

STATE ADVOCACY AND STATE FUNDING

I believe a good turnout on March 6th in Albany will make a difference this year!

Developments in Albany in this budget-approval cycle appear more positive than last year's for several reasons:

- The Governor included current funding levels, \$79 million for library aid and \$14 million for public library construction.
- A Senate Select Committee on Libraries has been established and is chaired by Senator Farley, a long-time library advocate. It has nineteen members that includes Senators Saland, Larkin, and Seward who represent communities served by Mid-Hudson Library System members. All are supportive of libraries.
- There is reason to hope that the Select Committee will favor a 4% increase in library aid to match the 4% increase the Governor has proposed for schools.
- NYLA is fashioning its advocacy message to include a similar call for a 4% increase.
- It's an election year!

In the last two weeks, I met with Senators Saland, Larkin and Seward. Robert Hubsher, Director of Ramapo Catskill Library System, joined me in the visit with Senator Larkin. Wanda Bruchis, Director of the Mid-York Library System, joined me in the visit with Senator Seward.

I had the following objectives:

- Express appreciation for the \$14 million public library construction grant program and explain its importance to libraries.
- Express appreciation for their successful support of \$79 million in library aid last year that, although still a 22% reduction in funding, avoided the deeper cuts originally proposed by the Governor.
- Explain how Mid-Hudson adjusted to a 22% cut and remained effective: negotiating an increase in support from our member libraries, reducing services and eliminating six full-time positions.
- Make the point that the loss in state funding is being met in part with local tax dollars and that this has made it very tough on the libraries in their districts, especially with the new tax cap law.
- Make the point that an increase in state funding is needed to relieve the pressure on the local tax payer.

DLD ASKS FOR A REVISION OF THE MHLS DIRECT ACCESS PLAN

The Division of Library Development has asked that we revise the Direct Access Plan. The plan was submitted last July and approved by the DA in May and by Mid-Hudson Trustees in July. DLD cannot approve the use of the word "refusal" in the final section of the plan that spells out possible action taken when serious inequities and hardships are met. DLD suggests that we either use the word "restrict," which is the word used in the Commissioner's Regulations, or just insert the pertinent language from the

Library Advocacy Day

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Regulations. In either case, there would be little change to the plan's intent. Once revised, the plan will need to be approved by the DA and the Mid-Hudson Library System Trustees.

The Ad Hoc Direct Access Plan Committee was chaired by Amy Raff and she has agreed to chair the reconvened committee. Members of the committee included Merribeth Advocate, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Jeanne Buck, Gloria Goverman, Pat Kaufman, Lisa Karim, Tom Lawrence, Carol Rodriguez, Kelly Tomaseski and me.

UPDATE ON DELIVERY SERVICE PLANNING

As I've reported previously, Mid-Hudson's contract with our delivery contractor ends on June 30, 2012. It is renewable for another five years. We are in the process of doing the "due diligence" in preparation for discussions to renew the contract. We are especially concerned about the current fuel surcharge agreement and believe its rates are higher than industry standards.

We have received two proposals from companies already providing delivery services for libraries, one in the state of Connecticut and the other in Upper Hudson, Southern Adirondack and Mohawk Valley Library Systems. Careful consideration will be given to these proposals before sitting down with our present contractor to discuss moving forward in July.

Tom Finnigan has also been looking into tax-free gasoline, which Erica Freudenberger from Red Hook suggested as a way to lower costs. But because delivery is provided under contract with a private company, and most of the drivers are individual contractors who drive their own vehicles and are covered by their own insurance, there's no clear path to eliminating taxes on the gasoline used for delivery. The state's Office of Governmental Services advised Tom that the state contract would apply if we operated our own pumps. He has also asked the Dutchess County Office of Planning if there's some way we could use county fuel and they're looking into this.

We are aware that our delivery service isn't just a matter of book bins and tires. Drivers are entering member libraries when they're closed. The service involves a certain level of trust that our members extend to our contractor and Mid-Hudson. So our objective is to reduce or keep costs level, minimize change, and continue to provide a service you trust.

UPDATE ON RECONVENING THE SYSTEM FUNDING TASK FORCE

The System Funding Task Force meets on Wednesday, March 7 at 10:00 a.m. in the MHLS Conference Room.

Tom Lawrence is chair. Members of the committee are Sally Alderdice, Jeanne Buck, Linda Deubert, Karen Garafalo, Sukrit Goswami, Gloria Goverman, Debra Kamecke, Pat Kaufman, Julie Kelsall, Frank Rees and Gillian Thorpe. Linda Vittone, the System's Finance Manager, Merribeth Advocate and I also plan to participate.

As I shared in my report to the DA in February, our objectives include 1) identifying opportunities to reduce member assessment fees, such as the reduction in the Holds and Delivery Fee from using \$40,000 in central library development aid for delivery this year, 2) determining how we update the averages for circulation and holds, 3) clarifying when populations-served are updated by member library charter actions and 2010 Census, and 4) determining how to handle populations of unserved areas when service to these areas by a member library is provided under contract.

UPDATE ON CD/CVD CLEANING

As many of you may remember, we notified you last August that we didn't have the staff to sustain our CD/DVD cleaning service for member libraries. Turn-around times for cleaning had been stretching to 2 months plus and no improvement was expected. Additionally, only about a quarter of member libraries actually used the service. We accepted CDs and DVDs for cleaning up through August 31, 2011, and have now finished cleaning these.

Member libraries will now be given the opportunity to purchase the machine we've been using and Chris Herron will be sending out an announcement about this in the next couple of weeks. The machine is an Azuradisc Model 1600 and we'll be asking \$500. The purchase will include a limited amount of supplies as well. If there are a multiple libraries interested in purchasing the machine, Chris will draw these libraries from a hat.