Central New York Library Resources Council

Legislative Committee

March 18, 2013

3:00 p.m. at CLRC or conference call

**Present:** Carole Kupelian (Retired school librarian, via teleconference), Chair, Mike McLane (Library Consultant and retired librarian), Wanda Bruchis (Mid-York, via teleconference), Sue Kowalski (Pine Grove School, via teleconference), Bob Manning (OCPL, via teleconference), Christine Richie (OCPL), Matt DeLaney (Tully Free Library, via teleconference), Mallory Arents (i-School, via teleconference), Anna Dobkowski (CLRC), Deirdre Joyce (CLRC), Debby Emerson (CLRC)

**Excused:** Mary Tiedemann (OCM BOCES)

Carole Kupelian called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m.

Mike McLane made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 11, 2013 meeting as presented (S/Approved unanimously).

**Action Items:**

**Debby to find out details of National Library Legislative Day in Washington, DC.**

**Anna to find out details of how to exhibit at the State Fair.**

**Sue will check status of SSL’s efforts to create lesson plans that could link legislative efforts to**

**the school curriculum.**

**Agenda Items:**

1. **Library Advocacy Day Wrap-Up.**

Feedback from committee members – round robin.

Christine: Thinks everything went well; the four children she brought along had a great time and got to speak with the legislators. They were invited to a press conference with Assemblyman Stirpe but could not stay because one child’s tooth fell out.

Bob Manning: was out of town and unable to attend this year.

Mike McLane: At our appointment in Assemblyman Barclay’s office, there was a group from Northern New York there as well. That group had arrived early and the Assemblyman’s staff brought them into the conference room, even though the rest of our group was not there yet. The meeting had already started by the time the CLRC contingent got there. As the group leader, Mike wasn’t sure what had already been discussed when our group arrived. Debby agreed that it was awkward; the Assemblyman was ready to start the meeting and we couldn’t really ask them to wait for the rest of our group (even thought it was early). Mike thought the appointment with Senator DeFrancisco went very well. The Senator said, “I could give your speech for you!”. He was very open, and supportive. He had a good conversation with the students from Pine Grove.

Wanda Bruchis: Things went very well. She went to see Brindisi and Griffo and Assemblyman Blankenbsuh. Assemblyman Brindisi is a good frined of libraries, buth the public libraries and Mid-York. He was very welcoming to the students in the group. Wanda discussed maintenance of effort with him. Assemblyman Blankenbush is new to the Mid-York area and it was good to get to know him. He was very honest and said up until three years ago, he had no knowledge of what libraries did! North Country (Steve Bolton) has been working him. Senator Griffo encouraged us to talk to our Assembly representatives. The Senate is already supportive of libraries and will follow Senator Farley’s lead, but we need the Assembly to align with us as well. If both houses are supporting something, it’s more likely the Governor will support it as well. Legislators had been called into conference so in the afternoon we met with staff rather than the legislators themselves.

Sue Kowalski: Her students were also involved in the Alliance for Education presentations so it was a busy day for them. They are passionate about school issues. They left a packet of information for Senator Farley but were unable to attend our appointment. It is difficult for these students to grasp the fact that some schools do not support the school library, since they have always had access to good library services. Sue noted that the CLRC bus always arrives too late for passengers to attend the legislative breakfast. The bus would have to leave Syracuse very early in the morning to arrive in time for the breakfast. Debby explained that the breakfast is not a formal event, but more of a “meet-and-greet” with the legislators, and an opportunity for them to get their pictures taken for the Read posters.

Carole: Going through security was very easy this year. It was good to have people representing a variety of libraries.

Mallory Arents: This was her first experience meeting with elected officials. It went smoothly, except for one appointment where the legislator’s office had moved. She attended the appointment with Assemblyman Briindisi and said he was very attentive and supportive.

Matt DeLaney: In each appointment there were people from different libraries and different backgrounds, and that worked well. He agreed with Mike that when some appointments started early, it was difficult to tell what had already been discussed.

Deirdre Joyce: We will try to get information out ahead of time in the future. Packets for legislators could be sent with Debby who usually goes to Albany the day before. Information that is put in participants packets will be made available on the website so people can view and download it before the trip. The persuasive speaking class held the week before Advocacy Day was very effective, and Deirdre hopes to bring him back next year. It was helpful to have everyone list their legislator on the registration form; this was an opportunity to see which appointments were going to be really full and which had a smaller group and people could make decisions on which appointments to attend to make sure each one was full.

Debby Emerson: Felt the group was well organized. The committee has asked that none of our legislative appointments conflict with each other and we did make an effort to schedule that way, but we are limited by the times offered by the scheduling secretaries.

Anna Dowkowski: In the appointment with Senator Seward, the room was full and he had each person introduce him/herself and mention their library. Anna thought it would be helpful to do that in all appointments – if the legislator does not bring it up, the leader could start it out. Anna also noted that there are no academic librarians who attend these appointments or go to Advocacy Day with us. Debby noted that the academic librarians attend advocacy days with other groups such as SUNY or UUP. It might help to have an academic library member on this committee.

Suggestions for next year: Check with our advocates to see which is more important, meeting with the legislator him or herself or being able to stagger appointments so there are no conflicts. Also, is it less important when a legislator has only a very small piece of the CLRC service area? We are all advocating for the importance of libraries, so it is basically the same message. Mike noted that every year, at least one legislator seems to ask about the NOVEL databases. Should we be prepared to let them look at it, perhaps show it to them on a tablet? This year it was Senator DeFranciso who asked. Internet coverge in the buildings is not always reliable for mobile devices, but we could include NOVEL information in the packets. Do the public libraries have brochures or instructions they had out to library users? Matt suggested that we use our limited appointment time to talk about the bigger picture of why libraries are important and how vital they are in the information age. Specific questions provide an opportunity for us to arrange to go back and meet with the legislators in their home offices to answer those questions. Mallory Arents noted that conversations sometimes get off track (for example, you end up talking about where you’re from instead of about libraries) and it would be helpful to have advice on how to get back on track. Sue noted that in our appointments, we don’t follow our own advice about how to make good presentations. We are fairly passive, handing over the packet and saying “Here’s your packet”. Bob Manning said the OCPLC uses a “talking paper”. It is actually a PowerPoint consisting of just a few slides, but it is printed out and used as a visual to illustrate the speaker’s message. Deirdre suggested that we could ask Peter Iglinski to help address some of these things if he does training for us again next year. Non-group leaders also need to be prepared to respond to questions and join in the discussion. Boob said it has been helpful to leave the legislators with something in their hands with our name on it. However, we don’t want to leave them with too much information. At some point it just becomes “white noise”.

1. **Outreach to Schools**

In a previous meeting there was a suggestion that high schools students, especially seniors enrolled in the required Participation in Government class, might be able to use their participation in Advocacy Day or the legislative breakfasts toward the requirements for their class. Debby asked for advice on the best way to interface with the schools to see if this is a possibility. Anna reported that she sent information about Advocacy Day to each of the schools and a number of the emails bounced. She then sent a request to each school library system asking them to update contact information for each of the libraries. There were limited responses. To discuss the possibility of students using our advocacy events to get credit, we would probably need to speak with each district’s curriculum coordinator. Sue Kowalksi noted that the School Library System Association is trying to come up with a lesson plan that would show how this fits into the curriculum. It wasn’t completed for this year, but Sue will follow up and report back. Carole mentioned that Erin Dineen had done some work on this and might be a resource.

1. **State Budget**

Debby reported that as of the end of last week, the Senate had recommended a $4 million restoration of library funding in its one-house budget. The Assembly did not include a restoration of library funding. The two houses now meet to work out their differences and come up with a final, joint budget proposal. At the end of last week, NYLA Executive Director sent out a request for people to call Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver’s office to voice their support for the Senate language that includes a restoration of library funding. There were over 150 calls logged to the Speaker’s office. Most of the legislators we met with indicated that the budget should be finalized by March 21.

1. **Other Advocacy Initiatives**

Are there other initiatives the committee could beinvolved in? We focus most of our efforts on the December legislative breakfasts and on the March Advocacy Day. Mike McLane mentioned the national library advocacy day which is held in May each year. Mike has attended in the past when he was living in Washington. It’s a good opportunity to meet with federal officials. There is typically a state coordinator for each state. It’s usually held during the first week of May. Deirdre suggested we host a virtual letter writing party, encouraging members to write to state and/or federal representatives. Deirdre has also been promoting the PLA Advocacy workshop. ALA also has a virtual library advocacy day which we could promote on our website, and there could be several members who could participate virtually. Sue Kowalski suggested inviting our legislators to our libraries. Could we take their pictures in the library? OCPL does this with county legislators in February. An attractive invitation goes out to each legislator, inviting them to visit the library closest to them. While this program has focused on county legislators, it could certainly be extended to state legislators. The contact person at OCPL is Kathy Osmond. Sue suggested that each library could pick one of their major events and invite their representatives to that event. Bob Manning suggested advocating with the Governor’s local staff in each geographic area, particularly in late summer-early fall when the Governor is formulating his budget. Matt DeLaney noted that any effort to spread the advocacy effort throughout the year would be welcome. With a small staff, he feels his library does not communicate with the legislators as much as they could. CLRC could help to collect and disseminate the information. Social media could be part of the solution. We could create dedicated hash tags and encourage people to get their information out there. Mallory noted that Queens Library was directly tweeting their elected officials, and getting some good responses that way. CLRC could make an effort to get Twitter handles for all of our legislators, and send messages directly to them. Mike McLane returned to the issue of academic librarians. The SUNY librarians can be reached through SUNYLA (the SUNY Librarians Association), and the librarians at private academic institutions generally participate in ENYACRL in this part of the state. There is no one organization in the state that represents all academic librarians. Both of these have legislative committees or liaisons. Debby will find out who the current officers of these organizations are, and contact them.

1. **OCPL Government Relations**

Current efforts have been focused on the Central Library renovations. An RFP went out for the engineering and architectural work and there were many responses. There is a meeting with Assemblyman Finch from Auburn on April 19. OCPL applied for a Library Aware Community Award in January; they should hear in April sometime.

1. **Mid-York**

Madison County Board of Supervisors met and agreed to continue funding at 2012 levels for the rest of this year. This is good news, but funding for future years is still up in the air. The county feels it is up to the individual libraries to go to the community to ask for funding. Libraries expressed great support for the Mid-York system. Mid-York is planning a meeting with the Oneida County Executive in May to disucss their expectations of libraries. The recent shootings in Herkimer have had a traumatic impact on the Mid-York system and on the Herkimer Library in particular, and recovery will take some time. Deirdre said she will contact our presenter for the library security program to let him know of the events that happened in Herkimer, so he can be prepared to address questions.

1. **NYALS-NYLA Government Relations**

NYLA and NYALS have banded together to hire a government relations advocate. There are two gentlemen working on these efforts for us, one based in Albany and the other based in the Metro area. The advocate was present at pre-Advocacy Day meetings and said he anticipated a restoration of library funding of $10 million. The figure proposed by Senator Farley in his talk at the PAC dinner was $4 million in restoration of funds. The advocates continue to take our message to the legislature.

1. **Other Business**

Bob Manning noted that the victim of an incident in Clay, NY was a school librarian at a Liverpool elementary school. The i-School has set up a fund in her honor and will also be conducting a book drive. Mallory will keep the committee apprised of any new developments.

Bob mentioned the possibility of conducting a flash mob as an advocacy event. OCPL did this a couple years ago and it garnered a lot of media publicity, as well as being a fun event. [After the meeting, we learned that OCPL is planning to host a flash mob at the 2013 New York State Fair.]

Sue Kowalski mentioned the Book Cart Drill Team that took part in the St. Patrcik’s Day Parade. It is a great was to showcase libraries and librarians! Carole noted there is a parade every night at the State Fair. We could have a booth for libraries at the Fair – maybe NYLA or the NY3Rs could sponsor, so it would be for all libraries? We could get things from local libraries, have them make signs, collect materials from libraries statewide? Anna will find out details about exhibiting at the Fair.

**NEXT MEETING: April 29, 2:00 p.m.**

Mike McLane made a motion to adjourn at 4:35 p.m., (S/Approved unanimously).

Carole Kupelian: “We’re done.”

Respectfully submitted,

Debby Emerson, CLRC