neither of these are FOLMC's function, mission or purpose. According to the bylaws that the FOLMC Board approved for chapters, that was never our mission or purpose.
- The other questions we received were around what kind of documented relationship do we have with MCPL. FOLMC does have a memorandum of understanding with MCPL, which contracts us to receive the deaccessioned library materials. The books that are taken out of the collections, are gathered and transported to our Wheaton bookstore. By contract with MCPL, we extract value from those books that were purchased by County government. We use those funds to enhance MCPL.
- Other questions and issues received from the Library Board were that there is a belief that ONE FOLMC created a new burden on MCPL staff. People wanted to understand how library staff gets appreciated under this new model, And finally, how will the director solicit input from libraries on funding. I cannot speak for MCPL, but based on the Library Board's role, it's our understanding that the Library Board, the LACs and the community gives the director input. Director Vassallo can address these statements and questions as she sees fit.

- We thank everyone for the opportunity to share more about ONE FOLMC volunteer model and to address these questions. This information can also be found on our website at folmc.org, including a statement on behalf of the Board of Trustees as well as an FAQ with additional details about ONE FOLMC and how it works.

PRESENTATION: Strategic Framework 2022-2025

Kate Frades, Civic Design Lead, Montgomery County Office of Innovation

- The strategic planning process has included multiple opportunities for staff and the community to engage: staff destination postcards, customer vision boards, customer focus groups (Library Board, LACs, FOLMC), workshops with library staff, and biweekly sessions with MCPL Core Team.
- Project Phases: Phase 1: Project Launch – December 2021; Phase 2: Conduct Research – January – March 2022; Phase 3: Develop the Strategic Framework – April – June 2022.
- MCPL’s core values, mission and vision statements are also being reviewed.
- The strategic framework was shared with the Board members. After discussion, a link was sent to the Board members giving them the opportunity to provide feedback.
- The next step is to share the updated strategic plan with staff, offering an opportunity for staff to add their reflections, comments and thoughts.
- Director Vassallo thanked Kate Frades for the work she has done for and with MCPL. Her ability to bring some many together to work towards the same purpose is wonderful.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

- **Personnel:**
 - New Hires:
 - Elizabeth Quinn, Librarian I, Connie Morella
 - Kayleigh Bekisz, Librarian I, Maggie Nightingale
 - Ricardo Alvarez Rivas, Librarian I, Germantown
 - Promotions:
 - Gray Dickerson, Librarian I to Librarian II, Brigadier General Charles E. McGee
 - Anna Morrison, Librarian I (PT) to Librarian I (FT), Brigadier General Charles E. McGee
 - Transfers:
 - Dyanne Tsai, Library Desk Assistant, Davis to Germantown
 - Alan Hecht, Librarian I, White Oak to Wheaton
 - Laura Sanchez-Bustamante, Library Desk Assistant, Germantown to Gaithersburg
 - Yoojin Lee, Library Assistant I (Olney) to Library Desk Assistant (Wheaton)
- **Hiring**
 - I am very pleased to announce that our new Human Resources Manager, Dr. Lolita Smith, joined our organization on June 6, 2022. Dr. Smith comes to us from the Army Medical Logistics Command in Frederick, Maryland, where she was the Director of Human Resources. She has many years of experience in Human Resources matters, including personnel management, recruitment and retention, employee-management relations, benefits and career development. In addition to her position with the Army, Dr. Smith was on the faculty of the College of Business at Trident University International, where she taught courses in Human Resources Management, Team Building, HR Information Systems and others.

- Many of our positions with a high number of vacancies have already been recruited and are moving to the interview or offer stage. We currently have eligible lists which should fill more than 30 of our vacant positions. In addition, many of our positions that do not require a Masters in Library Science are first offered internally to County employees, and so are not posted publically on our social media unless we find that we do not have enough applications.
- **Assistant Director for Programming and Outreach** - closes June 24, 2022.
- **Refresh/Construction Updates**
 - Maggie Nightingale - Reopened on Saturday, May 21, 2022 at 11:30 AM.
 - Damascus - Draft Facility Assessment under review by the Department of General Services, Division of Building Design and Construction.
 - Potomac - Closed on May 22, 2022 for refresh project. Movers have packed book and material collections and stored them. Furniture and other items are being removed from the building this week.
 - Noyes – Added back into the Capital Improvement Plan. Expected closure spring 2023.
 - Clarksburg – The Department of General Services Division of Building Design and Construction submitted a Program of Requirements for the new Clarksburg library for MCPL to review. MCPL is reviewing and updating outdated items.
- **Upcoming Events**
 - **Summer Reading Challenge Kickoff Party**, Saturday, June 18 at the Rockville Memorial Library. The event will include:
 - A Chesapeake Bay Foundation hands-on educational table
 - Strolling magician Abracadabra Alex
 - Possible visit from Washington Nationals mascot, Screech
 - Summer Reading Challenge! signups and book giveaways
 - Craft tables
 - **Summer Reading Challenge signup** begins June 15.
 - **Rededication of Brigadier General Charles E. McGee Library** is scheduled for Saturday, June 18, 10 AM.

CHAIR' S REPORT:

- Chair Roberts stated that is with regret that she is going to be leaving her position as Board Chair due to moving from the Montgomery County, Maryland area. It has been wonderful, all the work the Board has done in terms of making sure our libraries are a great resource to our community.
- Chair Roberts will be here for the July meeting; the Board recesses in August. Vice Chair Briskin-Limehouse will conduct the September meeting, during which a new chair will be elected.
- Director Vassallo thanked Chair Roberts for her willingness to take on the chair position when it became vacant, for her upbeat approach to working with everyone, and for her smile and everything else that has made her such a joy to have as the chair of the Library Board.

WORKGROUP REPORTS:

- Library Policy and Practices (Lighter, Duval, Briskin-Limehouse, Manubay, Fiery)
 - No report
- Legislative and Public Affairs Workgroup (Montgomery, Schiff)
 - No report

- LAC and Board Activities (Roberts, Levine)
 - No report

OLD BUSINESS:

- None

NEW BUSINESS:

- Proposed Updates to LAC Handbook
 - The annual review of the LAC Handbook actually falls under the LAC and Board Activities Workgroup. However, the Library Policy and Practices Workgroup has reviewed it and made suggested edits.
 - The suggested edits now need to be reviewed and approved by the full Board.
 - Chair Roberts asked all Board members to review the LAC Handbook again, noting the suggested edits. This will be tabled until the July meeting.

LIAISON REPORTS (submitted via email):

- Accessibility Advisory - Has not met since March, but their next meeting is June 16. They've changed their meeting dates to Thursdays going forward. The AAC would like to present to full Library Board sometime in the near future. A request to present at the September meeting will be made.
- Aspen Hill - Last meeting was May 16. Welcomed two recently approved LAC members, bringing total membership to ten. Discussed LAC specifics, such as pending revisions to LAC Handbook and wanting to confirm that LACs can view drafts/edits prior to completion. Discussed if roles/responsibilities change for LACs now that FOLs are no longer branch by branch. Outstanding question to BCC (via Regina) regarding use of email address to use as marketing/outreach with community (e.g. aspenhilllac@gmail.com). Next meeting is August 8.
- Brigadier General Charles E. McGee (Silver Spring) - Continues to meet and is preparing for elections.
- Chevy Chase - Has not met since the last Board meeting.
- Connie Morella - Has not met since the last Board meeting.
- Damascus - Community is excited that Damascus is next up for refresh. Any information yet regarding dates for start/finish ETA? Other than that, it is business as usual!
- Davis – Had a virtual meeting on May 23, its first meeting since my appointment to the Library Board. Present were the co-chairs Linda Pottern and Jonina Duker, two members, and Branch Manager Steven Warrick. The manager reported that branch activity was continuing well, given the continuing pandemic, and that the library's electronic resources were being well used. He reported that despite staff shortages, the library was doing well, and that Davis was in line to get two new full-time staff members from the Potomac branch, when that branch was closed for its refresh. He mentioned the new MCPL Human Resources manager and talked about the staff development coordinator. He said that Davis branch programs were continuing, most of them virtually and that the English conversation club was continuing, Davis also has a STEM program for children that's quite popular. He reported that under the new branch system he will be the manager of four branches, but he will no longer be at Davis. The LAC members expressed their strong regret that he was leaving them. The LAC reported that their branch FOL, with which they had formerly had joint meetings, was now disbanded and that no book sales were currently being held at Davis. I reported on the County Council meeting that approved the library budget. And I

told them about the long discussion that culminated in a canceling of the proposed refresh of the Chevy Chase branch, and a directive for consideration of how affordable housing could be put on the same site as a new Chevy Chase branch (which is currently not near a metro stop but will be after the Purple Line is built). I reported on the reopening of the Maggie Nightingale branch after a refresh and also on the ongoing preparation of a Strategic Plan for MCPL, but said that the Library Board had been briefed only at the beginning stage.

- Germantown - Still defunct.
- Kensington - No report
- Little Falls - Did not meet in May. As previously reported, Secretary Dave Shumacher has stepped down. The LAC had a nice going away gathering for him at the library. Their next meeting is on June 21, and they plan to hold elections. At that meeting, they also would like an update on the facilities memo sent to Anita and Sonja.
- Long Branch – No LAC applications have been received.
- Maggie Nightingale - The community is so excited to have the library open! Reception has been very positive. Several vacancies have been filled over the past two months. Summer programming is ready to go with various presenters, dates/times, to meet community needs. Actively working on connecting to the senior population and middle school/high school populations for additional pop-up programs.
- Marilyn Praisner - Continues to meet and discuss the FOLMC changes.
- Noyes - They are working on engaging new members. They will be holding election of officers at the next meeting in July. Paulette Dickerson will not run again and hoping to have someone else step in the fill the role. The digital sign has been fixed and in use again. The next Noyes meeting is July 14, 2022.
- Olney - Very interested in hearing more about the FOLMC changes. Has started in-person programming (slowly), with Read to a Dog, quilting, and Bone Builders. The Olney FOL has also sponsored three programs in Olney: Energy Express, Aquarium, and a music program featuring Groovy Nate. The FOL also sponsored a virtual author talk (Georgia Hunter, “We Were the Lucky Ones”). Will report on the May meeting at the July Board meeting.
- Potomac - Met virtually June 7 and had a good turnout. Patrick Fromm, acting branch manager led off, taking us through the current state of the refresh. He also outlined the steps that had been taken with the garden club to ensure the health of the plantings. I outlined the results of the FY23 budget process and pointed out that the Government Operations and Education and Culture committees were going to make a joint examination of the county's hiring procedures, with particular emphasis on how they affect libraries. In that regard, I asked Patrick if there was a paper or report that spelled out just how the process worked. He referred to some OHR material that, while it might not be directly on point, could be helpful. It can be found at:
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HR/Recruitment/RecruitmentSelection.html#1>
The LAC chair, referring to the Board's June 8 agenda item on the FOLMC's reorganization, asked that a representative from the chapters that have chosen not to participate in this approach brief the Board at a subsequent meeting.
- Quince Orchard – No update since May meeting. Plans to meet in July.
- Rockville Memorial - Had a last minute cancelation of the meeting.
- Twinbrook – Still defunct.
- Wheaton - Met on May 16. April Rivers, who has served as secretary for 10 years, is stepping down as she is moving out of the area. Quorum was not met so they could not hold elections. They plan to do this at the next meeting, scheduled for June 27. The branch

manager provided updates regarding programming and staffing. The book club is staying virtual, and is wondering if they could put a notice on the MCPL Wheaton library webpage to advertise meetings. Also, if it is possible to do targeted marketing with the MCPL digital marketing team. When asked by the MCPL board member about how the group recruited LAC members in the past, one thing they did was have a table set up before/after some programs, with LAC members there to give out applications and answer questions. They also engage with neighborhood associations.

- White Oak - Last meeting was June 6. Discussed FOLMC decision to consolidate branch funds; questions arose as to how branch can access the estimated \$30k balance "earmarked" for branch. In addition, will book donations and book sales (\$1) return to branches or are library patrons expected to drive to Rockville or Wheaton. Discussed regional manager role and pending reorganization. Currently WO is in Region 1 but it seems that some region/branch changes have occurred. Would like update as to latest on rollout. Held elections for 2022-2023 on June 6. Shared June board meeting virtual link with LAC. Next meeting is September 6.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- For Pam or Ari: I represent 20 book sale volunteers at Davis who have all volunteered for ONE FOLMC. We have called 5 days in a row and left messages asking how we can restart our sale and get the sale money to you - but no one ever responds to our messages and now I hear tonight that you have had a training session for volunteers. We have established schedule and years of working together and cannot get the courtesy of a reply telling us how/when we can restart our sale. [Karen Braun]
 - White Oak is having the same issues [Pant] as is Connie Morella.
 - Director Vassallo will reach out to Ari Brooks.
- You mentioned community involvement and that has been our concern – that we are now shutting down community involvement. Ari and Pam came prepared with answers to questions that had been submitted in advance. Why did no one ask any questions while she was there? Why didn't anybody ask why perfectly healthy chapters were being unchartered? That is a question we have raised many times, and we can't get an answer. It is a question that has our members and community very upset. Our community has been supporting this chapter for 30 years. [Karin Currie, Potomac]
 - We wanted to have them come tonight, and we did send them the questions that our liaisons submitted from the various LACs because that is our purview. We did this as more of a courtesy because some of our LAC members had some questions. We are not the Friends. We are two separate organizations. Neither MCPL nor the Library Board can speak for FOLMC. Director Vassallo has stated that she will reach out to Ari Brooks, maybe she can add that question when she does so.

ADJOURNMENT:

- The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.