

MINUTES OF THE CLA LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

April 6, 2021

ZOOM Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Beth A. Crowley, Co-Chair, CLA Legislative Committee--Director, Cheshire Public Library; Kate Byroade, Co-Chair, CLA Legislative Committee—Director, Colchester Public Library; Thomas Piezzo, President, CLA—Director, Brainerd Memorial Library; Lisa Karim, Immediate Past President, CLA—Director, Simsbury Public Library; Deborah Schander, State Librarian; Maureen Sullivan, Acting State Librarian; Mary J. Etter, Chair, CLA PEG Committee—Director, South Windsor Public Library; Jonathan C. Stock, Legislative Liaison, Connecticut Bar Association; John Casiello, Co-Chair, Publicity & Communications Committee—Collection Management Department Head, Ridgefield Public Library; Glenn Grube, CLA Legislative Committee—Director, Avon Public Library; Douglas C. Lord, Region 4 Representative—Director, Cyrenius Booth Library; Leslie McDonough, Region 3 Representative—Director, Mansfield Public Library; Vicky Coffin, Region 6 Representative—Director, Salem Public Library; Jennifer Keohane, Executive Director—Connecticut Library Consortium; Bridget E. Quinn, Legislative Committee—President & CEO, Hartford Public Library.

Co-Chair Beth Crowley called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

The Co-Chair moved that draft minutes of our previous meeting held February 23, 2021 be accepted as written. Her motion, having been seconded by Mary Etter, passed without dissenting vote.

State Librarian Deborah Schander outlined the progress of budget advocacy for our agency thus far. This process began with her testimony—in concert with the State Library team—on March 1. It was followed that evening by public testimony, both virtually via ZOOM and written. Virtual testimony totaled 12 while written totaled 44. Subsequently, conferences went forward with key legislators both on State and Federal levels. Prospects appear good. Public testimony clearly had positive local impact, thanks to dedicated Connecticut advocates. ALA has been especially effective, during National Library Week, in reaching out to our Congressional delegation--including Congresswomen Rosa DeLauro and Jahana Hayes. That networking looms important since Federal funds have already been authorized from the recently passed stimulus bill. Additional monies may emerge when the infrastructure bill, perhaps embedding more library funds, wins passage.

The State Librarian addressed Virtual Town Hall Meetings held across our State last month. Their scheduling was: Region 1, March 9; Region 2, March 10; Region 3, March 15; Region 4, March 23, Region 5, March 24; and Region 6, March 29. Total participation in all 6 events numbered 119. These round table meetings proved highly productive. They offered excellent opportunity to begin a conversation: one which will expand going forward. President Piezzo complimented Beth Crowley for organizing this Town Meeting sequence. Multiple important questions arose including resource sharing, database acquisition, equity, and funding. Although Connecticut is small in geography, many divergent viewpoints emerged. The State Librarian noted that these meetings have surfaced multiple ideas—ideas which will improve future service. While COVID-19 reduces total attendance levels, virtuality works. This alternate capability, longer term, may enhance participation by people who cannot physically attend.

Next attention addressed outreach efforts undertaken by our Publicity and Communications Committee. John Casiello reported that, as we all know, pandemic conditions exclude working directly at the Legislative Office Building. Instead, work went forward with regional representatives to go virtual. Our product was a two-minute video posted on YouTube.¹ The video is a montage of services from public libraries across the state. Our objectives involve adding content, launching on social media, and networking in various ways. After

¹ <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgxwLtQNnqFfCRPXrGnssKBbgkSfh?projector=1>

communicating with the Publicity Committee, this video will go out today. A question arose regarding whether our product will be sent to television networks. The response was that no such plan currently exists. Present emphasis rests upon radio. However, librarians with T.V. contacts can certainly try. Perhaps stations might run short pieces as ten-minute video spots. Bookmarks clipped from our video will be sent to libraries for local printing and distribution. Examples of such bookmarks were shown separately.

Careful discussion took place regarding non-budgetary advocacy objectives. Three major objectives supported by distinct work groups exist. Those objectives and present work group membership are listed out below.

- 1) Position Papers/Local Advocacy Pieces
 - Prevent efforts to privatize library service in the State by companies such as LS&S.
Members: Beth Crowley and Vicky Coffin
- 2) Possible Statutory Changes—Need State Library Board Endorsement
 - Require minimum levels of library funding as a civil right across all communities.
Members: Kate Byroade, Colleen Bailie, and Leslie McDonough
 - Add library vendors (third party vendor as contracted by a library) to the library confidentiality statute.
Members: Sam Lee and Jennifer Keohane
- 3) Possible Endorsement of a Future Action
 - Facial recognition moratorium. There is a similar proposal going through the Massachusetts Legislature [S.1385/H.1538] and librarians there have provided testimony against facial recognition.
Member: Sam Lee

President Piezzo asked what the time frame might be for launching this non-budgetary advocacy. Beth Crowley responded that these objectives, being detailed and labor intensive, require more participants. A recruitment effort will be made to attract additional volunteers.

Jon Stock highlighted the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Among its many provisions is a \$200 million grant allocated to the Institute for Libraries & Information Services. He posed two questions. The first involved when these funds might be payable. Deborah Schander responded that all monies must be spent within 18 months. His second question was whether these funds might be matching because, if so, that condition would strengthen our similar argument for adding back proposed Connecticut cuts. The State Librarian replied that no matching requirement exists.

Referencing our recent CLA election, Lisa Karim noted that some positions were hotly contested. No less than five candidates tried for selection as Secretary, for example. This phenomenon, infrequent in previous years, bodes well for increased participation over time.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jonathan C. Stock
Recording Secretary