

Urban Libraries Meeting September 30, 2022 by Zoom

Attended by: Michael York (State Library), Eric (Derry), Sean (Lebanon), Sylvie (Windham), Denise (Manchester), Miriam (Bedford), Natalie (Kelley), Betsy (Milford), Todd (Concord), Yvette (Merrimack), Heather (Hooksett), Marti (Keene).

Treasurer Report: \$6414.19 balance.

State Library: Michael shared that he met Randy and he is doing well in his retirement. Streets of Concord are very quiet. Working on budget due November to Governor, legislature will get it in February. When volunteering at the polls he noted most ballot requests were for Republicans, where there is most competition, though a Democratic write-in won in Michael's town. Democrats expect to lose seats and end up with 10 in Senate. "Come to Gathering" will have a panel of librarians that includes Michael and Lori in Newmarket. October 27 at 7 p.m. "Our Public Libraries" will be a discussion about "Palaces for the People" by Eric Klinenberg. He recommends this book about public libraries and the need to support them.

NELA: Business meeting at Conference, Tues Oct 25 at 8 a.m., will include by-law changes and slate of officers. School Library Media will be brought on board as a section, likely November.

Book & Program Challenges Updates: Windham had Salem resident email complaint letter by general library email and to town officials, but not Director or Trustees, while Sylvie was on vacation. Visitor claimed he found "Gender Queer" on display in the center of the kids' area to purposely target kids. Seemed to be "canned language" as part of a larger effort, perhaps from conservative groups working in that area. Nancy responded that the title is an adult book, available in the Adult Graphic Novel section and not in kids' area. Town officials kept hands-off and said it was a library issue. Seems dropped by complainant without filing challenge paperwork. Windham policy requires challenges come only from Nesmick cardholder or Windham resident. He was neither but visiting as a GMILCS participant with Salem library card. Lebanon and Concord require that people be both residents AND cardholders to challenge materials.

Merrimack Human Resources Director sent Intellectual Freedom video to all City staff for them to view and be prepared to contact police if needed.

There were complaints about Black Lives Matter books in Kelly's kids' area. Consideration form was given to the complainant, but it was not filled out and returned.

Michael offered to send us all the form letter with the state statute about theft of library materials so that it can be sent to the people who refuse to return materials they complain about. Milford notifies police when people refuse to return or pay for lost/damage material. Their police fine or collect from people when they are stopped for other reasons. They've been able to get some materials back and/or collect money that way. Marti noted that Keene's (recently retired) police chief said he would not involve police in collecting materials or fines/losses.

Concord is getting "nibbles" --people asking questions but not filing challenges.

Eric noted that support generally seems to go to the library when it gets into the newspapers and to Select Boards. The exception seems to be of the Dover and Rochester libraries' challenges which was brought by a

legislator. Michael concerned that the legislator may try to bring legislative action. Michael heard from someone who said she “only” wants the books to not be on the lower shelves for easy access by kids. That person is running for state rep. Betsy noted that targets most in danger are schools who often are not prepared with policies. A Milford School librarian, who is also on staff at public library, borrowed the public library’s policy for her school.

When asked what people are doing to assist frontline staff: Yvette has everything in a packet easy to grab for frontline staff to give complainants. Sylvie says they regularly discuss challenges, audits, and how to deal with them at staff meetings.

Sylvie noted up-tick in all sorts of complaints, often in closed social media. Recently a woman plastered social media when she couldn’t get her teen’s therapist involved with a program that was just for teens. The policy now says that they need 72 hours’ notice to accommodate special needs at programs.

Meeting Spaces: Concord has had large increase in requests for small meeting spaces in library for therapy, DCF visits, etc. Sylvie also had a lot of requests she can’t fill and people complain they should as “taxpayers,” like room reservation for every other week for the year and a story time that solicits patrons for a business. Milford is having more requests as people move indoors from their picnic tables. Todd put together a list of places on their website of places that offer meeting spaces, free and at cost. He asked for libraries nearby to notify him if edits are needed.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX1vS7ntB6O71vg_hbrW3j_agV2LTR1PeyvebwRCUjG3UmkAEw_hpZS-rR1yWHpxvNfgNjqY3FxFxHJNkk0X1/pubhtml?gid=0&single=true

Raffle basket for NELA: Theme ideas—pets, self-care. Cost generally \$100-\$150. Eric and Erin will assemble on the self-care theme, up to \$200. NHLA reimbursement will be made for basket purchases.

Programming “post-pandemic”: Derry has healthy mix of in-person and hybrid. Kelley now 100% in person, had very low attendance online. Sylvie has kids’ events mostly in-person, with 60% hybrid for adults. Hooksett has had some presenters prefer Zoom, but mostly in-person and all kids’ events in-person. Keene doing virtual and hybrid for adults if programs seems to lend easily itself to that format—especially for distant presenters, kids’ all in-person.

Where can/ should ULAC sponsor events?: Possibly NHLA Spring Conference May 4 & 5 in Mills Falls—no theme yet.

Next meeting in West Lebanon at Kilton Library, October 28 at 10 a.m.

November & December meetings: Consensus was in-person in Concord on December 16, either at Public or State Library.