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**Board of Directors—August 2020 Meeting**

**August 27, 2020**

Virtual

**Present:** Michelle Jeske, President; Melanie Huggins, President Elect; Directors-at-large: Cindy Fesemyer, Toby Greenwalt, Amita Lonial, Brandy McNeil, Dara Schmidt, Kelvin Watson; ALA Division Councilor: Stephanie Chase; Fiscal Officer: Clara Bohrer

**Absent:** Ramiro Salazar, Past President

**PLA Staff:** Barb Macikas, Executive Director; Scott Allen, Deputy Director; Mary Hirsh, Deputy Director; Kathleen Hughes, Manager, Publications; Samantha Lopez, Manager, Marketing and Membership

*Follow-up items are listed at the end of the document.*

1. **Welcome and Introductions**, *Jeske*. Jeske recognized that Dara Schmidt’s community in Iowa has been struggling due to recent storms, and Schmidt provided an update on the status of returning power, Internet access, and other factors. Libraries have provided support to community members, for instance by operating as coworking spots, providing Internet access to people who don’t have it.
2. **By consent, approved** the adoption of the meeting agenda.
3. **By consent, approved** the 2020 July Board Meeting Minutes and Follow-up (2021.07) and report on grants from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) (2021.08).

**Action/Discussion/Decision Items**

1. **PLA President Update**, *Jeske* (no document). Jeske reported that she has been busy responding to media requests, speaking about public libraries on an ALA Connect webinar, and consulting with PLA member leaders (including McNeil and Schmidt, as new PLA board members) and ALA Executive Director Tracie Hall. Jeske is checking in regularly with Larry Neal, who serves on the ALA Executive Board. She briefly mentioned that their last discussion covered the gravity of ALA’s financial situation, fixing ALA’s accounting and information technology problems, some proposed ALA operational changes, and the importance of messaging to the membership. Jeske also talked to Jon Cawthorne, president of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), about Executive Director searches and other issues, and they agreed regular communication between PLA and ACRL will be important going forward. It was also confirmed that ALA laid off three staff in August 2020.
2. **PLA President Elect Update**, *Huggins* (no document). Huggins reported that she has been representing PLA on various committees (covered later in the agenda). She noted that turnover in public library leadership across the country seems to be increasing, and many library directors are retiring, in part driven by the COVID-19 crisis. For PLA, this may mean a loss of some experienced volunteers but also new voices helping to shape future direction. She also noted that her community and library, like many others, are struggling to deal with the racial injustice issues facing the country, personally and as the library.
3. **Public Libraries Magazine**, *Hughes* (2021.09). Hughes reiterated that early in the COVID-19 crisis, paper was in short supply and article authors were also hard to secure, leading to the decision to move some issues of Public Libraries magazine to digital flipbooks. The May/June issue was produced in both formats, but two future issues will be only digital flipbooks. The change will save printing and postage expenses. Feedback to date has been limited, with some praise for the environmental impact of eliminating the print version and a few complaints that readers prefer print. It was also noted that some readers may prefer print for accessibility issues. Board members expressed concern that finding the digital issues may be challenging, and that some readers may stop reading entirely. Hughes confirmed that all PLA members who receive email will get a link, no password required, to access the issues, and that link can be forwarded to anyone. Issues are also archived in the PLA Member Community library in ALA Connect.
4. **Executive Director Search**, *Jeske, all* (2021.10). **ACTIONS.** Jeske reported that a search committee meeting will be scheduled soon. Search committee members include PLA leaders and staff (Bohrer, Huggins, Jeske, Ramiro, and Hirsh) as well as ALA staff members Tracie Hall, Deborah Caldwell-Stone, Lorelle Swader, and Kerry Ward. Process and timeline were briefly mentioned. The full PLA board will have an opportunity to interview candidates. The search should be launched in November, and the goal is to conclude the search within six months. The long delay in initiating the search for ACRL’s executive director was noted. Macikas reported on the draft position content description (PCD) and job posting. Whether a master’s degree in library science will be required or preferred was discussed, as was the ability of the new PLA Executive Director to work remotely. It was moved and **approved**that PLA will seek to remove language suggesting candidates must reside near ALA offices and advocate that the job postings reflect this. The need to have knowledge of the library field was confirmed. It was moved and **approved** to replace MLS preferred with language that prioritizes strong association management experience and knowledge of the public library field.
5. **Forward Together Update**, *Chase* (2021.11). Concern was expressed that recommendations from the Steering Council on Organizational Effectiveness (SCOE) will not proceed because they are not supported by resources and structure, and that ALA Council is only focusing on the recommendation concerning its dissolution. The interplay between the new group examining the ALA Operating Agreement and the status of Council was briefly discussed. The Forward Together finance workgroup has not started work.
6. **Operating Agreement Working Group Update**, *Bohrer* (2021.12). The Operating Agreement Working Group met in July and plans to hold monthly meetings. Reports will be posted publicly, to allow member reaction. The posting site and first report are not yet completed. The Working Group will begin by assessing values and defining the relationship between ALA and its divisions. The Working Group agreed it will speak with one voice, which may be challenging given that individual members represent different groups within ALA and may have different opinions. Staff representation on the Working Group is heavily weighted toward general fund staff. Bohrer advised that PLA leaders should be prepared to make comments on the public reports. The timeline requires final recommendations and bylaw changes approved by June 2021.
7. **Scenario Planning Committee Charter**, *Fesemyer, Huggins* (no document). The Scenario Planning Committee consists of Fesemyer, Greenwalt, Huggins, Jeske, and Lonial. The committee drafted two goals, which include ensuring there is a timely and creative process and to ensuring the board has what it needs to envision PLA’s future and determine the next steps to create a healthy and strong organization. Values discussed included bold thinking about public libraries and the value of public libraries in general; making sure we are focusing on the members of PLA; making sure we are clearly communicating with the larger PLA; timely confidentiality; and respecting the roles and positions of the PLA staff and the tension that these discussions can cause. Committee next steps are to discuss how to engage stakeholders and subject matter experts, draft a timeline, and determine the qualifications of the people who will consult and develop scenarios.
8. **New Business**, *all* (no document). McNeil received information from the ALA Conference Committee and has agreed to be the liaison from PLA to that group.
9. **Celebration of Barb Macikas**, *all* (no document). Macikas was thanked for her work. Jeske read a resolution to honor Macikas on her retirement.
10. **Closed Session**, *all,* (no document). The board went into closed session.
11. **Adjournment,** *all* (no document). There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm Central.