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**PLA Board of Directors Meeting**

**January 22, 2021**

**Virtual**

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

**Absent:** Ramiro Salazar, Past President; Brandy McNeil, Director-at-large

**Guests:** Mike Borges, Maverick & Boutique; Jane Darling, Maverick & Boutique; Deborah Jacobs; Kathi Kromer, ALA Associate Executive Director; Abby Straus, Maverick & Boutique

**PLA Staff:** Mary Hirsh, Interim Executive Director; Scott Allen, Deputy Director; Nellie Barrett, Program Officer; Lian Drago, Meetings Manager; Larra Clark, Deputy Director; Sara Goek, Program Manager; Kathleen Hughes, Manager, Publications; Melissa Faubel Johnson, Meeting and Special Events Planner; Samantha Lopez, Manager, Marketing and Membership; Angela Maycock, Manager, Continuing Education

1. Welcome and Introductions, *Jeske.*
2. By consent, approved the adoption of the meeting agenda.
3. By consent, approved the consent agenda as presented.

**Consent Items Document Number**

* 1. December 2020 Virtual Meeting Minutes 2021.35
  2. Organizational Excellence Combined Report 2021.36
  3. Leadership Combined Report 2021.37
  4. Transformation Combined Report 2021.38
  5. Advocacy and Awareness Combined Report 2021.39
  6. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice Combined Report 2021.40

**Action/Discussion/Decision Items**

1. PLA President Update, *Jeske* (no document). Jeske welcomed attendees and noted that the agenda for the meeting was very full. The accomplishments reflected in the consent agenda reports were impressive. About 35-40 ALA Councilors joined PLA’s meeting on January 15, including some who are running for ALA offices. The meeting focused on changes to the Operating Agreement (OA) and what PLA felt should be retained and what should be changed. Engagement was strong, and agreement was present about many issues: ALA is very complicated; members are challenged to “find their place;” divisions and roundtables help people get involved quickly and meaningfully; and although challenging, the size and scope of ALA is also beneficial to engage diverse people and for policy purposes. Jeske also attended the recent division meeting with ALA President Julius Jefferson. PLA suggested agenda items including timely financial reporting, an update on the OA, and how all the proposed changes to ALA intersect. Key points from the meeting included recognizing that the timeline for Forward Together will likely be extended beyond the summer of 2021; a focus on membership growth and recognition of the American Dental Association as a model; acknowledgement that financial reporting needs to improve; and the need to work together. Finally, it was reported that Tracie Hall is aware of the PLA board and staff concerns and intends to meet with PLA soon.
2. PLA President-Elect Update, *Huggins* (no document). Huggins was keynote speaker at the Research in Public Libraries (RIPL) conference, which went well, and will speak at Texas Library Conference. She noted that front line library staff are not priority for getting the COVID-19 vaccine. She is working with a survey that has been distributed through Urban Libraries Council (ULC) and will post it to the PLA list for completion. It was unclear if ALA is working on issues related to the vaccines.
3. Financial Update, *Bohrer* (2020.41, 2020.42a‐d). Bohrer shared the April 2020 report, and noted that PLA will not receive any more monthly reports for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) until after the audit is completed. The first reports for FY21 (September 2020) have just come out and will be provided to the PLA board soon. Bohrer noted that FY22 budget planning has started, and the overhead rates will not change. Going forward, units will be expected to have budget priorities and will be expected to project revenues first. Finally, units have been told they cannot transfer funds to their long-term investment accounts because of the cash situation.
4. Operating Agreement Work Group Report, *Bohrer* (no document). There was little to report because progress has been slow.
5. Council and SCOE Report, *Chase* (no document). Chase shared when discussions of interest might be happening during the 2021 Midwinter Meeting. These include Forward Together, member engagement, and budget priorities. Chase also shared information on selected resolutions. A resolution to condemn white supremacy and fascism was discussed, particularly as it may impact library meeting room use, and it was noted that the Office for Intellectual Freedom will need to be prepared to advise and support public libraries if the resolution passes. Chase also reported that she thinks there is support for reducing the number of Councilors, as well as making other changes such as moving to virtual meetings.
6. Executive Director Search Update, *Jeske, all* (no document). PLA received 23 candidates from Human Resources and narrowed it to 7 candidates. The subcommittee has also provided input on screening questions. Telephone screenings of the 7 candidates will be conducted by the consultant. Members expressed concern about the diversity of the candidates and questioned whether ALA Human Resources was doing enough to ensure a diverse pool. Staff was asked if PLA will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the hiring process at some point.
7. Public Policy and Advocacy Office Update, *Kromer* Kromer reported on 2020 successes and promising developments for 20201. She reported that we ended 2020 with the 8th consecutive increase in funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Other successes were mentioned, such as increased funding for broadband. She thanked PLA for its assistance on advocacy, the census, understanding COVID-19, and the Google and Microsoft projects. The ALA Public Policy and Advocacy (PPA) office is monitoring appointments and plans to reach out to new leaders in labor, education, commerce, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and other departments soon after appointment. She also highlighted the Build America’s Libraries Act (S. 5071), introduced in December, which would provide $5 billion to repair and construct modern library facilities in underserved and disadvantaged communities. She asked PLA to continue to assist by 1) providing local examples of facility needs for outdated buildings, as well as positive community impacts from new and renovated facilities; 2) informing ALA’s comments to the FCC on the Emergency Broadband program, in terms of what do public libraries need or want to help promote this program; and 3) sharing examples of digital equity work. Board members asked Kromer about COVID-19 vaccine distribution, and she sited specific chapters that are working with their states around vaccine distribution.
8. DCWG Update, Watson (2021.43). The Digital Content Working Group produced its product, The Need for Change: A Position Paper on E‐Lending (December 2020), which will be published in *American Libraries*. Discussions continue with Macmillan and other publishers. It was suggested that the PLA board send a letter to e-lending partners (aggregators) to promote an approach that would be acceptable to public libraries. Watson will circulate the draft letter.
9. MLS in Public Libraries, *Watson* (2021.44). Watson briefly mentioned that he is part of an informal group that has been discussing the limited scope of the traditional MLS/MLIS degree as it pertains to daily work in modern public libraries. He presented the request to PLA to make recommendations that public library administrators re-visit hiring practices in such a way that certain skills are highlighted and prioritized and can be acquired through diverse pathways; that MLS/MLIS programs ensure that these skills are better integrated into curricula; and that state libraries to re-visit state standards for public libraries and public librarians in such a way that these skills are more central to the certification process for libraries and librarians. ALA’s involvement with library schools, and revenue from the credentialling program, was discussed. It was also suggested that if PLA pursues this, engaging the groups it impacts in crafting the statements could be beneficial. Those groups may include ULC, the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA), and others. A previous IMLS effort to convene public library directors and library schools was mentioned. It was agreed that a smaller group should continue this discussion.
10. Strategic Plan Update, *Straus* (no document). Straus reported that the consultants are reviewing documents, crafting member survey questions, and preparing for focus groups. The board and staff engaged in a CAIRO (constraints, assumptions, issues, risks, and opportunities) exercise.
11. New Business, *all* (no document). No new business was identified.
12. Adjournment**,** *all* (no document). There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4pm Central.

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**Action Items/Discussions Requiring Follow Up**

The following actions were drafted based on discussion at the January 2021 board meeting.

1. Hirsh will share materials from the January 15, 2021 meeting of ALA Councilors to the PLA board.
2. Hirsh and Jeske will included ALA Executive Director Tracie Hall in an upcoming PLA board meeting.
3. Huggins will circulate the survey about COVID-19 vaccine distribution to the PLA leadership.
4. Chase will investigate the potential for submitting an ALA Council resolution related to the COVID-19 vaccine distribution.
5. Watson will circulate a draft letter for PLA to consider regarding how e-lending aggregators should present product to public libraries.
6. Board members interested in convening to continue to discuss the MLS degree/education and public libraries will let Jeske know.