

2012-2016 PLAN OF SERVICE

The most significant action items on the DA's September agenda is approval of the new five-year Plan of Service for MHLS and the central library program, which is provided by the Poughkeepsie Public Library District.

The Plan must be approved by the DA and the MHLS Board and submitted to DLD by October 1, 2011. DLD will review the Plan and approval is expected in four to eight weeks. Without a DLD-approved plan, MHLS wouldn't be eligible for state funding and there would be no funding of the central library program.

Approval of the Plan is on the agenda of the MHLS Board's September 14 meeting.

Reasons to Approve the Plan of Service

There are several reasons why the Plan should be approved.

- 1) It's a blueprint for the collaborative development of efficient and cost-effective services. These services include:
 - Development of the tools to manage collections and the public's use of them.
 - Facilitating the public's discovery of available resources.
 - Delivery between member libraries.
 - Outreach to special client populations and to youth.
 - Communication between member libraries and MHLS.
 - Professional development of member library directors, trustees and staff.
 - Onsite consulting to address member library needs.
 - Advocacy for sustainable funding.
 - Facility development and construction.
- 2) It provides for the ongoing evaluation of this collaboration and service, including outcome-based evaluations.
- 3) It represents the contributions of over 250 directors, trustees, friends and staff from 63 member libraries, MHLS and the MHLS Board, and five correctional facilities.
- 4) It's been extensively vetted by a special ad hoc committee of member library directors and the MHLS Board Planning and Personnel Committee. Both recommend its approval.

Application of the Direct Access Plan

The Direct Access Plan is included in the new Plan of Service but was approved separately by the DA in May and by the MHLS Board in July. It will be reviewed by DLD as part of the new Plan of Service and is expected to go into effect January 1, 2012.

The Direct Access Plan ensures that all residents of Mid-Hudson's service area have equitable access to Mid-Hudson's member libraries. But it also identifies what constitutes the over-use of a member library by residents living outside a member library's chartered service area and possible remedies and restrictions.

Union Vale is a town in Dutchess County of approximately 4,500 residents. It's an "unserved area" under the Direct Access Plan--it doesn't have a library and is not included in the chartered service area of any MHLS member library. Instead, its residents primarily use the libraries of Beekman, LaGrange, Millbrook and, to a lesser extent, Dover Plains.

The new Direct Access Plan determines over-use by residents of an "unserved area" at 5% or more of a member library's circulation, averaged over a three-year period. Use of Beekman by Union Vale residents is over 5% and is approaching 10% of its circulation. Use of LaGrange and Millbrook is also fairly significant.

Beekman, LaGrange, Millbrook, Dover Plains and I have worked to establish a reasonable level of support by the Town of Union Vale, as well as a formula to distribute support to the four libraries contiguous with the town. We met with the town supervisor, requested annual support of \$72,811, and attended and spoke at a town board meeting. This is not the first time the town has been approached for support.

Like all member libraries, Beekman, LaGrange, Millbrook and Dover Plains have a strong sense of public service. They want to continue to provide Union Vale residents the high level of service they provide their own residents. However, if we are unable to secure Town of Union Vale support in 2012, the time has come to reduce services to Union Vale residents to the extent allowed by Commissioner Regulations and the Direct Access Plan.

These restrictions would go into effect in 2012 and would be system-wide where practical. They would include restrictions on borrowing items less than a year old and electronic materials. Restrictions on programs would likely be instituted by the four contiguous libraries as well. We have our fingers crossed, however, that restrictions will be avoided and Union Vale will begin to support the library services provided their residents.

PULISDO & NYALS CONFERENCE

Merribeth Advocate and I attended a three-day conference of the Public Library System Directors Organization (PULISDO) and the New York Alliance of Library Systems (NYALS) last week, which was held in Greenbush, just outside of Albany.

PULISDO

It was very interesting to learn how library systems differ across the state in their relationship with member libraries--the varying levels of collaboration with members and the support they receive. It confirmed, once again, how fortunate we are at Mid-Hudson with our ongoing collaboration and support. The advisory committee structure is, in particular, a strength despite the occasional challenges in reaching consensus. I also had the feeling that the high level of attendance we have at Mid-Hudson training and professional development programs is the envy of a number of library systems.

A statement on the future of libraries that highlighted the continuing importance of library systems was developed at the meeting for the New York State's Regents Advisory Council for Libraries.

Plans were also begun to develop an online repository for public library system documents, including policies, memorandums of understandings, contracts with members, legal opinions, material on staff and trustee training and surveys.

NYALS

The NYALS conference focused on library advocacy, beginning with a guest speaker and ending with the development of a number of action plans.

The speaker was JR (John) Drexelius, who is a 24-year veteran staff attorney of the state legislature. He worked with Senator Volker for 12 years. His presentation was especially insightful and he provided a number of great tips. He also had some very good intelligence on the workings and players of state government. Some of these included:

- Lobbying--petitioning the government--is a fundamental and protected right, and confirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- However, the first lobbying laws in 1906 in New York that required individuals to register with the government and divulge payments for lobbying were also ruled constitutional; these laws have been made more restrictive in 1999 and 2007, the later extending ethics reform and instituting a blanket ban on gifts.

- In 2011, ethics reform mandated training for lobbyists and government officials, but exempted 501 (c) 3 from revealing contributors.
- Organizations registering under IRS 501 (c) 3 should elect the 501 (h) option. This enables a 501 (c) 3 organization to spend a base of 20% of their first \$500,000 in annual expenditures on lobbying, and allows additional spending on lobbying in declining percentages of their annual expenditures up to a maximum of \$1 million dollars.
- The New York State Commission on Public Integrity is an authoritative source on the rules and law of lobbying in New York State--www.nyintegrity.org.
- 501(c) 3 organizations can create 501 (c) 4 organizations, which include PACs
- When preparing talking points, developing multiple points and phrasing the same points differently can avoid canned letters and formulaic presentations, which can lead to more effective advocacy.
- Key understanding: the first rule of the majority leader is to remain the majority leader and keep his or her party in the majority; therefore framing advocacy on legislation in a way that improves the majority's chances of remaining the majority can be effective; and framing advocacy on legislation in a way that improves the minority's chances of becoming the majority can also be a useful strategy.
- When advocating for a bill, make sure to contact the chairs of committees; also contact any member of a key committee in the majority that may be in a competitive race and in a marginal position.
- Legislative agendas are set by the majority caucuses in both the Senate and Assembly.
- "Check the math." Determine the minimum threshold for securing support by assessing the various caucuses--majority and minority, upstate and downstate, NYC, Queens, Brooklyn, Long Island, democrat and republican.
- Downstate caucuses represent 50% of the political power in Albany.
- Identify and communicate with the staff of key committees and executive offices. Have a message tailored for these staff. What, for example, could persuade staff in the Division of Budget that a 10% cut in library funding is unfair?
- Majority rules: presently, it's the democratic caucus that selects the Board of Regents in the joint legislative session.
- The state budget cycle begins in September with the budget call, which is a letter to state departments that details budget targets.
- Advocacy should begin the first week of February instead of the first of March.
- The State Division of Budget projects a balanced budget for 2012 but estimates gaps of \$2.4 billion in 2013 and \$2.8 billion in 2014.

OTHER: MHLS Annual Meeting: Threats & Competitors; When the police call, be prepared!