

NOBLE Executive Board Meeting via zoom

January 13, 2021

Present: Ron Gagnon, Myron Schirer-Suter, Linda C.W. Gardener, Amy Lannon, Theresa Hurley, Nicole Langley, Tara Mansfield, Brian Courtemanche, Cate Merlin, Patti Rogers

1. Call to Order/Welcome

The Meeting was called to order by Amy Lannon at 2:06pm.

2. Approval of Minutes

Nicole made ~~ma~~ motion to accept, seconded by Linda, all in favor

3. Treasurers Report

Changes with CD's that will be discussed later in the meeting

4. Executive director's Report

Release 3.6 -- The new Evergreen software release 3.6 was loaded on the evening of Sunday, January 10th. All went very smoothly, there were no staff client issues.

Release 3.6 has many new and interesting things — the long-anticipated new course materials module, two new catalog versions, one within the staff client and the other eventually for the public catalog, and a curbside service module. Other upgrades include improved holds management functionality and interface improvements. Also an improved version of printing entries from the catalog which we will be rolling out.

In preparation, we are presenting two “What’s Coming in Release 3.6” sessions, one on January 6th and another on January 14th, both at 10 am via Zoom. The first one had 60 registrants, and 48 for the second tomorrow as of yesterday.

MBLC and State Budget – I attended the MBLC Commissioners meeting via Zoom last week.

This year the network line item 7000-9506 received a 3% increase after a small cut veto by the Governor was overridden. Overall, the FY21 MBLC budget was one of their best ever.

State revenue at this point is higher than in 2020.

The FY22 process is starting. The MBLC passed a FY22 Legislative Agenda seeking a 3% increase across all their accounts. The Governor’s FY22 budget is expected in the next week or two, then the House budget process begins in late March and the Senate in May. It is still necessary to contact your local state rep. or senator to reaffirm the need for library funding via the MBLC budget and especially reach out to any newly elected reps. or senators. Danvers has a new rep. who I will be contacting.

Amy had a question ~~w~~about when the state distribution will come out.

Patti questioned when the waivers would come through.

Decertification – The Peabody Institute Library of Peabody could be facing decertification due to ~~a~~ disproportionate cut in their budget of 17%, one of seven communities with over a 10% cut.

PPP Forgiveness and Tom Clarke – Paula has wrapped up our Payroll Protection Plan loan forgiveness application. One of the things that stood out was that the process would be a lot easier if we hired back the one staff member that we had laid off, part-time PC Technician Tom Clarke, to be on the payroll before December 31st. While the volume of work on library PCs is still not up to the level when libraries were completely open, we hired Tom back for some special projects at his old rate.

Two projects have been identified in our objectives that staff have not had the time to research – improving our phone system to accommodate work-from-home, and upgrading our meeting and conference room capability for the ability to host hybrid meetings, live streaming in-person meetings, giving librarians the ability to choose their preferred participation method. Tom had been head of IT at the Billerica schools, in his full-time working

life, so he understands the issues, even though they were different then. He is starting with the phone system. More later.

ECCF meeting – On a very snowy December 17th, the Essex County Community Foundation met with NOBLE librarians via Zoom to gather input on needs and possible solutions to address the digital divide in Essex County. We had 18 registrants and a good discussion and hopefully- this will keep libraries on the ECCF’s radar for future funding opportunities as our libraries do much to help local residents with access to the Internet for life needs and information. One of the things identified at the NOBLE level is upgrading library equipment to take advantage of higher Internet bandwidth, our current equipment current has a maximum of 100 Mbps which meets the recommended bandwidth for most of our libraries, but not Lynn, Peabody- and Revere, our larger cities.

Perfect attendance – Elizabeth, Michele, and Paula used no sick days in 2020, Martha used one sick day. All are opting for the extra days of pay buyback benefit.

Upgraded Dell Group Purchase -- NOBLE offers group purchase pricing on desktop PCs, laptops and peripherals. In FY20, NOBLE libraries purchased \$85,000 of equipment, a total of 122 PCs and laptops, and 53 monitors and other peripherals. Desktop models have been upgraded to the new Dell Optiplex 3080 models: the Staff model stays at the current \$575, which is \$179 less than Mass. state contract pricing, and the Public PC model drops \$20 to \$475, \$185 less than the state contract. The pricing is better than Mass. state contract pricing due to our projected volume, an average 2of 26% savings. NOBLE pricing is also \$300 less than the current sale pricing on the Dell website for the staff model.

All the PCs have ~~ssolid-stateolid-state~~ drives and come with Windows 10 Professional installed. Monitors are not included, but also available at significant discounts. Specifications are selected to run well with Evergreen and other standard and library software.

Libraries can contact us with any specific PC or laptop needs and we can get current quotes from Dell. Average laptops run just under \$900, but are more variable in cost, specifications and availability.

Upgrading staff PCs – We are in the process of updating staff PCs, including desktop PCs for Paula and I and laptops for Beth Willis and Michele Morgan. All are at or beyond five years of use and the new equipment should improve productivity while avoiding downtime. In Beth’s case, the new PC is a laptop replacing a desktop for working from home. These upgrades will exceed the amount budget for PC upgrades this fiscal year, but other line items will come in under budget so it will not be an overall problem.

Snow Day Survey – I posted a question to the Director’s list recently to see how libraries were treating snowy days in light of the pandemic and increased ability to work from home. My interest was in the scheduling or rescheduling of training sessions and meetings.

It appears that we will still need to reschedule sessions in the face of snowy forecasts. Of the ten public libraries that responded, in one-third of them the staff was not required to work ~~ionn~~ a fully closed snow day, and two-thirds were not required to work ~~ionn~~ days that included delayed openings or early closings.

5. Vote to Approve Allocation of MBLC LEA OverDrive Funds

We are receiving \$33,159 from the MBLC from their LEA funding to invest in OverDrive titles that can be shared with other Mass. networks. We are proposing the following allocation for the funding:

Spanish & Portuguese titles	\$16,000.00
Workforce Development titles	\$7,000.00
Education (remote learning, study skills)	\$5,000.00
Picture Book Videos	\$5,000.00
	\$33,000.00

Our theme this year is responding to needs raised by the pandemic.

We have been trying to get grant funding for non-English collections for about a year without success. This gives us an opportunity to actually make this happen. If it is a large success it could give us evidence for future grant applications.

Workforce development titles would be focused on job hunting, resume writing and basic skills needed for today's job market. Education is geared toward student support and study skills during times of remote and hybrid learning; and overcoming the deficiencies caused by those models going forward. Picture book videos are somewhat of a story-time-on-demand concept that would help young learners with reading skills as well as providing diversion while introducing them to classic picture books and stories.

Last year's MBLC LEA funds were invested in standards and classics, both fiction and non-fiction. See report from Elizabeth.

Linda shared her appreciation that it was thoughtful in responsiveness in all varieties and ages. Theresa made a motion to approve, Nicole seconded, all in favor

6. Vote to Approve Reallocation of Investments –

We last reallocated our investments in the summer of 2019. A lot has changed since then, mainly that bank interest rates have fallen through the floor, from about 2.5% to less than a half of a percent. This rate is less than the rate of inflation, we are losing money on bank deposits.

Three mutual funds: Fidelity Real Estate, Vanguard Dividend and Vanguard Balanced fund. The real estate went down but the other 2 have done well.

We have done pretty well on our mutual fund investments over that time, last year our three investments combined earned an average of 6.5%. I am proposing that we put a greater share of our funds into mutual fund investments, as outlined on the attached sheet. I propose we do that by keeping our real estate investment as at present, due to uncertainties in commercial real estate over the next year or more; increasing our investments in two very solid and widely recommended Vanguard funds (rated gold and five stars by Morningstar), one focused on dividend-paying stocks and the other a mix of 35% stocks and 65% bonds for balance in varying markets.

I am also proposing we put some funds in a slightly more volatile but highly viewed Fidelity account that is focusing on large company investments that will benefit from a post-COVID rebound. This fund has been recommended by several sources, including Investors' Business Daily and Bottom Line and is rated number five out of over 1,200 large growth funds by U.S. News. Last year it increased its value by 47%.

These moves would still leave us with almost \$1.5 million in cash, plenty of liquidity, with our investments 56% in cash and 44% in mutual funds. A file is attached with more information on our current and recommended investments; and on the individual investments.

On the books, the fund totals are split among categories: operations, PC Support (\$40,000), contingency (\$750,000), capital (\$910,348) and MBLC Infrastructure (\$10,961)

Amy summarized that increasing liquidity, not necessarily the goal or need, in general, we expect more income and revenue by reallocating.

Linda made ~~ma~~ motion to approve, seconded by Myron, all in favor.

7. NOBLE Sustainability – Ad Hoc Committee –

Amy stated that at the last ~~members'~~ meeting, Jenny Benedict brought up sustainability. Amy following up on that, is proposing for consideration forming an Ad Hoc Committee in sustainability and the environment.

STATEMENT: The world is facing unprecedented global ecological changes. Locally, the actions we take daily influence the sustainability of our community and our environment for future generations. Organizations can minimize their environmental impact by advancing operational policies and procedures in areas such as building efficiency, materials, transportation, and waste.

A NOBLE Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee will be formed to research and recommend draft sustainability policies and procedures for NOBLE. The Committee will consist of 3 or 5 members and be chaired by a member of the executive board, reporting research and recommendations to the Exec Board no later than April 2022.

The NOBLE Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee will undertake the following scope of work:

- Research sustainability standards

- Research sustainability policies and procedures in other Library consortia and libraries

- Develop draft policies and procedures for NOBLE and solicit feedback from members

- Recommend sustainability policies and procedures to the membership for approval.

Brian mentioned that Endicott has an Office of Sustainability. Thoughts of having someone from the office attend a meeting as a guest speaker. Brian volunteered to be the Executive Board Representative.

Brian made ~~ma~~ motion to approve Ad Hoc Committee, seconded by Linda, all in favor

8. Vote to Nominate Brian Courtemanche Vice Pres./President Elect

By our Bylaws, a presidential term starts on July 1 of an odd-numbered year and runs through June 30 of the next odd-numbered year.

That is hard to picture at the moment, since we have had three presidents in the past ten months – Kath, Diane and Amy

Bylaws ~~sSection~~ 5.2:

5.2 Elections. In odd number years, Members at Annual Meeting shall elect Vice-President/President-Elect and Clerk; in even number years, Treasurer and Clerk. A Nominating Committee should be appointed by the President by the end of March.

Amy's term started last month, finishing out Diane's term (which was finishing out Kath's term), and since there is less than a year remaining in that term (less than seven months), Amy will also serve her full term (we hope) starting on July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2023.

As Amy ascended to the presidency, you need to nominate a new Vice President/President Elect, who again filling out less than a year of a prior VP term (Amy's), will serve their ~~full-year~~ VP term (also 7/1/21 to 6/30/23) and then become president July 1, 2023 and serve through June 30, 2025.

See Bylaws section 5.8, Vacancies, second paragraph:

If the Presidency is vacated with less than one year remaining in the term, the Vice-President/President Elect shall automatically succeed for the unexpired portion of the term, and then serve his/her own two year President term. Members of the Corporation would then elect a new Vice-President/President Elect to fill the unexpired portion of the Vice-President/President Elect term, and then serve his/her own ~~two-year~~ term as Vice-President/President Elect, after which they automatically succeed to the Presidency.

Your nomination will be on the agenda for our March Members Meeting.

Amy made ~~ma~~ motion, seconded by Nicole, all in favor.

9. Discussion of Library Employee Confidentiality Agreement –

We had originally discussed a draft of an Employee Confidentiality Agreement at our March, 2020, Executive Board meeting, the last one in-person. And then the pandemic hit and it went on the back burner. At that meeting the concept was agreeable but it was sent back for language reworking. The concept is to make staff Evergreen users cognizant of the serious privacy issues with the data in Evergreen. I have simplified the language to make it less imposing and clearer. The idea is to have a document that library (and NOBLE) staff would sign as they are given Evergreen credentials. It is part of a larger upcoming effort to improve system security and data privacy.

Evergreen login is looser than it should be. Concerns about group logins when someone leaves the workstation, the login doesn't change. Do people realize that this is private information? Shouldn't be looking up people's accounts.

Linda commented that it was practical and easy to understand. Now would be a good time to do this because people are not sharing workstations at this time.

Amy made a note on the Employee Confidentiality Agreement: 4th paragraph last sentence "I agree that I must check the identity of a person before giving them information from library record and then only giving the information to that person". Does this apply to patrons who give permission for others to pick up holds, etc.?

Amy states we should wait- to make ea recommendation of how this will proceed to the members meeting Linda asked for clarity if this was just ea confidentiality agreement specifically or ifs the group login included. Ron states it could be part of a package. Maybe we should recommend it as a package.

Amy asked Ron to prepare for the February meeting a recommended best practice for group login and request to have all noble members have this confidentiality agreement, if they don't already have one.

10. Vote to Approve Capital Request for Telephone System –

The current office Toshiba phone system is almost five years old, but most importantly Toshiba has gotten out of that market and central system parts are no longer available, not even on the used market. If our central equipment fails, we are out of luck, which makes it important to get a newer system. Our current system does not have the capability to transfer calls to employees working remotely, have them return calls without exposing their private number- or to have them cover the phones when the office is not staffed, all of which are needs highlighted by the pandemic. We would likely be looking at a cloud-hosted system, so we are investigating that model from several vendors. There will be some start-up costs, which we are seeking a capital allocation to cover. Requesting authorization of up to \$10,000 from NOBLE capital funds to cover startup costs.

Brian made aa motion, seconded by Theresa, all in favor.

11. Discussion of Time-Off for COVID Vaccination –

To encourage employees to get the COVID vaccination as soon as practical, I propose that we offer two-half days off without coming from the employees' existing total leave provided that documentation is provided for each of the two expected vaccinations. This will also give us a better idea of our employees' vaccination status. At this point- I am not calling for a vaccination requirement, but providing an incentive toward the vaccination.

NOBLE staff getset a bonus for not using their sick time, giving them the time off may make it easier and encourage employees to get the vaccine. NOBLE will require documentation for that ½ day.

Brian made aa motion, seconded by Linda, all in favor.

12. New Business

Myron addressed the vacant seat on the Board that when Kathy left, we have one fewer academic on the board. The President the appointing authority to appoint members. Amy asked to send her recommendations for consideration.

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:34pm.

Respectfully submitted.

Theresa Hurley