

March 25, 2014

Nadine Muller, Foreperson  
Marin County Civil Grand Jury  
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 275  
San Rafael, CA 94903

Dear Ms. Muller,

On March 11, 2014 I received a request from you to respond to the Grand Jury Report: *Libraries Aren't Just for Books Anymore* in regards to the progress and timeframe for implementation of recommendations. This response was completed in consultation with Sara Jones, Director of County Library Services, Marin County Free Library (MCFL) and will be formally reviewed by the Library Commission as a whole at their April 9, 2014 monthly meeting. It also constitutes a full response for all concerned organizations: the Library Commission; MCFL, and the Library Foundation.

**Report Recommendation 1:** *The new MCFL Director of Library Services make improved communication a priority and include all affected groups and stakeholders early in any new MCFL planning process to get feedback and input from Staff. Leadership needs to encourage staff input in contemplating major changes. Participation could include tasking staff to do research and reports in-house during the planning process.*

**Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. The new Director, Sara Jones, met with over 150 staff members before officially starting her position in July of 2013. She completed meeting all staff in her first month. This approach established an open door policy and staff feel more comfortable communicating with the new Director.

The following modes and methods of communication are used regularly:

- Consistent personal communication at meetings and at branch visits
- E-mail communication- all staff e-mails on important information that pertains to all staff. These are also posted simultaneously to the Library Intranet
- Regular meetings and communication with MAPE union stewards
- Director is available and responsive by e-mail, phone and in person. Director's business cards are available at every branch library and staff and patrons are greatly encouraged to contact the Director
- Surveys to regularly assess communication efforts
- Ensure staffs at all levels have means and methods to communicate- providing e-mails to all staff including extra hire staff.

The All Staff Day held in September was an effort to help improve communication and the survey results and input from staff indicate it was an important step in the right direction. Communication has been central to deploying the remodels and the new service model. Adequate training of staff for the new service model included using staff at all levels through the Single Point of Service (SPOS) team and a lead employee at the Librarian I level doing research and reports to ensure success. Staff representing all levels gives input and staff input has been central to the training materials and designing methods to ensure the implementation goes smoothly.

The planning efforts have also included a staff committee representing all levels of the organization. To date we have had excellent staff participation in the planning process including over 60% of online stakeholder surveys and over 70% staff participation in the community planning meeting. The planning process has several more months and significant staff input will be sought and integrated into the final plan.

Communication is essential to a well managed organization and significant strides have been made to improve it. The Director has received many written and verbal comments that staff believe communication has substantially improved.

**Recommendation 2:** *The MCFL administration develop a well defined and reasonably short path to permanent hire status for those (especially “extra hires”) who want to pursue a career in Library services.*

**Response:** MCFL administration indicated further analysis was necessary but understood the intent for this complex recommendation. MCFL has vacancies nearing 20% and has put significant resources towards filling the vacancies. Currently to meet service obligations these vacancies are filled with extra hire hours so significant progress cannot occur until the vacancy level is substantially reduced. In the past nine months MCFL administration has made a consistent effort to make available additional hours to regular hire positions whenever possible. Positions are consistently offered as departmental promotions and many staff members have received promotions.

The extra-hire issue is being addressed at the County level and MCFL looks forward to changes to allow for appropriate levels of permanent part-time, temporary part-time and is looking at a model in collaboration with MAPE for roving library positions to assist in MCFL service obligations.

**Report Recommendation 3:** *MCFL prepare progress reports and audit expenditures on Measure A spending and that Library Commissioners, in their capacity as the Independent Citizen Oversight Committee for Measure A, review the status monthly. Both the BOS and Library Commission to meet a minimum of twice yearly to discuss and provide guidance on current issues and long term plans for the MCFL, including feedback to the BOS.*

**Response:** The Library Commission has been having Measure A reports at monthly meetings. This began in August of 2013 and each meeting agenda indicates a particular topic for reporting. There have been three meetings when this didn't occur:

- December 2013 (due to the Director's absence)
- February 2014 (an overview of the MCFL budget, which included – but was not focused on the contribution of Measure A to the Library's budget)
- March 2014 (which was a meeting where the Commission participated with Library staff and patrons in providing input for the planning process)

MCFL has been developing and will present an accounting system to the Library Commission at the April 2014 meeting to distinctly track Measure A expenses for the remainder of the time period (thru June 30, 2015) and it will be in place for the renewal of Measure A on June 3, 2014 should it be successful. The Director has consistent and regular contact with the BOS and MCFL will continue to invite BOS to connect with their Commission appointees. The BOS were fully participatory in the planning process with significant phone conversations conducted by the strategic planning facilitators.

**Report Recommendation 4:** *The BOS appoint commissioners to the two vacant positions in District 4 and District 5, and that the BOS make it a policy to promptly find and replace commissioners when needed. When a new commissioner comes to his or her first meeting the appointing supervisor should attend and introduce the person to the Commission.*

**Response:** Commission appointments have been timely from the BOS. The Library Commission president and Vice President sent a letter to all Commission members to encourage full participation and regular attendance. The BOS are available to the Commissioners, but their demanding schedules makes attending Commission meetings challenging.

**Report Recommendation 5:** *The Library Foundation develop a plan to further its stated goals of spear heading community enthusiasm and financial support for the MCFL. The Library Foundation investigate ways to increase long-term, consistent funding for the MCFL that can be relied on for continuing library services, such as FLAGship and the Bookmobile. If such a plan is not forthcoming, the Grand Jury recommends that the Library Foundation consider a merger with the Friends.*

**Response:** The Friends and the Foundation have been investigating a possible merger since this report was filed. The Foundation also has had many significant successes this year. The first being the funding of \$40,000 that kept the FLAGship on the road; the second securing funding for the Anne T. Kent California Room to digitize historic newspapers and finally providing funding for the Marin Poet Laureate. The Foundation is also recruiting members and has 4-6 names to consider and is planning to work towards acquiring funding for addressing the facility needs of MCFL.

**Report Recommendation 6:** *MCFL and BOS support Friends with information and recognition! MCFL and BOS should encourage collaboration between the Friends and the Foundation to share ideas and coordinate fund-raising and possibly events.*

**Response:** The BOS issued a proclamation during National Friends of the Library week in October to celebrate the support of all the Friends groups and the Library Foundation. A Foundation meeting in the fall invited all members to be present to meet the new Director. It was attended by over two dozen past and present members of both groups. At all County Friends meetings and all Foundation meetings a member of each group is present to keep communication and collaboration open. Both groups have been significantly involved in volunteer and financial donations for the renewal of Measure A. Both organizations contributed to the November community survey conducted by Godbe Research and both volunteer organizations have been critical to the campaign for renewal.

**Report Recommendation 7:** *MCFL develop a comprehensive work plan including scope, schedule and budget for all work funded through Measure A and make the status of Measure A projects a discussion item at each Library Commission meeting.*

**Response:** The Library Commission has been having Measure A reports at monthly meetings. This began in August of 2013 and each meeting agenda indicates a particular topic for reporting. MCFL has been developing an accounting system to distinctly track Measure A expenses for the remainder of the time period (thru June 30, 2015) and it will be in place for the renewal of Measure A on June 3, 2014 should the vote be successful.

**Report Recommendation 8:** *MCFL revisit and update its 2007 Vision Plan, with staff and community participation.*

**Response:** MCFL has been in the process of revisiting the Vision or Strategic Plan for the past nine months of FY13/14. The first step was starting with staff input at the All Staff Day in September. A consultant to facilitate the process to ensure broad input and a plan with specific implementation and measurements for attainment was pursued. An RFP was issued and a vendor was selected. To date this is the participation in our planning efforts:

Type of Input	# of Responses
Online Cardholder Survey Participation	8,105
Online Stakeholder Survey Participation	97
Community Planning Meeting	48
Stakeholder Phone Interviews	11

A MCFL Strategic/Vision Plan is scheduled to be in place by June 30, 2014. It will include staff participation, all stakeholder participation (Library Commission, Foundation, Friends and BOS) and will provide a library services roadmap, ways to address significant facility needs and most importantly a way to measure success for identified goals and objectives.

We appreciate the time and consideration the Grand Jury provided to improve the Marin County Free Library and we hope this provides the Grand Jury with needed information to assure Marin County that commitment to improving service to our community is our highest priority.

Sincerely,

Alison Howard, President  
Marin County Free Library Commission

Sara Jones, Director of County Library Services  
Marin County Free Library

Mary Moore, President  
Marin County Library Foundation

SFJ/AH/MM/elg

cc: Board of Supervisors  
Matthew Hymel, County Administrator