

NOBLE Executive Board Meeting via zoom

September 9, 2020

Present: Ron Gagnon, Elizabeth Thomsen, Martha Driscoll, Diane Wallace, Myron Schirer-Suter, Amy Lannon, Theresa Hurley, Nicole Langley, Patricia Rogers, Tara Mansfield, Brian Courtemanche,

1. Call to Order/Welcome

The Meeting was called to order by Diane Wallace at 2:11pm.

2. Approval of Minutes

A spelling error was noted under Item 4- Resource Sharing, “Thirteen of the 17 public libraries haze restored full resource sharing”, it should state, “Thirteen of the 17 public libraries have restored full resource sharing”. Motion to approve with correction made by Myron, seconded by Amy, all in favor.

3. Presentation and Approval of Proposed FY22 Budget with FY21 Revisions.

Ron sent out the proposed FY22 budgets with FY21 adjustments. The budgets uniformly hold the line on library charges for FY22. The budgets keep staffing at the current level. NOBLE has been busy answering questions, consulting with libraries and reconfiguring systems to meet the daily evolution of governing requirements for library operation. NOBLE has learned more about what the Evergreen system can do, and has written patches to make it do what it couldn't to meet the evolving staffing, customer service and outreach demands.

NOBLE has assisted libraries with adding electronic resources. Usage of OverDrive and other electronic resources has skyrocketed. NOBLE has also assisted libraries who are working on projects such as weeding, reorganizing collections and revising hosted websites.

Some other networks have laid low and referred libraries to canned vendor training, NOBLE has done far more live training, consulting and discussion roundtables than ever.

NOBLE has hosted 27 trainings with 560 attendees and 80 roundtables with 1,100 attendees.

Operating Budget- The bottom line, and the library assessments, remain the same as implemented for FY21.

This budget is 0.8% lower than the budget voted by membership in November 2019. The difference is the use of \$8,012 in capital funds voted by Executive Board at the May meeting to assure that no library would pay more than in FY20. The original budget included a charge for those libraries using NOBLE-provided Internet connectivity, which cause a small increase for those libraries and a small decrease for libraries providing their own Internet. In May, Board members voted to retain the small decrease while eliminating the small increase, resulting in a reduction in the overall assessment. For FY21, the gap was made up with capital funds and for FY22, the gap is filled by a small reduction in spending.

The big question for FY22 is that we have no idea what the MBLC is going to give. The MBLC is drafting plans for a 30-50% cut overall. There is no FY21 budget at this point, an interim budget was passed by the Legislature and Governor at FY20 funding levels. It does not appear that the MBLC is allocating or distributing anything to the networks until the full-year budget is approved. The state budget is stalled due to the uncertainty of state income and possible Federal funding. The current interim budget expires at the end of October and expectations are that another interim budget is likely. Last year NOBLE received \$212,550 and applied it to the operating budget.

NOBLE has a much larger than normal surplus carried over from FY20 and applied to FY22. The \$184,300 received from the CARES Act Payroll Protection Plan closes much of the FY22 gap, along with 18% of what NOBLE received in both the telecomm and resource sharing reimbursement line items.

The total included for the two line MBLC subsidy items is \$38,174, which is a gap that could be made up from capital for the worst case scenario.

No significant changes in spending are projected for FY21. NOBLE is not recommending a cost-of-living increase for staff in FY21.

The operating scenario employed is that the pandemic is over by FY22, and travel, conferences and in-person meeting resume.

The proposed FY22 total operating assessment, adjust for the loss of three library members, is lower than in FY19, 20 and 21.

Amy made a motion to approve changes to the fiscal FY21 budget and the proposed FY22 budget as presented. Seconded by Brian, all in favor.

4. Approval of proposed FY22 OverDrive Budget and Assessment

For FY22 OverDrive, Ron is proposing to continue with the \$233,200 shared funding budget and assessment we had in FY20 and FY21. As the annual library assessments are based half on prior year's relative usage with NOBLE, and half on the prior year's assessment, there is a range in assessment changes from an increase of \$1,618 to a decrease of \$1,765 for FY22, but the total remains level.

Total spending on OverDrive collection in NOBLE increased 64% in FY20 due to the quadrupling of Advantage spending by member libraries and a \$33,519 grant subsidy from the MBLC.

From March 1 to the end of August, usage increases from 2020 over 2019 for the same period are:

EBooks up 73%

Audiobooks up 23%

Magazines up 100% (double)

For the whole fiscal year, FY20 usage of NOBLE OverDrive items was up 25% over FY19. Cost per circulation is up to \$1.25. Pre-pandemic library Advantage orders were \$25,778 through March 12, and \$194,921 from March 14 through June 30. NOBLE spending was spread out evenly throughout the year.

Question about when the Magazine change would take place. Elizabeth stated that the magazine title change would take place on September 13.

Motion made by Nicole to approve the FY22 OverDrive Budget and Assessment as presented. Seconded by Myron, all in favor

5. Approval of FY22 PC Support Assessment Rate

Ron is proposing to hold at current rates for the PC Support program for FY22. This will result in a smaller deficit in the program of about \$2,100. There is a lot of uncertainty with the reopening libraries, use of PCs, and the hours of the PC Support Tech. The budget reflects a pre-pandemic scenario, with the part-time PC Support Tech and with the former number of miles driven. The program carries a nest egg of about \$40,000 to provide coverage if the full-time PC Support Specialist be out for an extended period. The deficit will come from that balance. The rate has remained the same since FY19.

Motion made by Amy to approve the FY22 PC Support Assessment Rate. Seconded by Theresa, all in favor.

6. Resource Sharing Participation in NOBLE and the Commonwealth Catalog

NOBLE is the only network not participating in the Commonwealth Catalog.

21 of 25 NOBLE libraries are participating in full resource sharing with other NOBLE libraries. Full resource sharing includes having and fulfilling other libraries' requests on the pull list, retrieving items off the shelves and putting them into delivery for holds at other libraries. With fairness and reciprocity, other libraries should be encouraged to fully participate, maybe by a certain date in the future.

A caveat- some member libraries that seem to have egregious staffing and budget reduction that may also affect state certification and the ILL activities. It is up to individual library governing boards to decide if they will serve decertified libraries.

A question was asked if full participation of all member libraries is needed to participate in ComCat. Full participation is not needed, individual libraries can opt out.

Amy made a motion for NOBLE to reinstate ComCat participation allowing individual libraries to opt out. Seconded by Nicole, all in favor.

7. Reactivation of Billing for Long Overdue Items

Since the pandemic, patrons with long overdues are blocked but not billed. Billing of long overdue items was suspended on 3/15. Borrowers can't clear their account via credit card since they have not been billed. The curbside service often has no option for payment. Blocked borrowers can't use curbside which requires placing holds, which is not allowed for blocked borrowers. Borrowers may have forgotten about items or may not be able to get to the library to return.

Since March 15, items have not been billed to patron's accounts but Long Overdue blocks have been added to patron's accounts. A total of 4,573 users have been blocked since July 1, covering the pre-pandemic extended loan periods as well as the beginnings of curbside long overdues. 13,585 items were involved as of September

1. Possible solutions:

1. Unblock users with these pandemic long overdues and send a reminder about the outstanding items, sent from loaning library. Libraries can customize language to explain local return process. Questions: Send bill and at later date? When? Curbside loans would follow normal policy-defined process?
2. Send bills to long overdue users as per policy.

Discussion about sending out bills vs. sending out reminders to patrons who have long overdues. Goal is to unblock patrons and get materials back. Each library can customize the long overdue notice to be sent out to recover materials.

Amy made a motion to present the recommendation of the Executive Board that we open access to the 4,573 patrons and remove blocks using NOBLE tools and resources such as the modified notices that can be customized, and to be sent out to recover materials. Seconded by Nicole, all in favor.

8. New Business

No new business

9. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 3:32pm.

Respectfully submitted.

Theresa Hurley