MID-HUDSON LIBRARY SYSTEM

MINUTES of the 64th ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday, October 27, 2023 | Henry A. Wallace Center at the FDR Library and Home

Hyde Park, NY

President Ramage called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

1. **ROLL CALL**
   a. Trustees Present: Stuart Auchincloss, Peter Carey, Kenneth Goldberg, Rajene Hardeman, George Joiner, Jill Leinung, Barry Ramage, Janet Schnitzer, Ric Swierat, Carla Taylor, Mark Wilson
   b. Staff Present: Nina Acosta, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Isaac Barbee, Kathryn Brew, James Coyle, Laura Crisci, Kerstin Cruger, Tom Finnigan, Gerry Formby, Rebecca Hagan, Dave Haspel, Laurie Shedrick, Ashley Teal, BJ Vickery
   c. Others Present (list attached to file)

2. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
   Board President Ramage welcomed attendees to the 64th Annual Membership Meeting of the Board of Trustees and introduced the 2023 Board of the Mid-Hudson Library System and the 2023 leadership of the MHLS Directors Association.

3. **ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS**
   Mr. Swierat, Chair of the MHLS Nominations and Elections Committee conducted the election of four trustees to the MHLS Board.

   From Columbia County: Janet Schnitzer has been nominated for a second five-year term by Emily Chameides of the Hudson Area Library and seconded by Matthew Pavlov of the Kinderhook Memorial Library. Janet Schnitzer's nomination was approved at the Columbia County Library Association meeting held on July 28, 2023.

   From Greene County: Thomas Silvious was nominated to fill the remainder of the term vacated by Alexandra Prince. This nomination was moved by Maureen Garcia, director of the Mountain Top Library, seconded by Catherine Benson, director of the Heermance Memorial Library in Coxsackie, and approved at the Greene County Library Association meeting held on July 12, 2023.

   From Putnam County: Peter Carey was nominated for his first full five-year term. This nomination was moved by Stephanie Harrison, director of the Patterson Library, seconded by Donna Perolli, director of the Reed Memorial in Carmel, and approved at the Putnam County Libraries Association's meeting held on June 27, 2023.

   From Ulster County: Stuart Auchincloss was nominated for a second five-year term. This nomination was moved by Ivy Gocker, director of the Woodstock Public Library District, and seconded by Darren Lanspery, director of the Plattekill Library, and approved at the Ulster County Library Association's meeting held on August 15th, 2023.

There being only one candidate nominated from four counties, Mr. Ramage declared the election of Janet Schnitzer for a 5-year term commencing January 1, 2024, Thomas Silvious for the remainder of a term ending December 31, 2026, Peter Carey for a 5-year term commencing January 1, 2024, Stuart Auchincloss for a 5-year term commencing January 1, 2024.

4. **REPORT OF THE BOARD PRESIDENT**

Board President Ramage's report provided an overview of the board's five goals for 2023:

- Strengthening the MHLS board members' competencies, skills, and commitment to ethical leadership through professional development.
- Continued focus on board-to-board visits to member library boards as well as to the county-based library associations to strengthen relationships and to promote transparent communication throughout the system.
- Focusing on the financial stability of MHLS to ensure adequate support for local libraries.
- Encouragement of continued and new financial investment in the system.
- Focus on three core values in 2023: intellectual freedom and defending the right to read; equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI); and sustainability.

5. **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Treasurer Richard Swierat provided a report on the fiscal standing of the organization including sharing the results of the 2022 audit of MHLS by RBT Certified Public Accountants. The System's board, staff and CPAs have worked together to ensure our organization is managing its revenue and expenditures well and there were no adverse findings from the 2022 audit to report. Treasurer Swierat noted that in 2020 the finances of the system were seriously threatened by the economic shock of the pandemic to the state budget. Treasurer Swierat was pleased to share that the good work done by the staff and board has continued to aid in recovering from that economic shock and have used the past three years to ensure our financial planning is sound, that reserve funds are adequately funded, and that we are good stewards of the organization's service and facilities plans. Treasurer Swierat welcomed James Coyle, Finance Manager & Personnel Officer, to the MHLS. Mr. Swierat thanked the staff, board, and member libraries for their continued effort in advocacy for libraries and library associations in New York.

6. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Executive Director Aldrich provided:

a. An update on the Municipal Ballot Petition Signature Reduction bill which was signed into law by Governor Hochul on October 25, 2023. In recognition of the assistance to pass this bill into law, MHLS awarded Certificates of Appreciation to AnnaLee Dragon, Executive Director of the New York Library Association and to Max Prime, Director of Government Relations & Advocacy of the New York Library Association.

b. A review of System efforts over the course of 2023 including the everyday success of MHLS staff in supporting member library operations; the introduction of the new Training on Demand platform; advancements of the record quality in the online catalog; new OverDrive Reciprocal Lending Agreements with two more public library systems and the introduction of Transparent Language; progress on digital equity efforts; Trustee Education Series and Trustee Handbook Book Club offerings; the publication of a new Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State; Continuing Education offerings including the MHLS Horizons Series which focused on Artificial Intelligence, the EDI in Libraries Series, and the Sustainability Series which was offered in conjunction with WebJunction; efforts to build libraries' reputation as resilience hubs in the Hudson Valley; Outreach Mini-Grants; and the unveiling of the new catalog: discovery.midhudsonlibraries.org.

c. An update on the MHLS Board's partnership with Unite Against Book Bans and efforts to educate library boards and administration in the face of ongoing threats against libraries nationally.
d. An introduction to the five new MHLS staff members who have joined the organization in the past year.
e. Service Milestone Awards to:
    i. Laurie Shedrick, MHLS Assistant Director / Technology Operations Manager for 15 years of service
    ii. Nina Acosta, MHLS Data Operations Supervisor for 10 years of service.
    iii. Barry Ramage assisted during this section of the report to present Executive Director Aldrich with her own 25th anniversary service milestone award.
f. A presentation of "Outstanding Accomplishments" including:
    i. Amenia Free Library's grand opening of their new facility
    ii. Putnam Valley Library's passage of their first School Ballot initiative, stabilizing their funding for the first time in its history.
g. An unveiling of the new MHLS tagline: 66 Libraries 1 Great Community

7. **ADJOURNMENT OF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**
At 10:30am, President Ramage adjourned the Business portion of the 64th Annual Membership Meeting.

8. **KEYNOTE SPEAKER**
Ms. Aldrich introduced Deborah Caldwell-Stone, the Director of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom and the Executive Director of the Freedom to Read Foundation. She is a former appellate litigator who works closely with librarians, trustees, and educators on a wide range of intellectual freedom issues. Ms. Caldwell-Stone advises ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee and its Privacy Subcommittee on law and policy concerns and has served on the faculty of the ALA-sponsored Lawyers for Libraries and Law for Librarians workshops. She is a contributor to the 10th edition of the Intellectual Freedom Manual and teaches the ALA Editions' e-course, "Privacy, Libraries, Patrons, and the Law."

Respectfully submitted by Stuart Auchincloss, Secretary

Stuart Auchincloss

Approved on December 6, 2023 by the MHLS Board of Trustees