

VLA Board Meeting  
November 9, 2006  
Norwich University

A P P R O V E D M I N U T E S

Present: Barbara Doyle-Wilch, Donna Edwards, Lise Ewald, Teresa Faust (recording), Amy Grasmick, Grace Greene, Marianne Kotch, Trina Magi, Lisa von Kann (presiding), Linda Wells, Nancy Wilson.

Minutes from the September board meeting were approved after correction.

**Treasurer**

Donna Edwards distributed the budget report [Attachment A].

Regarding the large sum of income from the conference and its effect on VLA as a non-profit, Donna reports that our accountant says it is not unusual for a non-profit to carry-over a large sum like this. Questions would arise, however, if the money was generated from some for-profit activity.

Donna is also researching procurement of a "commercial blanket bond," specified in the by-laws. No insurance agent could tell her about it. It is unclear whether this is a bond to protect the organization from the treasurer making off with all the funds (Donna absconds to Kansas City), or to protect the organization from the board as a whole (we all go to Kansas City). Several board members are aware of other boards being bonded. It was suggested Donna check with our counterparts in New Hampshire or another small state.

VLA received two thank you letters from the New Orleans Public Library for our contributions to its rebuilding campaign. NOPL reports that it has completed the renovation of one branch and is working on several others.

Forms on which to request funding will be emailed out to VLA officers and section and committee chairs. Completed forms should be sent back to Donna before the January board meeting so she can draft next year's budget.

**Newsletter**

Lise Ewald, newsletter editor, joined us for this part of the meeting. Barbara Doyle-Wilch distributed the content calendar from 2004-2005 [Attachment B] for the board's review, asking which items had to appear in print form. Barbara and Lise asked the board to consider also what it wished to accomplish via the newsletter [Attachment C].

Points raised:

- Content should focus on things unique to Vermont or VLA, some local interest or tie.
- There should be no filler, things of no interest put in to take up space.
- Legislative issues should be covered.
- Annual reports tell what the organization, its sections and committees, are doing.
- Trina was thinking of a short column in a question and answer format, focusing on intellectual freedom.
- The same Q&A format could be used for many subjects, to get information on what local libraries are doing out to a wider audience, without having someone struggling to write a lengthy article about it.
- The notice of the annual meeting, the slate of officers and the absentee ballot must be sent out a month before the conference.
- Program announcements in the newsletter are noticed.

- The call for nominations for officers should be in the newsletter.
- A profile of the Sarah Hagar Award winner would be nice in the issue following the conference.
- Solicitation of award nominees should be in the newsletter.
- The peer directory on the website could be updated and advertised.
- Some NELA news could be included.
- Information on the upcoming conference would be useful.

At this time, Barbara is thinking of having three print issues of the newsletter annually, in January/February, June/July, and October/November, with electronic issues in-between.

### **Government Relations Committee**

Linda Wells reported that 13 county meetings were held in which the state funding initiative was discussed. Some of the concerns raised involved basing the amount received from the state on the library's budget, meaning that a rich library would get more money and a poor library would be likely to remain so, and the fear that those libraries who charge fees for borrowers from other towns would no longer care to support those borrowers. Although these concerns are understandable, the committee sees the wisdom in keeping the proposal simple, in order to "get our foot in the door." The proposal is that the state would give a library 10% of its operating budget, providing the library meets state standards. The statewide total for this would be \$1.6 million. Of the 189 public libraries in the state, 139 meet state standards, which, incidentally, were passed by the legislature. Coordinators have been appointed in each county; these county coordinators will meet on Nov. 17. The presentation of the proposal at the trustee conference was well-received. If the proposal does not appear in the governor's budget, the next step is to immediately contact the chairs of the appropriations committees in the state house and senate.

Two potential lobbyists were met with and the committee learned a lot from them.

A one-sheet "slicker", or informative handout, recommended by one of the lobbyists, is estimated to cost \$350-500.

It is advised that all refer to the measure as "state funding" rather than "state aid", as funding implies a long-term commitment.

### **More on lobbying**

Lisa reported on her research involving VLA's 501[c] status and limits on lobbying. 5% of an organization's expenditures is not a statutory limit, but is the traditionally accepted limit. A 501[c] can elect to be limited by the 501[h] expenditure test, which essentially increases the limit on lobbying efforts to up to 20% of the organization's expenditures. Lisa has filed the 501[h] election for VLA. It can be voluntarily revoked at any time. If the organization exceeds the 20% limit, the expenditure can be ameliorated over a four-year period.

The "Catch-22" in this situation is that if we have more expenditures, we can spend more on lobbying, but then we won't have the money to spend. It was suggested that the annual conference expenses would be considered our expenditures as we file the taxes for the conference.

Lisa has learned that some other largely rural states have two separate line items in their budgets for monitoring legislation and lobbying.

A motion authorizing the Government Relations Committee to obtain the services of a lobbyist for the coming year, FY2007, for an amount not to exceed \$15,000, was passed.

A letter will be written for the newsletter about this.

### **Awards Committee**

Grace Greene distributed a Proposal For Honoring Retiring Librarians [Attachment D], outlining who would be eligible for an award upon retirement from a Vermont library and how such an award might be presented. An estimate for a metal ornament to be designed and manufactured by Danforth Pewter was included. If the design and message are generic enough, the award could also be used for other purposes. The cost of this award should be included as part of next year's proposed budget, to be voted on in January.

### **Personnel Committee**

Amy Grasmick reported that the Personnel Committee is almost ready to test its survey of academic librarian salaries and benefits on SurveyMonkey. Board members will be the guinea pigs for the test survey.

Amy asked that the Board officially endorse the salary recommendations made by the Personnel Committee in its 2006 revision of Increasing Public Library Compensation. Motion was moved and approved.

Amy has been invited to serve on a panel discussing salaries in rural and tribal libraries at this year's ALA annual conference.

### **Confidentiality**

Trina Magi distributed a summary of information gleaned from her conversation with an official from ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom regarding strengthening the Vermont statute protecting the confidentiality of library records [Attachment E]. If this did happen, it would be a first. There has been a movement to actually weaken privacy of records. We should not try to do this before we are sure we have a majority of legislators in agreement with us and at least 20 sponsors in each state house. We could get a sense of the atmosphere for such a move through our lobbyist, and through casual meetings with legislators. A coalition with the League of Cities and Towns to strengthen privacy of all records would be a good idea. Marianne will let Trina know the date of the Town Officers meeting. Ultimately, library boards set the policy at libraries and an educational effort aimed at trustees could be fruitful. A suggested boiler-plate of a confidentiality policy on the VLA web site could be very useful.

Adjourned.