

NOBLE Executive Board Meeting (hybrid)

October 11, 2023

Present: Kathy Lussier, Brian Courtemanche, Catherine McDonald, Allison Babin, Amy Lannon, Tara Mansfield, and Myron Schirer-Suter.

1. Call to Order/Welcome

Brian called the Meeting to order at 2:06pm.

2. Approval of Minutes

Catherine made the motion to approve the minutes from 9/13/2023, seconded by Allison. Amy and Myron abstained. All in favor.

3. Treasurer's Report

NOBLE's Budget Expenditure Report was distributed. Myron noted that the audit was completed and things were in a steady state, with nothing out of the ordinary.

4. Executive Director's Report

Audit

Kathy reported that NOBLE's accountant completed his field visits and is working on putting everything together for the tax filing and audit report.

MBLC

Kathy reported MBLC approved the 9506 grant awards at the meeting last week, resulting in the following FY24 award amounts for NOBLE:

Resource Sharing grant \$221,826, a 23% increase over FY23.

Telecommunications grant \$40,865, a 0.8% increase over FY23

Network Infrastructure grant \$28,771, a 25% increase over FY23, which can now be used for cybersecurity.

LEA grant \$66,472, a 103% increase over FY23.

Kathy noted that the MBLC decided to maintain the \$1,750 per-circuit cap on telecommunications expenses, which prohibits NOBLE from obtaining the full reimbursement for this grant. NOBLE is the only network that hits this cap. With the Massachusetts Broadband Institute recommending that libraries strive for 1 Gbp in bandwidth, Kathy tried to make the case that the MBLC should reimburse for the cost of these higher speeds. She noted that part of the MBLC's reasoning is that they would prefer not to use state funds when there are federal funds available through the e-rate program to help offset these costs.

ECDI

Kathy reported that the Evergreen Community Development Initiative (ECDI) is looking for a new host organization, preferably a 501(c)(3), and she has begun some preliminary work to determine if NOBLE can serve as a host organization. Kathy and Paula talked to the auditor to discuss the best method for tracking finances separately from NOBLE's finances. If NOBLE were to take on the project, they would charge a fiscal agent fee to cover the cost of Paula's time to support the project. Kathy noted that she would like to talk to an attorney to identify potential labor laws around hiring employees who work remotely out of state. Kathy asked if there were any questions or concerns from Board members.

Myron asked if ECDI has its own Treasurer. Kathy said that they do not currently have their own Treasurer, and noted that the governance structure was unclear. Myron asked how it worked with MassLNC, and Kathy reported that she signed the checks. She noted that for NOBLE, only the President and Treasurer can sign checks. Catherine noted that she is a backup and filled out banking information. Myron asked if the accountant had suggestions, and Kathy said not really. Myron asked if ECDI needed to be under a 501(c)(3) umbrella, and Kathy confirmed it does need to be. Brian said he appreciated Kathy's experience with these issues and for being aware of the potential issues.

Catherine asked about the sustainability of hosting if Kathy was not there. She noted that she likes the idea of consulting an attorney with the complications of work happening in different states and banking. Kathy noted that she wasn't planning on going anywhere, but that it was important for NOBLE to figure out all the issues so that hosting would be sustainable. Brian agreed and noted working with an attorney would protect NOBLE and NOBLE Officers, and there would be documentation for transparency. Catherine noted that having these protections in place would help Kathy have the support she needs. She noted that the Executive Board does not have the expertise to oversee it, and she would support allocating funding for the attorney. Brian noted it would be short-term money for protection, expertise, and oversight.

Kathy noted that there would also need to be strategic planning around the organization, since it had not been done since 2016. Amy asked why ECDI did not want to become its own 501(c)(3). Kathy noted that they may be wary because the last time they started the process, Kathy left. She noted that the current coordinator did not feel ECDI was big enough to operate as a 501(c)(3). Myron asked how common it was for organizations to operate under another 501(c)(3). Kathy noted that it happens, and MassLNC operated this way. Amy noted that there are art non-profits that allow artists to operate under their umbrella for grant purposes. Brian noted that transparency is key and that it is important to be careful not to make any assumptions.

Kathy said that PaILS in Pennsylvania was also interested in hosting.

Resource Sharing Working Group

Kathy reported that the Resource Sharing Working Group held its first meeting of the fiscal year and re-elected Meaghan Kinton as chair. The group discussed the special circumstances that would allow a library to make specific items non-holdable and cases where libraries asked to have non-holdable shelving locations. In general, Resource Sharing Working Group members agreed that most items should be shareable in the network if they can travel through the delivery system.

The group also discussed the book group request policy that allows a book group card to place multiple requests on one title, and there were no issues. NOBLE staff raised the idea of allowing automatic renewals on network transfers now that there are only four libraries that have not implemented autorenewals. A representative from a library that does not allow autorenewals was present, and they were okay with hold transfer autorenewals if it follows the home library policy. The group was in favor of changing this policy and noted there are sometimes customer service issues with the fact that items owned by other libraries do not automatically renew. NOBLE staff will reach out to the four libraries before moving forward with a suggested policy change.

SMS Notification Service Investigation

Kathy, Martha, Elizabeth, and Michele met with reps from two companies that provide fully functional text notification services. Contracting with an SMS service would remove the need to ask for cell phone provider information when patrons sign up for SMS notifications and would be more reliable than our current method of sending text messages. In addition, libraries would receive error reporting to let staff know when a notification does not go through.

Shoutbomb is a service that sends out text notifications and allows users to text information back to perform renewals or to cancel holds. The service is very affordable at a cost of about \$3,000 per year. Kathy noted that the service is operated by just one man, with no backup support help, which was concerning.

MessageBee is a text, email, and voice notification service that provides a portal where staff could log in to see data on the text messages sent from their library. Users cannot yet respond to these texts to perform renewals or cancel holds, but they are planning to implement this service next year. Kathy noted that they have a customer support team. NOBLE is still waiting for a quote for just the text messaging service.

NOBLE Library Construction Projects

Kathy and Elizabeth attended the groundbreaking for the Sawyer Free Library in Gloucester on September 29th. She noted that it was a very well attended event with many speeches from officials talking about the importance of libraries to our society.

She also noted that Lynnfield's Town Meeting vote to accept a construction grant from the MBLC is scheduled for Monday night.

MLA Legislative Committee

Kathy reported that the MLA Legislative Committee is focusing on preparations for an upcoming hearing on the bill to bring reasonable licensing terms to library ebooks and digital audiobooks. The hearing for three book-banning bills will be held on the same day.

Evergreen Community

Kathy reported that the Evergreen Project Board has created a subcommittee to consider potential funding models for the Evergreen project. With a funding model, the community may be in a position to hire a contractor or full-time staff to organize work around the project. Kathy volunteered to serve on the committee.

Kathy reported that she met with Lisa Carlucci, Executive Director of Equinox Open Library Initiative yesterday and discussed Equinox's role in the community and potential ways NOBLE could partner. She noted that Equinox has been focusing on trying to get funding for features that would appeal to potential new customers.

5. Vote to Recommend Proposed FY25 Overdrive Budget and Assessment

Motion: Move to recommend to Members Meeting the proposed FY25 Overdrive budget and assessments with a total of \$275,000.

Discussion:

The two versions of the proposed FY25 budget were distributed. Kathy reported that as previously discussed, there is the option of level funding Overdrive or increasing the budget by \$25,000. The options were presented at the October Members Meeting and feedback was requested. Kathy noted that she had only heard from two libraries who do not mind the increase, so it does not sound like there are concerns from libraries about paying for the increase. Kathy noted that this year's increase in 9506 funding led to a \$35,127 increase in LEA grant funds, which is larger than the increase libraries would see in the higher Overdrive budget. If 9506 funding stays high, we should expect to see a similar number for next year's Overdrive funding.

Amy noted that Overdrive is the one area that keeps growing and growing. Brian noted that Endicott has low numbers, but ends up getting a credit. He noted that Endicott does not promote the service. Myron noted Gordon has low usage, but thinks the increase is appropriate since individual libraries are spending extra to support the collection.

Action: Amy made the motion, seconded by Catherine. All in favor.

6. Vote to Recommend FY2025 Action Plan

Motion: Move to recommend to Members Meeting the proposed FY25 Action Plan.

Discussion:

Copies of NOBLE's FY25 Action Plan were distributed, and Kathy noted the plan is very ambitious. She highlighted two items on page 1: D. Implement Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software to track information on member libraries and their staff and E. Implement a ticketing system to track issues and requests from libraries. Amy noted that it would be nice to have a ticketing system, since she submits many issues to NOBLE. Kathy noted that a ticketing system would also help with statistics. Brian noted that the statistics could help with grant opportunities.

Kathy highlighted item J. on page 3 about creating director handouts and meetings to improve orientation of new directors to NOBLE procedures, policies, governance, and community. She noted that the handout would include things you need to know and then they could schedule a follow up meeting and create a new directors group. Brian noted that the handouts would be helpful to experienced directors as well, as a refresher. Myron agreed and noted that Massachusetts libraries operate very differently compared to other states.

Kathy noted that item L. on page 3 proposes to organize a variety of programs online and/or at NOBLE to highlight changes in library technology, as a replacement for the TechExpo event. The programs will be hosted by NOBLE staff and by library staff.

Kathy reported that M. on page 3 was a new item of organizing a NOBLE-wide reading event as a social opportunity for library staff to meet and strengthen community ties.

Kathy highlighted that there was a change on page 5 item D Participate in Evergreen Community software development and improvement efforts on a weekly basis. Kathy noted she bolded “on a weekly basis” to support the performance management framework discussed in August. Kathy would like to see dedicated Evergreen staff to spend 10% of their time working on contributions to the Evergreen community.

Kathy highlighted item G. on page 5, which is to strengthen system data security by conducting a Library Management System privacy audit. The NOBLE management team and an appointed task force would perform the audit. Kathy noted that there are privacy and data security issues and checklists from ALA. Amy asked who would be on the task force, and Kathy noted that it would be directors. Brian asked if there was a certain level of technical expertise required to be on the task force, and Kathy said this expertise would not be required. NOBLE staff would do the technical work and then bring issues to the Task Force to consider.

The next highlight was on page 8 item C., to organize a legislative event to advocate for state funding for the MBLC budget. The newly formed Advocacy Committee will work on this item with Kathy.

Allison noted that she was excited about the ticketing system and noted the value of implementing a CRM. She said that the social opportunity for library staff was a great idea.

Action: Amy made the motion, seconded by Myron. All in favor.

7. Vote to recommend minimum age for eCard registration

Motion: Move to recommend no changes to the current Online Registration Policy.

Discussion:

Kathy reported that she sent out a survey and membership is divided about the minimum age for library cards. She noted there seemed to be a slight preference for no minimum age. Amy noted that she can see the issue from both sides, and that it is much easier to expand access than to take it away. She recommended having guardrails if there is any hesitation.

Brian asked if it would be better to let sleeping dogs lie. Amy noted that libraries make it the parent’s responsibility to oversee what their child is reading, so she is leaning toward notifying the parent about the eCard. She noted that if the child wanted a physical library card, they would require parental permission. She noted that the chances of children under 18 applying for an eCard are low, so no changes would also be okay.

Allison noted that she was concerned about the parental email, and that it might open the door for seeking information about what the child is checking out. She noted that Beverly allows students in Grade 5 to get library cards and that they were hoping to use the form for school visits, but that would not be possible if the

age was set to 13. Allison noted that she does not want to offer something different online than they do in person.

Catherine asked what Kathy is recommending. Kathy noted that children under 13 could be required to add a parent's email as a compromise. Catherine noted that Wakefield staff would likely have a problem with the parental email. She said that she was leaning toward no guardrails because if a child is online, the least of their problems is what they are going to find at the library. Catherine noted that the loss of materials traditionally is a primary consideration, but there is nothing to lose with digital items. She is leaning toward no minimum age and no parental email.

Brian noted that Endicott is on the sidelines of this issue, and wondered if sending the parental notification would be lightly tapping a hornet nest. Amy noted that individual library policies should be reviewed to make sure the application process is appropriate. She noted that the Boston Public Library had removed age restrictions for eCards. Catherine noted that BPL was going beyond that and giving access to banned books nationwide.

Allison clarified that if there was no age restriction for the online registration, local policy would still kick in if the patron wanted to get a physical card. She noted that in that way the eCard works with existing individual library procedures.

Action: Amy made the motion, seconded by Allison. All in favor.

8. Vote to recommend NOBLE written testimony for H.3239

Motion: Move to recommend to Members that NOBLE submit written testimony, composed by the Executive Director, in support of H.3239.

Discussion:

A draft of written testimony was distributed. Kathy reported that H.3239 is the bill that would combine consumer protection laws and state contract laws to improve library licensing scenarios for digital books and audio. She noted that Maryland attempted to make changes to the law unsuccessfully, so new language is being developed. The new language removes the piece that says publishers have to sell to libraries, which has worried some people. Kathy noted that it is unlikely that publishers would not sell to Massachusetts libraries because of the loss of revenue. The new approach would allow libraries to make non-public preservation copies of digital materials, allow loan of digital titles via interlibrary loan, and allow libraries to determine circulation loan periods. Perhaps most importantly, the new language requires that publishers offer pricing that is not greater than the price charged to the public for the same item.

Brian asked if the issue was with ebooks or databases, and Kathy confirmed it was just ebooks. Myron noted that prices should not be more than the amount they are selling to the public. Brian noted that Endicott had restricted ebook downloads because that made titles unavailable for periods of time.

Amy noted she was in favor of sending the letter. Catherine asked if there was statewide support on this issue with other consortia. Kathy noted that there was a meeting planned for Monday with other consortia to strategize. She noted that CLAMS, SAILS, Minuteman, and OCLN had supported the issue in the past. Brian asked if the letter might irritate vendors like EBSCO, which could potentially have blowback for databases. Amy noted that EBSCO has the most reasonable pricing on ebooks. Catherine noted that the legislation would level the playing field. Kathy confirmed that EBSCO pricing is based on what they pay for access. She noted that Overdrive is also an intermediary, but they are very nervous about this legislation.

Kathy said she would share the language with the Advocacy Committee for feedback.

Action: Amy made the motion, seconded by Catherine. All in favor.

9. Discussion on sharing the recording from the Members Meeting

Discussion:

Kathy brought up the possibility of sharing the recording of Members Meetings with directors, and asked if there were any concerns. Brian asked how long the videos would be available, and Kathy said 30 days. Brian noted that the minutes are the official record of what was discussed and agreed upon, so 30 days seemed fair. Amy noted the recordings would be helpful for folks who missed the meeting and would encourage engagement. Brian asked if there would be additional accessibility requirements in terms of closed captioning. Kathy noted that they could close caption the meeting.

10. New Business

No new business.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tara Mansfield
Secretary