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**PLA Board of Directors Meeting**

**September 18, 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

**Guests:** Larry Neal, ALA Executive Board Member

**PLA Staff:** Mary Hirsh, Interim Executive Director; Scott Allen, Deputy Director; Nellie Barrett, Program Officer; Lian Drago, Meetings Manger; Sara Goek, Program Manager; Steven Hofmann, Manager, Web Communications; Kathleen Hughes, Manager, Publications; Samantha Lopez, Manager, Marketing and Membership; Angela Maycock, Manager, Continuing Education; Emily Plagman, Manager, Impact and Advocacy

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

1. **Welcome and Introductions**, *Jeske.* Sara Goek was introduced as a new PLA Program Manager.
2. **By consent, approved** the adoption of the meeting agenda, with the addition of a report on the Operating Agreement.
3. **ACTION. By consent, approved** the consent agenda as presented. It was moved and **approved** that the requests from the PLA Task Force on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice (EDISJ) concerning full committee status and a dedicated staff person would be included for discussion on the October 2020 board agenda.

**Consent Items Document Number**

* 1. Draft August 2020 Board Minutes 2021.13
  2. Welcome new PLA Staff no document
  3. PLA Committee Reports 2021.14

**Action/Discussion/Decision Items**

1. **PLA President Update**, *Jeske* (no document). Jeske has continued to work with ALA to respond to media requests and is currently waiting for publication of a New York Times article. The ALA Executive Office has responded to the joint division letter expressing concern about ALA finances and sustainability by circulating dates for a meeting. ALA’s Public Policy and Advocacy Office successfully nominated “America’s libraries” for the new Federal Communications Commissioner (FCC) Digital Opportunity Equity Recognition (DOER) Program, citing PLA’s survey and Wi-Fi access point distribution projects in the nomination. Jeske thanked the board for working so diligently during this difficult time, noted that PLA committees and task forces continue to do impressive work, and acknowledged staff.
2. **PLA President-elect Update**, *Huggins* (no document). Huggins echoed Jeske’s comments about impressive PLA work and noted that the inability to interact in person at conferences is challenging. She reported that the first meeting of the PLA executive director search group is the following Monday.
3. **PLA Liaison to ALA Executive Board Update**, *Neal* (no document). Neal noted that while he represents all ALA members as an Executive Board member, his volunteer experience has been with PLA and he will be happy to join the PLA board for future meetings as his schedule permits. Neal described how the ALA board operates. He anticipates challenging staff and board leaders with questions about finances and long-term plans. Topics discussed recently include outsourcing of the financial reporting, which has not been successful and will be lessened or terminated as a new consultant is identified to help get ALA back on track. When annual estimates of income were presented, they included the 2021 ALA Annual Conference as a live event, with only slightly reduced revenue. Given COVID-19’s impact on library budgets and continued concerns about health risks, it seems unlikely that the event will be live and that participation will be comparable to past events. Neal pointed out that ALA’s long-term asset balance is strong. PLA leaders asked for more information on the ALA board’s discussions about the Operating Agreement and more specifics on the financial, legal and cultural intentions behind the “one ALA” push.
4. **ED Search Updates**, *Jeske* (no document). After the last board meeting, Jeske followed up with the ALA Executive Director and human resources staff with suggested changes to the position content description and job posting. More information on the process will be available after the search committee meeting on September 21, 2020.
5. **BARC Report**, *Bohrer* (2021.15a-b, 2021.16). Projecting the status of fiscal year 2020 (FY20) with only 6 months of reports is challenging, however ALA is projecting an $11 million FY20 deficit, citing loss of revenue from the in-person Annual Conference as a major factor. Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC) reports outline the strategy to cover the gap, including accessing ALA’s line of credit. For FY21, after implementing strategies such as furloughs and accessing the federal Paycheck Protection Program and securing an Economic Injury Disaster Loan, ALA projects a $500,000 deficit. The PLA board continued to express concern that borrowing and accessing credit are not sustainable or solution-oriented strategies. ALA’s five-year pivot strategy was briefly discussed. The plan is mostly conceptual and lacks detail, which will be developed in October. The board discussed concepts included in the plan such as staff reductions, leasing office space, increasing revenue from continuing education, and expanding into the international market. The board noted the incongruity of relying on divisions to increase membership while discouraging them to develop new programs to serve members through staff furloughs and restrictions on spending.
6. **Approve FY21 Budget**, *Bohrer* (2021.17-18). **ACTION.** At its August 24, 2020 meeting, the PLA Budget and Finance Committee reviewed and approved the PLA fiscal year 2021 (FY21) budget as submitted. The budget projects $2,005,644 in revenue ($771,600 in general fund revenue and $1,234,044 in grants) and $2,412,565 in expenses, for a net loss of $563,947. The board moved and **approved** the FY21 budget as presented. PLA staffing status was briefly mentioned, and subsequent to the meeting, it was confirmed that PLA has 19 positions (including two positions which are .5 FTE), plus one long-term consultant. Of the 19 positions, 11 are grant funded (of which 5 are currently vacant), and 8 are supported by the general fund (of which 1 is currently vacant). Vacant positions and furloughs limit PLA’s ability to serve members and create programming. PLA could advocate for filling grant-funded positions despite ALA’s hiring freeze, but attracting qualified candidates to ALA may be difficult given ALA’s situation.
7. **Operating Agreement**, *Bohrer* (no document). The Operating Agreement working group met and discussed three issues: are the values stated in the Operating Agreement (unity, diversity, autonomy, authority, etc.) appropriate and accurate; is the Operating Agreement itself still relevant; and does the Operating Agreement effectively address all ALA units including divisions, roundtables, etc.? The PLA board agreed that the values may reflect librarianship, not effective association management, and should be revised to clarify or remove “autonomy” and to include values like sustainability. More information will be available once notes from the working group meeting are circulated. It was also agreed that PLA should publish articles for the membership on the Operating Agreement process, for their education and input.
8. **Virtual Councilor Engagement**, *Chase* (2021.19-20a-b). Chase reported on discussions at the last Council meeting, which were similar to those discussed by the Executive Board (lack of updated financial reports, annual estimates of income, preliminary review of pivot plan, etc.). Other issues discussed included the potential to keep the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago and open the audience up, generating revenue from ALA research efforts, improving member engagement, and reorganizing staff such that staff who do similar work (for instance, communications and marketing) are aligned. The PLA board reviewed evaluation results from PLA’s last Councilor Breakfast, which were very positive. Councilors want to know more about PLA’s concerns so they can advocate for what PLA and public libraries need. It was agreed that PLA should continue to convene Councilors who are public librarians or have interest in public libraries, virtually, and should do so in advance of the 2021 ALA Midwinter Meeting. PLA’s positions on the Operating Agreement will be an agenda item. It was moved and **approved** to convene a subgroup of the board to plan and schedule a pre-Midwinter virtual ALA Councilor Event.
9. **Virtual PLA All Committee Meeting**, *Hirsh* (2021.21). **ACTION**. PLA hosts All Committee Meetings during ALA national conferences. Staff proposed hosting a virtual All Committee Meeting near but not overlapping with the ALA virtual Midwinter Meeting. The event would allow the PLA board to thank committee volunteers, share PLA priorities, and answer questions about PLA direction. It would also help acquaint the board and nominating committee with active volunteers who are currently on committees. Breakout room technology in Zoom would be used to facilitate individual committee meetings. It was moved and **approved** to develop a 2021 Virtual PLA All Committee meeting.
10. **Scenario Planning Update**, *Fesemyer, Huggins* (no document). The subcommittee, which includes Fesemyer, Greenwalt, Huggins, Jeske, and Lonial, met to discuss potential consultants and to develop talking points about PLA’s sustainability and scenario planning work. Board members were encouraged to continue to suggest individuals who could consult to PLA on sustainability and scenarios. The subcommittee agreed the environmental scan should be extensive and consider association strategies both in the U.S. and internationally. The board also suggested the work focus heavily on member needs and member engagement. To that end, a member/nonmember survey and focus groups may be conducted. Staff indicated that PLA’s last survey was 2016, so staff recently started discussing the need for another survey, which will coincide nicely with this effort. PLA intends to use Gates Legacy grant money to support this work, given the charge in the Legacy grant to identify sustainability strategies, however other funding options are also being considered. Given the need to move quickly, however, it’s unlikely PLA could apply for and secure government or private funding to complement the Legacy funds. Given ALA’s financial status, any sizable contract is being reviewed by the Executive Office and may not be approved. Staff suggested PLA accelerate identifying and contracting with a consultant, so we know if it will be allowed to move forward before we spend too much more time and energy.
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 3:00pm Central.

**PLA Board of Directors September 2020 Meeting**

**Action Items/Discussions Requiring Follow Up**

The following actions were drafted based on discussion at the September 2020 board meeting.

1. Hirsh and Jeske will include recommendations from the Task Force on EDISJ’s fall board report to the agenda for the October 2020 PLA board meeting.
2. Neal will continue to report to the PLA board about ALA Executive Board deliberations, with particular attention to the ALA board’s discussions about the Operating Agreement and the “one ALA” approach.
3. Bohrer will share additional detail from BARC including divisions and roundtable budget breakdowns.
4. Bohrer, Jeske and Hughes will collaborate to prepare articles for the membership on the process of opening up the Operating Agreement, to be published in Public Libraries magazine, PLOnline and/or member e-mails.
5. A subgroup of the board and staff (TBD) will prepare, promote and present a virtual event for ALA Councilors prior to the ALA Midwinter Meeting.
6. Hirsh, Jeske and staff will identify board members and staff to begin planning and preparation for the PLA 2020 Virtual All Committee meeting.
7. Huggins will continue drafting an RFP for the scenario planning/sustainability consultant and circulate to others for review.
8. PLA staff (Hirsh, Allen, Lopez, others) will begin drafting a plan for a needs assessment of members, nonmembers and other stakeholders to be ready to integrate into the board’s scenario planning work once a consultant is hired.
9. Hirsh will provide the scenario planning subcommittee with language to help with the consultant RFP and eventual deliverables.