



Montgomery County Library Board

February 12, 2020

ATTENDEES: Briskin-Limehouse, Chiu, Christman, Duval, Negro, Rippeon, Roberts, Villar, Wallace, Watts, Williams

STAFF: Anita Vassallo, Director, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Regina Holyfield-Jewett, Recording Secretary; Library Associates: Tina Israel (Little Falls), Dorothy Harrell (Potomac), Alexandra “Sasha” Hoffman (Marilyn Praisner), Tina Kao (Silver Spring), Abdulai Koroma (Silver Spring), Avis Mathews (Silver Spring), Cynthia Mogel (Gaithersburg), Vandana Singh (Potomac)

GUESTS: Jim Montgomery, Friends of the Library, Montgomery County, Inc., Board of Trustees; Jessame Ferguson, Montgomery College; Kathy Davies (Little Falls LAC); Kathryn Scott, (Little Falls LAC); Christina Hamilton (Public)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Roberts at 7:05 PM

Board members, staff and guest self-introduced.

The minutes from the December 11, 2019, meeting were approved.

The following LAC applications were approved:

- Germantown - Farrand
- Noyes - Winek
- Potomac - Sverdlov
- Praisner - Crews, Kemparaju, Taheri
- Wheaton - Rein
- White Oak - Isler, Stewart, Wright

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

- **Personnel** - Staff changes for January 2020
 - Transfers:
 - Cindy Gil, Librarian II, from Potomac to Marilyn Praisner
 - Olubunmi Itheme, Library Assistant II, from Davis to Quince Orchard
 - Timothy Hendricks, Librarian II – Children to Librarian II – Adult (Quince Orchard)
 - Promotions:
 - Megan Johnson, Library Desk Assistant (Silver Spring) to Library Assistant I (Chevy Chase)
 - To Anh Chung, Library Desk Assistant (Olney) to Library Assistant I (Marilyn Praisner)

- Sevastita Turcu, Library Aide (Maggie Nightingale) to Library Assistant I (Little Falls)
 - Tadelech Ramet,d Library Desk Assistant (White Oak) to Library Assistant I (Marilyn Praisner)
 - Raymond Prather, Library Desk Assistant (Quince Orchard) to Library Assistant I (Olney)
 - Yolanda Mongan, Library Desk Assistant (Germantown) to Library Assistant I (Connie Morella)
 - Mark Santoro, Librarian I to Librarian II (Aspen Hill)
 - Grey Dickerson, Librarian I - part-time to Librarian I – full-time (Silver Spring)
 - Susan Smith, Librarian I - part-time (Wheaton) to Librarian I – full-time (Silver Spring)
 - Separated from County
 - Eyoel Delessa, Librarian I, Silver Spring
 - David Payne, Branch Manager, Germantown
- **Refresh/Construction Projects Update:**
 - Long Branch -Waiting on a closure date from the Department of General Services (DGS). Bidding for the construction contract began.
 - Germantown - Closure sometime in fall 2020. Finalized furniture finishes on February 6. Opened in March of 2006.
 - Potomac - Walk-through of building with DGS for known issues. Facility assessment began.
 - Damascus - Outdoor ADA work continues (ramps and railings).
- **Library Lovers Month Kickoff** was on February 1, 11 AM at Connie Morella Library. It was a good turnout. Councilmember Jawando attended and presented a proclamation. A proclamation was also presented before the full Council on February 4.
- MCPL has exited the Maryland’s Digital eLibrary Consortium for **Overdrive** in which it participated for collective ebook/audiobook purchasing and lending. To better serve County residents, MCPL now has its own independent Overdrive ebook collection. Customers can expect an electronic collection that reflects the interests of County residents and a system that is more responsive to their requests and needs. This includes greater functionality within the OverDrive application, shorter hold times, and a greater flexibility to provide service features that will increase usability and satisfaction. There were some glitches and lessons learned.
 - The McMillan embargo is affecting MCPL’s ebook collection. As of November 1, 2019, Macmillan Publishers allows libraries—no matter the size of their city or town—to purchase only one copy of each new ebook title for the first eight weeks after a book’s release. See the [American Library Association](#) website for more information.
 - The state of Maryland has not addressed this yet.
- A group from MCPL went to Annapolis on February 5 for **Maryland Library Legislative Day**.
- **State bills** regarding public libraries.
 - Building Lifelong Library Learners – remove fines for individuals under the age of 18. The bill is by age of the user, as it is written now. It is being reviewed to make amendments.
 - Fund the State Library Resource Center which is the central training and collection resource for all Maryland public libraries.

- Increase for capital grants for libraries from \$5M to \$7.5 M.
- Councilmember Jawando continues his **Community Conversations**. The remaining branches have been scheduled with the exception of Noyes.

Branch	Date	Time
Twinbrook	Monday, February 24	6:00 - 7:30 PM
Marilyn Praisner	Monday, March 9	7:00 - 8:30 PM
Davis	Monday, March 23	6:00 - 7:30 PM
Little Falls	Thursday, April 16	6:30 – 8:00 PM
Rockville Memorial	Monday, May 4	7:00 - 8:30 PM
Olney	Thursday, June 4	7:00 - 8:30 PM
Kensington Park	Monday, June 15	6:00 - 7:30 PM
Maggie Nightingale	Thursday, June 25	6:30 - 8:00 PM
Quince Orchard	Thursday, July 9	7:00 - 8:30 PM
Wheaton	Thursday, July 30	7:00 - 8:30 PM
Pending		
Noyes		

- **Save the date:**
 - Second in this year’s series of **Contemporary Conversations @ MCPL** is scheduled for February 22, 7:30 PM at Silver Spring Library. The guest speaker will be Tope Folarin, a Nigerian-American writer based in Washington, DC. He won the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2013 and was shortlisted once again in 2016. He was also recently named to the Africa39 list of the most promising African writers under 40. He was educated at Morehouse College and the University of Oxford, where he earned two Masters’ degrees as a Rhodes Scholar. He is the author of *A Particular Kind of Black Man*.
 - Mark your calendars. **National Library Legislative Day (NLLD) 2020** will be held at Georgetown University Conference Center in Washington, D.C., on May 4-5. NLLD is a two-day educational event designed to provide attendees with the opportunity to learn from policy experts, caucus with other advocates from their state, and meet with decision makers on Capitol Hill to raise awareness about the importance of libraries to communities across the country.
 - Members of the community are invited to audition to participate in the **Make Music Montgomery** contest by submitting 3-minute audition files (in commonly available formats) by March 8, 2020 featuring their musically inspired acts or audition in person on March 2, 2020. Information about submitting audition files and live audition events is posted on [MCPL’s website](#). Selected acts will perform during Vinyl Day, April 18, 2020. Prizes for first and second place will be awarded along with valuable advice from “community celebrity judges.”

CHAIR’S REPORT:

- A certificate of appreciation from the County Executive was presented to Jensen Chiu for his time and work as chair and vice on the Library Board.
- Remind LAC members when they are contacting Council members that they are doing so as independent residents unless they have been charged by the Board.

WORKGROUP REPORTS:

- Library Policy and Practices
 - Brief statement of support from the Library Board regarding the letter of support for Drag Queen Story Hour. The County Executive has given his go ahead.
 - Movement on eliminating fines and fees on adult materials.
 - Draft a recommendation from the Board.
 - The County is concerned about loss of revenue; they will want data.
 - It is an equity issue. Most of the 77k MCPL customers who are blocked, live in low income zip codes.
 - American Library Association has great information on their website.
- Legislative and Public Affairs Workgroup
 - Worked with the FOLMC Board to complete the position paper to send to the County Executive.
 - Revised and updated the toolkit.
- LAC and Board Activities
 - LAC Handbook
 - Page 5: *The MCLB can dismiss an individual from an LAC if that person is acting or speaking outside of the LAC's roles or responsibilities or in ways that impair the LAC's mission or operation, or if that individual is abusing usual rights and behaviors expected of all library users. (See "Guidelines Governing the Use of Public Libraries" and "Guidelines for Behavior" on MCPL website.)* - move this to another section:
 - Add this language – “All LAC meetings must be an in-person meetings.”
 - Add the Board liaisons' names to the LAC Annual Report form.
 - The LAC chair or co-chair must be present in order to hold an official meeting.
 - Jane Williams will work with Carrie Villar to incorporate alternate language.
 - Refer to the Maryland Open Meetings Act.
 - It was voted and passed that the LAC Handbook be accepted as presented with the noted changes to be made.
 - Jane Williams will loop back with those who made suggestions that were not incorporated into the Handbook.
 - The LACs should formally note in their minutes that information was given to the LAC members about where to locate the LAC Handbook.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Little Falls submitted two memoranda to the Board regarding staffing at the Little Falls branch. (See attachments A and B)
 - The Board asked Director Vassallo to respond to the memoranda. Director Vassallo's response included:
 - MCPL has 390 merit employees. With staff being promoted, retiring, etc. there are always vacancies.
 - Information regarding vacancies:
 - Interviewing next week for Librarian II for children.
 - Offers in process now for Library Assistant I part-time.
 - Another recruitment will be held for part-time Library Associate for adults.

- MCPL waits until there are several vacancies for a particular position before recruiting. Doing this allows a pool to be established that can be drawn from at a later date if necessary.
 - A dashboard with this information is being developed that will have this information. The dashboard can be shared with Board.
 - Part-time staff is needed to cover shifts and the Friday-Saturday flex.
 - MCPL is committed to having fully trained staff in the branches to provide the best customer service.
 - All departments, under Turn the Curve, have been charged with shortening the hiring process.
- Director Vassallo accepted the recommendations and stated that she appreciated the well thought out suggestions.
- An official response by Anita Vassallo, Sonja Roberts and Jane Williams will be drafted for review by the full Board.
- The Board asked to get a regular presentation from the Human Resources Manager regarding vacancies and recruitment.
 - Interested in seeing on the dashboard, the time the vacancy occurs to the time it is filled.
- Each year an amount is included in MCPL's budget to account for anticipated savings to be achieved during the fiscal year. The budgeted amount for lapse is the projected amount to be saved between the time a position becomes vacant and when it is filled, and the number of vacant positions. MCPL is able to achieve its lapse as a result of turnover and the higher than average number of vacant positions. MCPL's anticipated lapse is \$3.6M. The department is working collaboratively with the Office of Human Resources to fill vacant positions.
- A suggestion was made that MCPL work with the school system and colleges to recruit new staff.
- MCPL is looking for customer service-oriented people who know what libraries are about in 2020.
- Digital Signage
 - There was some concern expressed after the November Joint Meeting that the branches were not able to change their own digital signage.
 - Director Vassallo will speak to the Digital Strategies manager regarding this.
- Library Board Manual
 - There is a section in the Library Board Manual under bylaws that reads: . . . *the Board does not intervene in personnel or internal operating issues of MCPL. Refer to County Code Section 2-54 for a description of additional administrative responsibilities of the Library Board.*
 - However, the County Code states: *The library board shall have authority on its own motion, or on reference from the county executive, to inquire into matters affecting the county public library system including the acquisition and location of new library facilities, the adequacy of book collections, services to outlying districts and personnel needs of the department of libraries, and to make recommendations thereon to the county executive. (Mont. Co. Code 1965, § 2-53; 1969 L.M.C., ch. 34, § 11.)*
 - The language in the Board Manual should be updated to reflect that in the County Code.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

LIAISON REPORTS:

- Olney – No meeting in January; next meeting is February 19.
- Aspen Hill – Attended Councilmember Jawando’s Community Conversation. Continue to remind Mr. Jawando how much his tour of MCPL branches is appreciated.
- Montgomery County Public Schools –
 - Superintendent announced the reorganization of senior leadership in order to support schools more efficiently. The superintendent’s contract was renewed for four more years.
 - MCPS continues to work with diversity and diverse and inclusive instruction. An LGBTQ forum will be held at Walter Johnson High School on April 25.
 - MCPS is going into testing season March thru April.
- Rockville Memorial – Missed the January meeting. The chair had to step down.
- Twinbrook – The LAC has two really committed members. They met early this week to talk about Mr. Jawando’s visit scheduled for February 24.
- Quince Orchard – Met on January 21 with four of the seven members present. The branch manager was not in attendance. Talked about what has happened this past year. They continue to have the weekly gaming session.
- Noyes – Met on January 7; it was a short meeting. An update was given by the Noyes Foundation chair. The LAC chair would like to run again, and no one else has stepped up. The next meeting is February 13.
- Maggie Nightingale – The next meeting is on March 18. The focus of the December meeting was on the building itself.
- Gaithersburg – Next meeting is March 3. Concern was expressed about staff not being able to make changes to their digital signage. They are happy to have a full-time person. According to the roster, all of the LAC members are operating under expired terms. They will all reapply during the next meeting.
- White Oak – Met in January. They were concerned about lost LAC applications, which have since been found.
- Aspen Hill – Met in January and February. Inquired about the policy change regarding children checking out laptops. There are only two children’s computers, and they are always occupied. Somehow they have been hacked.
Response: The policy has always been those 14 and older can check out laptops. Parents may borrow the laptops for younger children to use. The manager should let administration know that the queue system for the children’s PCs has been hacked.
- Chevy Chase – The LAC is reorganizing. Roster shows three members, however, there are five members.
- Little Falls – Met on February 4. There was a guest speaker, Beverly Grant, from MCPS. The LAC is connecting with other LACs about processes. The next meeting is April 7.
- Long Branch – No chair, but a very prominent secretary. All terms have expired.
- Kensington Park – Will be meeting with the acting manager.
- Montgomery College – There are eight vacancies in all three libraries (approximately 40 staff in total). Advertising for an Access Services Supervisor at the Rockville Campus.
- Damascus – Met on January 14. They had some questions regarding FOL and donations. They are looking for a revenue stream to provide a program. For Library Lovers Month they held a program in which valentines were made for the County Executive.

- Germantown – Met on January 16. Talked about the refresh and services while they building is closed.
Response: MCPL is working with the director of the UpCounty Regional Services Center, Catherine Matthews, to find a low or no cost space for computer access.
- Potomac – Meets in March.
- Accessibility Advisory Committee – Meets in March.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM

Attachment A

To: Montgomery County Library Board
From: Little Falls Library Advisory Committee
Subject: Impact of staff vacancies on library services

Date: October 14, 2019

We are writing in accordance with our stated role to advise the Library Board on concerns relating to our local library, including staffing and services.

The Little Falls Library Advisory Committee wishes to express our deep concern over prolonged staffing vacancies at the Little Falls branch, and the effect of these vacancies on the level of service our dedicated library staff are able to provide to our community.

Extent of the problem

The Little Falls library is a busy library, averaging 10,000-12,000 non-unique visits per month. It currently has three vacancies, which include a part-time children's librarian, part-time young adult librarian, and a part-time circulation staff. All of these positions have been vacant since spring 2017 – some two and a half years. To make matters worse, two additional vacancies are anticipated for the end of October: the full time Head of Children's Services and another part-time adult services staff member. These departures will result in total vacancies equal to three full-time equivalent staff, of which 2.5 are information staff. It will leave in place only three full-time equivalent information staff, including the branch manager. In other words, at the end of this month the information staff on hand will be only 55% of the authorized information staffing of the branch.

Impacts of short staffing


These remaining staff will be responsible for a library that is open six days a week, for a total of 56 hours per week, with two busy service areas: children's services downstairs and adult services upstairs – each including separate circulation and reference functions. In other words, it will be impossible to staff the active service points with available staff. The branch manager is arranging for temporary substitutes, but due to the uncertainties of scheduling them, service points have already gone unattended at times, making it difficult for patrons to get help. For example, the children's section has been un-staffed during peak service periods. Gaps are expected to occur more frequently in the future.

Beyond the degradation of basic service coverage, we are concerned about the impacts on library programming, outreach, and development. We are aware that professional librarians have important duties in addition to staffing service points, and when staff are stretched thin, these duties cannot be given the proper attention. We do not believe that substitute staffing is a satisfactory solution to this problem. We are concerned that the longer the current short staffing continues, the worse the impact will be on the quality of library services provided to the community.

Recommendation

Consistent with County legislation establishing the Library Board and defining its powers, we request that the Board, as a matter of urgent priority, inquire into the origins and impacts of this staffing shortage and take followup actions as it deems appropriate to remediate the problem and ensure the continuity of high quality library services at the Little Falls branch library.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to your response.



David Shumaker, Chair

Attachment B

To: Montgomery County Library Board
From: Little Falls Library Advisory Committee
Subject: Continued concern over impact of staff vacancies

Date: January 6, 2020

In accordance with our stated role to advise the Library Board on concerns relating to our local library, including staffing and services, we wrote to the Board on October 19, 2019. While we haven't received a written reply to that memo, we did receive an update on the Little Falls staffing situation at our most recent meeting on December 3, 2019. At that meeting, we voted unanimously to communicate with the Board again, expressing our ongoing staffing concerns.

Status update

We are encouraged to learn that a part-time Library Associate position was filled by internal transfer on October 28. However, we are disappointed that due to extensive training requirements, there is a lag time of over two months between the time the position is officially filled, and the time the promoted staff member can fully participate in providing library services in her new position. We are also concerned that although this one half-time position has been filled, there remain several full-time and half-time vacancies. These include:

- Children's librarian (full time)
- Young adult librarian (part-time)
- Library Assistant I (part-time)
- Library Associate (Adult) (part-time)

We are also concerned that a Little Falls vacancy, which was initially accepted by an external candidate last August, and then turned down, remains vacant. We would hope that when situations like these arise the vacancy would be placed first on the priority list and offered to the next qualified person quickly.

It has also come to our attention that the staffing problems at Little Falls may be related to larger problems either at the library system level or the county government level. We understand that as of early October, there were 77 vacancies in the library system, out of a total authorized personnel complement of approximately 400 positions – nearly twenty percent. We also understand that the County Executive has identified the need to improve the County's hiring process, and has directed the new County director of human resources to make recommendations.

Recommendation

We believe that chronic and excessive vacancies in important staff positions dramatically limit the ability of Montgomery County Libraries to meet the needs of their communities, here at Little Falls and no doubt in other neighborhoods. Therefore, we recommend, as a matter of some urgency, that the Board initiate the following actions:


- Regularly monitor the number, percentage, and duration of staff vacancies on a branch by branch and system-wide level
- Work with the Library Director to identify practice improvements that could be implemented by the library system; such practices to include the prioritization of filling vacancies when an offer is rejected by the candidate, and the impact of full-time and part-time designations on the ability to attract qualified candidates
- Work with the Library Director to expedite training and development processes to decrease the lag time between filling a position and having the new or promoted staff person contribute fully to the delivery of services

Montgomery County Library Board

December 26, 2019

- Monitor developments in the County government human resources system and advocate for changes that would benefit the libraries.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to your response.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David E. Shumaker".

David Shumaker, Chair