

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2021
3:00 P.M. CT
ALA VIRTUAL MARCH COUNCIL MEETING

President Julius C. Jefferson called the March Council Meeting to order at 3:00 pm CT on March 31, 2021.

Introductions & Announcements. President Jefferson welcomed Councilors. He recognized the day as Cesar Chavez Day. This holiday celebrates the birth and legacy of the civil rights and labor movement activist Cesar Chavez on March 31 every year. Council Secretariat Marsha Burgess outlined the Code of Conduct and logistical instructions for the meetings, and Parliamentarian Eli Mina outlined the rules for the meeting.

QUORUM. A quorum was established at the beginning of the meeting.

ADOPTED, by CONSENT:

- Adoption of Virtual Council Rules, CD #5.1
- Agenda, CD #8.4

COL, COLA and CRC Joint Chair Report: Resolution to Prioritize Library Workers to Receive the COVID-19 Vaccine, ALA CD #47. Amy Lappin, Chair of the Chapter Relations Committee, and Justin de la Cruz, chair of the Committee on Library Advocacy presented to Council, presented, noting they were also presenting on behalf of Joe Thompson, Chair of the Committee on Legislation. Per the Council referral of CD #47 at its 2021 Midwinter Meeting, a working group was convened consisting of members from all three committees to review the Resolution and provide the following report:

- The working group, in addition to the three Chairs, included Brianna Hoffman, Lori Fisher, and Cindy Bhatti, with ALA staff support from Megan Cusick, Carrie Russell, Michael Dowling, and Kathi Kromer.
- Findings indicate that the advocacy needs of states varied widely in this issue. This is not a one-size-fits-all issue, and Council's thoughtfulness in requesting chapter input was greatly appreciated.
- The Working Group remained committed to prioritizing the health and safety of library workers while determining the best way to advocate for the individual needs of chapters. Matters that are controlled on local and state levels are often best handled by ALA offering support but not making a blanket statement. The ALA protocol for these issues that has been in place since 2008 for working on state and local issues was used to guide the working group's determinations.
- Timeline:
 - In December 2020, the CDC released guidance on a phased rollout of vaccines, putting front-line essential workers into phase 1a, and people in the education sector into phase 1b. This guidance also created a phase 1c, specifying other essential workers, but not specifically identifying libraries or library workers at that time.
 - January 14: ALA added vaccine advocacy information to their website to help chapters advocate for the safety of library workers. This information was updated on January 22 and then again after Midwinter.

- January 19: CDC guidance was updated with an interim list of categories of essential workers that were mapped to standardized industry codes and titles, which was a more detailed mapping and did identify libraries as part of the phase 1c guidance.
- January 25: Council passed the Resolution to Prioritize Library Workers to Receive the COVID-19 Vaccine, affirming that library workers have a fundamental right to a safe work environment, and it referred the Resolution to COL, COLA, and CRC for analysis by March 31, 2021.
- February 8: the working group sent out a survey to chapter leaders asking for a response by February 17, 2021, which was a fast turnaround for chapter input. There were responses from 40 states and from Washington, DC. The response rate did provide some assurance that chapters were eager to offer feedback in this matter.
- March 11: President Biden accelerated the process by directing states, tribes, and territories to make all adults eligible for the vaccine no later than May 1, 2021.
- March 12: the final report of the ALA Vaccine Working Group was sent to all Council members.
- Major findings of the report and conclusions:
 - Recalled the protocol for monitoring and responding to state and local library issues that ALA had adopted after the Office of Library Advocacy developed this protocol in 2008 under the direction of ALA's Executive Board. This protocol advised that ALA provide advocacy assistance only with the permission of the states and in coordination with the states, noting that while ALA, as an organization, can engage with states to assist with local concerns, state library associations are self-governing and are in the best position to know the political climate and local governing structures, citizen viewpoints, and other intricacies of their communities. Based on our findings and the wide divergence of practices in each state, this policy remains well founded and practical for use in advocacy efforts, including this issue of vaccinations.
 - Reviewed news stories across the country and sent a survey to all state associations. It is important to note that survey responses and feedback received was reflective of only a snapshot in time, and the situation is changing rapidly as state governments update their vaccination plans.
 - From the survey, a majority of states indicate that library buildings are open with restrictions or for curbside service only. Only two of the respondents said that most -- which meant more than 90% -- of the public library buildings in their state were fully open.
 - Three-quarters of the states responded that libraries or library workers are not specified in state vaccine rollout plans, with about a third of respondents indicating that vaccine rollout plans varied across jurisdictions in their states.
 - 19 states responded that they had already advocated for a change in priority level for libraries or library workers in their state.
 - With the report, the group also reviewed local library contexts to show the diversity of approaches to vaccine rollout support and advocacy. Some states and specific libraries have concentrated advocacy efforts on ensuring that libraries are included in early vaccine eligibility tiers. Many libraries and states have emphasized leveraging the trusted role of libraries in providing communities with accurate information about the vaccine, as well as information about how to sign up for vaccinations.
 - Illinois Library Association Executive Director Diane Foote told Library Journal in February, "We do want to be careful of the state-level advocacy because if we, as an association, came out and said libraries are essential and, therefore, we need the

vaccine, then we run the risk of being told by the state that all libraries in the state must be fully open." The situation in Illinois is that service levels vary across the state, and not all libraries in Illinois are ready to be open for in-person services.

- On February 9, New Hampshire Library Association voted not to send a letter to its state government asking for library workers to be specifically mentioned in any phase of the state's vaccination plan, and a majority of their association members that were surveyed on this issue agreed.
- Overall, the survey responses were varied, and they suggested that there is no one advocacy approach that speaks for all libraries in all states. While one state indicated that it appreciated the language in the resolution, advocating for phase 1b vaccination for library staff who work in buildings that the public are also using, there is another state that responded that it had determined that a template for library workers to advocate for themselves to their local health departments and elected officials would be more effective than a letter from the state association.
- Inaccurate information or reporting about CDC's prioritization schedule for essential workers has caused some confusion. The CDC already includes libraries in its priority phase 1c industry map, but also recognizes that the industry mapping needs to be paired with an analysis of job roles and risk assessment at the local jurisdiction level.
- Our working group asserts ALA's recommendation that library workers who are at heightened risk for exposure to COVID-19, such as those providing in-person services, should be prioritized for access to vaccinations. Based on information gathered by this working group, that determination cannot be made for libraries uniformly.
- In conclusion:
 - Vaccine Working Group members strongly support the importance of library workers being vaccinated. It is clear from the chapter survey results, the news, and other feedback received that the desire and ability to prioritize library workers for the vaccine varies dramatically, not just by state, but by locality within states. Given this advocacy environment, a local or state approach is best.
 - The Working Group believes that an ALA statement asking the CDC to include library workers in vaccine phase 1b will have unintentional and potentially adverse consequences on state and local advocacy efforts in the future.
 - It is the choice of the state chapter whether to invoke the existing federal face 1c designation and/or to pursue a change in local or state vaccination priorities, given their specific knowledge about those vaccination plans, phases, and the local political climate.
 - Strong working relationships with state and local elected officials are critical, and ALA has shown its commitment to honoring and supporting these strong relationships that state associations have cultivated by its protocol for monitoring and responding to state and local library issues.

President Jefferson called for questions on the report.

Question: Will the Committee still watch and/or accept reports on how different states did approach this so that we can document for the future how the different states did respond during COVID? Ms. Lappin noted that the Chapter Relations Office in particular is very interested, and updates on state and local responses can be sent to that office.

Forward Together Resolutions Working Group Update, CD #46. Christina Rodriques and Jack Martin, Co-Chairs, provided the following update:

- Thanked fellow committee members, listed in the report.
- This newly appointed Working Group will develop resolutions based on the Forward Together Working Group report that provided an analysis of the SCOE recommendations. The resolutions will include the various parameters of the proposed new structure at a conceptual (i.e., non-Bylaws) level. Council will debate on the various components via the resolutions, and the group will continue to work in the development of the resolutions virtually with the goal to bring forward a vote at subsequent Council meetings.
- Charge and timeline were outlined in CD #52 from the November 2020 Virtual Council Meeting. The group's goal is to bring those final resolutions to Council by the June Annual Meeting.
- Approaching charge agnostically, meaning that group will draft resolutions based on feedback and information that has been gathered during the SCOE and Forward Together processes, as well as using the many reports and survey data that is available via the Report tab on the Forward Together website. The group recognizes that as members of ALA, we all have our own opinions and what we think is best for the future of the Association, but the group is focused on drafting resolutions that keep all ALA members' best interests in mind.
- Goal is to draft resolutions that are well written and shared among various groups and committees within ALA, such as the Resolutions Committee and the Forward Together Fiscal Analysis Working Group, to help improve them.
- The group will divide itself into six subgroups so each smaller subgroup can focus on drafting resolutions on its chosen topics:
 - ALA Core Values
 - ALA Executive Board
 - ALA Committees
 - Round Tables
 - Council
 - Leadership Assemblies
- The full Working Group meets every other Wednesday for an hour and a half, and the subgroups are meeting in addition to those regularly scheduled meetings. The group will continue this schedule through the June conference in hopes we will have all these final resolutions to bring to Council for debate, amendment, and subsequent vote.
- Hosting two information sessions on April 29 and May 4 from 4:00-5:15 pm ET. These sessions will be open to all Councilors to attend and will give you the opportunity to see the latest drafts of the resolutions, as well as plenty of time to discuss and provide feedback. Registration information for these sessions will be sent out in the next few weeks through Council lists and groups.

President Jefferson opened the floor for questions

Question: Approximately how many resolutions does the group envision bringing forward? Mr. Martin noted the group does not know yet. The group has just started meeting and is in early discussions. Ms. Rodriques noted that with the six subgroups, there should be at least six major resolutions. There is also a lot of interdependence, though, and that is not certain.

Question: Have you considered proposing multiple resolutions that address options? Something like "if Resolution A is voted down, then Resolution B"? Mr. Martin noted that there has been discussion on that, but ideally, the group will bring a single cohesive set of resolutions. However, as everything is interconnected, the possibility of "if this, then" or "if not this, then," routes might be an option. Ms. Rodriques emphasized that while that route may be an option, the goal is to have resolutions so well

thought out, written, and reviewed that “if, then” will not be necessary.

Wrap Up & Next Steps. President Jefferson noted that a poll will be conducted to allow Councilors the opportunity to share preferences on the method of participation of the Council meeting in January 2022. At that time, ALA is launching its new LibLearnX, and this year will be an opportunity to pilot how the governing bodies would like to conduct the business of the Association in conjunction with this new meeting.

The options are:

- Virtual: similar to what we have been doing this past year. We will meet entirely virtually.
- In person at LibLearnX: Council will meet in person in conjunction with the new event.
- Hybrid: virtual and in-person. The hybrid approach would mean governance meetings are held virtually and some in person. We would also like at the option of providing a virtual option for councilors to participate remotely.

This is only a pilot and will pertain only to January 2022.

President Jefferson opened the poll and asked Councilors to submit their responses.

Results:

- 58% hybrid
- 30% virtual
- 12% in person

President Jefferson noted this poll is intended as a preliminary indication of preference and does not constitute a binding vote. The Executive Board will make a final determination of whether winter governance meetings will be held in person virtually or hybrid.

Announcements:

- Registration is now open for Annual Conference from June 23-30, 2021 and early bird discounts are in place until April 16.
- Council meetings will be held from Sunday, June 27, to Tuesday, June 29 at Annual Conference. All councilors are expected to attend the entire series of Council sessions.
- Councilors are reminded to vote in ALA’s Annual election, with ballots now open.

President Jefferson adjourned the March Council Meeting.