

THE LIBRARY BOARD
Public Library Development Committee
Meeting Minutes

The Public Library Development Committee met electronically via Zoom internet teleconferencing on Monday, May 10, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

Committee Members present: Mark Miller, *Chair*; Shelley Viola Murphy, *Vice Chair*; Laura Blevins, Maya Castillo, Marcy Sims; *Staff Liaison* Library Development and Networking Director Nan Carmack, Public Library Consultant Kim Armentrout, and Librarian of Virginia Sandra Treadway were also in attendance. Committee member Mohammad Esslami was absent.

Chair Mark Miller called the committee to order at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed all committee members and Library staff.

Mr. Miller began by saying he would be switching the order of the three agenda items and first discuss the approval of the updated *Planning for Library Excellence* (PFLE). He invited Library Development and Networking Director Nan Carmack to give an overview of the changes and specifically the equity diversity, equity, and inclusion (EDI) portions of the document. Dr. Carmack reviewed the revision process that took place in 2019 and mentioned that we realized that we had missed an opportunity then to include EDI wording and guidance in that revision. This year Library Development staff created a small working group to recommend revisions along these lines. The group included representatives from various public libraries and regions of the state and consulted with the Virginia Public Library Association's Librarians of Color Forum chair and co-chair and several assistive services librarians who work with people who have mobility, vision or hearing challenges when using libraries. This working group recommended new language relating to EDI issues to be added to the guide. The draft that the committee had today was approved in April by public library directors at the Virginia Public Library Directors Association (VPLDA) spring meeting and was now being presented to the committee for discussion and hopefully endorsement of the updated language.

Mr. Miller opened up the floor for discussion and questions. Laura Blevins inquired about specific wording on page six of the document, which Dr. Carmack explained had been used in the previous iteration of the document. She offered to tweak the language so that it might be more understandable for those without the background context. After asking for further questions, Mr. Miller moved that the committee approve the PFLE document updates as would be amended further by Dr. Carmack, and asked for a second to his motion. Shelley Murphy seconded his motion.

Mr. Miller went on to explain that the EDI language updates were primarily intended to help libraries reach out to and serve the general public and improve their access to public libraries. They did not address hiring practices. He affirmed his support for the changes and would be recommending them to the full Board. Dr. Carmack confirmed the purpose of the EDI updates but added that the new language did include guidance on best practices and policies relating to recruitment. Dr. Carmack also shared that the library directors at the VPLA meeting were unanimous in their approval for the EDI language updates.

There being no further questions or discussion, Mr. Miller took a vote on adopting the changes discussed; the motion passed unanimously.

Moving on to the agenda item on State Aid, Mr. Miller provided the committee with background on his long-standing desire to reexamine the current State Aid formula, which provides state funding to supplement local support for Virginia's public libraries. The current State Aid formula has been in place for many decades and was last reviewed in 2000, when the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission (JLARC) conducted a study that was published in 2001. Currently State Aid is only funded at about sixty percent, leaving libraries with about \$11 million dollars less in funding than the formula would allow. Mr. Miller suggested that exploring whether a re-evaluation of the State Aid formula may be a way to bring greater equity and increased State Aid to smaller and poorer libraries. Currently if a locality does not use its State Aid it is distributed equally amongst the other Virginia public library systems. There are other intricacies of State Aid that Mr. Miller wanted the committee to discuss in order to come to a decision as to whether to recommend to the full Board to pursue a new JLARC study or whether more research and discussion is necessary. Public Library Consultant Kim Armentrout shared the results of some research and recalculations she ran on whether full funding of the State Aid would take care of the concerns Mr. Miller expressed for funding for poorer library systems. She indicated that due to the different working parts of the formula for state aid, full funding in and of itself would not solve the problem. The formula currently has incentives for localities to regionalize, however, there has been a movement toward de-regionalization recently, and she cautioned that a full understanding of all the variables of the formula was needed in order to accurately assess whether changes in the formula should be considered or explored. Ms. Armentrout explained the three elements of the State Aid formula, percentage of local support, land mass, and population.

Robust discussion followed on whether pursuing a JLARC study of the current State Aid formula now was appropriate or desirable. The main questions raised were whether the formula was equitable and currently working as intended and whether the age of the formula was sufficient reason in and of itself to seek a JLARC study. It was suggested that research into best practices of State Aid formulas in other states may be helpful in this discussion as well as considering possible implications of changes to the formula. Of particular concern expressed by localities in the past has been that the formula do no harm, that it not penalize either small or large library systems. There have been instances where larger localities felt penalized, sought and received additional funding through seeking direct legislative action from the General Assembly. It was generally agreed that the formula was working as intended and that the partial funding of State Aid was the key problem, not the formula. However, more comprehensive input from the library

systems is needed in order to answer that question. With the pandemic revealing inequity of broadband internet access to a great number of Virginians throughout the Commonwealth, how this might be tied to a re-evaluation of the State Aid formula was also raised. It was also suggested that seeking to add a time frame into the legislation for a regular review of the State Aid formula may be desirable as most policies have specified time frames for required reviews and, in this case, perhaps every ten or twenty years a review be done as a matter of course. After asking for final feedback on whether to pursue at this time with the full Board a re-evaluation of the State Aid formula through a JLARC study, Mr. Miller concluded that the consensus of the committee was that further in depth discussion and research was necessary in order to gain clarity on whether it was desirable to pursue this course of action.

Mr. Miller invited Dr. Carmack to brief the committee on the CARES Act and ARPA funding. Dr. Carmack reported that the twenty libraries who met the three qualifications of high poverty, high unemployment and low broadband connectivity are well on their way in the process of expending the CARES Act funds to meet the deadline of September 30, 2021. However, due to supply chain issues causing delays with equipment, the Library of Virginia was working with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to request extensions for those localities. Mr. Miller requested a list of the twenty localities receiving the CARES Act funding. Dr. Carmack also stated the Library is still in the planning stage for how to allocate and distribute the \$3.8 million in ARPA funds. She noted that the CARES Act program had helped us to understand what local libraries need from us to maximize their use of these funds, but that it would still be a heavy lift for them to meet all the federal guidelines and document their expenditures. About \$1.4 million of the ARPA funds will be used to procure statewide services that encompass not only Find It Virginia assets, but also workforce development and school readiness resources. The remainder of the funds will be distributed to all localities using the State Aid formula as a guide. Since the deadline for expenditures of the ARPA funds is September 30, 2022, identifying appropriate expenditures that can be used within that time frame will be challenging.

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Miller thanked everyone for their participation and discussion, he adjourned the meeting at 4:35 p.m.