

## Meeting of the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont

Topic: Emergency Preparedness and Social Services

Friday, March 24th, 2023, 9:00am to 3:07pm

### Meeting Minutes

**Working Group members present:** Meg Allison, Maria Avery, Jeannette Bair, Catherine Delneo, Denise Hersey, Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup, Andy Kolovos, Kelly McCagg, Karen McCalla, Susan O'Connell, Wendy Sharkey

**VTLIB staff members:** Thomas McMurdo, Janette Shaffer, Josh Muse, April Shaw, Lauren Kelley, Karen Gravlin, Joy Worland, Jonathan Clark, Lilly Talbert, Gina Hruban

**Guests:** Ben Rose, Matthew Bollerman, Cindy Weber, Rachel Onuf, Carolyn Brennan, Sharon White, Wendy Hysko, Randal Smathers, Margaret Woodruff

#### I. Call to Order [00:00:00]

Catherine Delneo welcomed everyone and called to order at 9:03am.

Roll Call of Working Group Members.

As a reminder to the public and Working group members, the Working Group website can be found here: <https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/initiatives-and-projects/working-group-status-libraries-vermont>

Written comments can be found at:

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/initiatives-and-projects/working-group-status-libraries-vermont/testimony-working-group>

#### II. Changes to the Agenda [00:05:00]

A revised agenda was shared by Catherine Delneo.

Supporting document:

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/2023%2003%2024%20%20Agenda%20Working%20Group%20Changes.pdf>

Kelly McCagg made a motion to approve the revised agenda.

Andy Kolovos seconded the motion.

The Working Group voted all in favor, none opposed. The motion passed.

#### III. Approval of Minutes [00:06:59]

Catherine Delneo moved into the next business portion of the meeting, which was the approval of past meeting minutes.

Explanatory document: January 27, 2023 (Draft Minutes)

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/AboutUs/LibWorkGroup/Minutes/DRAFT%202023%201\\_27%20Minutes%20Working%20Group.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/AboutUs/LibWorkGroup/Minutes/DRAFT%202023%201_27%20Minutes%20Working%20Group.pdf)

Catherine Delneo called for any revisions or changes to the document.

Kelly McCagg called for her last name to be corrected on page one in the last paragraph, where it is incorrectly stated as McCalla.

She also requested that at the bottom of page three, in the first sentence, to correct 'Christopher

Kaufman Ilstrup asked **is** libraries' to be changed to **if** libraries'.  
Meg Allison made a motion to approve the minutes with those revisions.  
Kelly McCagg seconded the motion.  
The Working Group voted all in favor, none opposed. The motion passed.

#### **IV. Public Comment** [00:09:46]

Catherine Delneo called for any public comment.

Ben Rose shared his comments:

We live and raised our kids in Williston Village, and our son and daughter always walked to the Williston Central School K-8. For several of those years, there was a gap between when school ended and when Lori or I could get home from work. Where did our kids go for those hours? To the Dorothy Alling Memorial Library, of course. They know that the library was a place to be quiet, to read, to do their homework, and to explore. It served them well. The library is one of the many reasons I never mind paying our property taxes. I reviewed your Charge, and must say, wow, you have a big assignment and a lot to think about! Thank you for what you all do!

#### **V. Presentation by Ben Rose, Recovery and Mitigation Section Chief, Vermont Emergency Management** [00:10:24]

Supporting document:

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Ben%20Rose%2C%20DEM%20Resources%20for%20the%20Working%20Group%20on%20the%20Status%20of%20Libraries%20in%20Vermont.pdf>

Ben Rose shared information from the Department of Emergency Management about the State's Hurricane Irene response, Hazard Mitigation funding opportunities, Vermont Buildings and General Services Municipal Energy Resilience Grants, emergency preparedness materials geared toward Vermont schools, the State's emergency response contingency contracts, and the FY2023 Nonprofit Security Grant Program.

Ben encouraged libraries to become involved in local emergency planning efforts and shared resources and information to encourage them to do so.

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Meg Allison asked if flooding insurance is provided for libraries? Ben Rose replied that the state does not provide flooding insurance, but hopefully insurance can be acquired via the owner of the library building.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup commented that in addition to support from FEMA, the National Endowment for the Humanities and The National Endowment for the Arts both offer emergency funding for state art councils. This funding option did not exist at the time of Hurricane Irene.

## **VI. Presentation by Rachel Onuf, Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA)**

[00:48:23]

Supporting document:

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Resource%20List%20Rachel%20Onuf.pdf>

Rachel Onuf presented emergency resources available to support Vermont's libraries with a focus on responding to emergencies that impacted library collections.

Rachel also shared that mass climate migration could potentially result in people arriving at libraries who need "everything," and emphasized the connection between disaster response and social services. Specifically, there's a high potential that climate emergencies will result in a need for even more social services resources in libraries.

Vermont Arts & Culture Disaster and Resilience Network

<https://vacdarn.org/>

Preparedness resources including the recordings of the webinars the Vermont Historical Records Program (VHRP) presented in partnership with the Department of Libraries:

<https://vacdarn.org/cultural-heritage-institutions/readiness-for-cultural-heritage-institutions/>

The State of Vermont contingency contract with Polygon (Document/Record Disaster Recovery), available to ALL public libraries and cultural heritage repositories:

<https://bgs.vermont.gov/sites/bgs/files/files/purchasing-contracting/contracts/38257%202-2w.pdf>

The State Library of Iowa daylong hybrid program:

<https://www.statelibraryofiowa.gov/index.php/news/2022/09/registration-now-open-oct-20-learning-circuit-disaster-preparedness> and the resulting resource page:

<https://www.statelibraryofiowa.gov/index.php/libraries/resources/disaster-preparedness-toolkit>

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Wendy Sharkey spoke of Rachel's statement that emergency preparedness must be part of your mindset and asked, "How do you do that?" Rachel replied that you need to exercise the emergency plan once you have it in place; schedule training, lunch and learns, know who to talk to if an emergency occurs. If you do not have a plan, you don't have to have all the answers but rather know who to ask to get the answers. Exercising the emergency plan can really help develop the necessary mindset.

## **VII. Presentation by Matthew Bollerman, Sustainable Libraries Initiative [01:08:12]**

Supporting document:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Matthew%20Bollerman\\_Sustainable%20Libraries%20Initiative.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Matthew%20Bollerman_Sustainable%20Libraries%20Initiative.pdf)

Matthew Bollerman presented on the work of the Sustainable Libraries Initiative. Matthew shared that the focus of the Initiative is to help library leaders use specific practices to intentionally address climate change and co-create thriving communities. Supporting link: <https://sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org/>

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Wendy Sharkey asked: "How long would it take an average library to go through the Sustainable Libraries Certification process and what is the cost?"

Mathew replied that there is no set timeframe to complete the certification process, but that the average timeframe is 18 months to two years. The cost varies depending on the size of the library. The Sustainable Libraries Initiative website has a pricing model.

#### **VIII. Presentation on COVID 19 Response by Department [01:28:12]**

##### **Janette Shaffer, Department of Libraries**

Supporting document:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/VTLIB\\_COVID19%20 Response.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/VTLIB_COVID19%20Response.pdf)

Janette Shaffer presented on the Department of Libraries' response to the COVID-19 pandemic which included increased communication, hosting meetups and county meetings, pandemic-specific continuing education offerings, and administration of the IMLS CARES and ARPA grants.

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Meg Allison shared her gratitude to Janette and the Department of Libraries for everyone's support and hard work throughout the Covid pandemic.

#### **IX. Community Comments on Emergency Preparedness [01:45:26]**

##### **Carolyn Brennan, Director, Kellogg-Hubbard Library, Montpelier [01:45:26]**

Supporting document:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/CarolynBrennan\\_KelloggHubbard.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/CarolynBrennan_KelloggHubbard.pdf)

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Jeannette Bair asked Carolyn: "Do you know of anywhere in Montpelier where there are showers and laundry facilities available to the public who might need a changing station?" Carolyn replied that a nonprofit organization called Another Way offers laundry vouchers.

##### **Sharon White, Director, Alice M. Ward Memorial Library, Canaan [01:58:00]**

Supporting document:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/SharonWhite\\_AliceWardMemorial.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/SharonWhite_AliceWardMemorial.pdf)

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Wendy Sharkey asked Sharon: "What would you like to happen to help you with the issues your library faces?" Sharon replied she would like Essex County to be better understood across all segments of state government. It is very difficult to fund what is needed without county government. State support is needed that meets the needs of the county.

#### **X. Discussion of Working Group on Emergency Preparedness [02:12:03]**

Catherine Delneo called on Assistant State Librarian and VACDaRN member Tom McMurdo to share relevant resources:

[VACDaRN](#) notes that the state has a contract with [Polygon](#), a document disaster and recovery company. Polygon's emergency number is 800-422-6379.

In addition, the State of Vermont maintains a relationship with the [Massachusetts Higher Education Cooperative \(MHEC\)](#), a multi-state purchasing group. MHEC signs contracts with vendors that provide services and materials for non-profits, including libraries, at a discount. Registered users in Vermont can access these contracts. Instructions for joining MHEC are on our website here: [MHEC Purchasing | Department of Libraries \(vermont.gov\)](#).

MHEC maintains contracts with a variety of disaster response companies. These companies are all on the contract designated G32. Eight vendors are on this contract, including companies that do mold remediation and other disaster cleanup. Some offer up to 50% discounts through MHEC. Depending on the nature of the issue, libraries will have several choices to address issues arising from a negative event.

Working Group members discussed the content shared on emergency preparedness thus far.

Catherine Delneo shared that The Senate Committee on Education was considering adding language specific to the addition of consideration of firearm violence in public libraries to the scope of the Working Group's charge. She reached out to them and requested to testify on this topic and met with them on March 15<sup>th</sup>. After considering her feedback, they decided to include broader language on safety in our charge rather than focusing so narrowly on firearm violence and threats of firearm violence. The proposed language is within Senate Bill 133 An Act relating to miscellaneous changes to education law. If passed as currently written, the updated language will require our Working Group to Study "**whether current law provides adequate public safety protections in libraries**" and to "**include recommendations for legislative action regarding public safety protections on library property.**"

Karen McCalla shared that the Department of Education puts out a Weekly Field Memo that often incorporates emergency preparedness topics. <https://education.vermont.gov/content/weekly-field-memo>

#### **XI. Community Comments on Social Services [02:43:30]**

**Wendy Hysko**, Director Brownell Library, Essex

Supporting document:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/WendyHysko\\_BrownellLibrary.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/WendyHysko_BrownellLibrary.pdf)

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Andy Kolovos commented that young people are coming to the library unattended after school and asked Wendy to elaborate on how much things have changed since the pandemic. Wendy responded that she has noticed that post-pandemic, kids are really lacking social skills. They run around and yell as if in a gymnasium. The kids' behavior has been a struggle for her staff. Training children to have social skills and be in a shared space is an ongoing challenge.

**XII. Break (12:00pm-1:00pm)**

**[End of Part 1 recording – Part 2 begins here]**

**XIII. Housekeeping [00:00:45]**

Catherine Delneo reconvened the Working Group meeting at 1:02pm.

**Update on Possible Changes to Report Deadline**

Catherine shared that she asked the Senate Committee on Education for an extension of the amount of time the Working Group has to write their report until March of 2024. The Committee has incorporated language into the miscellaneous education bill that, if the bill passes as written, would require the Working Group to submit their report “**on or before December 20, 2023.**” This would be a modest extension of the time we have to write our report to allow for an additional meeting on the topic of public safety in libraries.

Catherine recommended that the Working Group schedule a special meeting on the topic of public safety in libraries on August 25<sup>th</sup> of this year. The group agreed to the addition of this special meeting to their calendar. Catherine will add the special meeting to the Working Group's calendar and the Department will warn the public of the special meeting.

**Working Group Membership and Availability**

Jeannette Bair stated that she will no longer be working in a public library as of July 1, 2023. The group agreed that if Jeannette was willing to continue serving on the Working Group, they felt it would be appropriate for her to continue to serve through the end of the effort. Jeannette indicated a willingness to continue and will do so.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup shared that he will be away on sabbatical from approximately June 15<sup>th</sup> until August 15<sup>th</sup>.

Andy Kolovos shared that he will be away on sabbatical from mid-June to mid-July.

**Outreach Efforts**

Catherine Delneo shared that she, Kelly McCagg, and Karen McCalla will engage in outreach on behalf of the Working Group at the VLA/VSLA Conference on April 3rd to provide attendees with an update on the efforts of our Working Group.

Catherine asked that Working Group members not attend this outreach activity, which is focused on providing an update to VLA and VSLA members and is not a meeting of the Working Group.

Catherine, Kelly, and Karen will provide the Working Group with a summary of feedback at a future Working Group meeting.

Catherine shared that a suggestion from UVM Dean of Libraries Bryn Geffert at this month's VLA meeting that similar outreach could be done to support involvement by college and academic librarians. Catherine will follow up with Maria Avery and Denise Hersey on this idea.

### **Report Writing**

Catherine opened a discussion of the interest of the Working Group members in serving as the lead writers for the Working Group's report. Catherine shared the results of a survey conducted between meetings to gauge the interest of each member in being the lead writer on each topic.

#### **Lead writers for each topic:**

Collections: Jeannette Bair

Technology: Karen McCalla

Staffing: Maria Avery

Social Services: Andy Kolovos

Continuing Education: Wendy Sharkey

Inclusive Services: Meg Alison

Intellectual Freedom: Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup

Library Structures & Organizations: Susan O'Connell

Programming: Catherine Delneo

Facilities: Denise Hersey

Emergency Preparedness (including Public Safety): Kelly McCagg

Catherine shared that in order to support the Working Group in writing its report to the Legislature, the Consultants from the Department of Libraries have written draft reports on topics the Department presented to the Working Group: Programming, Technology, Continuing Education for Library Staff and Trustees, and Inclusive Services. These draft reports provide an overview of the data available to the Department and, when possible, frame Vermont within the broader national perspective.

Each of these reports will serve as the initial portion of the report on each of the topics within the Working Group's purview. Catherine will share the draft written reports from the Department with the Working Group member serving as the leading writer for each section.

Working Group members will be responsible for writing the second portion of the topic reports, with a focus on:

1. what we heard from the experts and community in topical meetings of the Working Group and
2. on any recommendations that the Working Group discussed.

Each lead writer will develop a high-level summary of what we heard from the community members who took the time to share written and oral comments and from the specific presenters who presented information at Working Group meetings. (Working Group members are not being asked to do additional surveys or focus groups or research on the topics.)

Lead writers should identify key quotes from specific community members, as these quotes may be useful to emphasize concepts in the report. The report might include quotes highlighted in text boxes, for example.

Lead writers should include a set of recommendations on their topic. These should be based on consensus already reached by the Working Group. In situations where consensus has not yet been reached, Working Group members can develop specific recommendations which can be brought back to the full group for discussion and refinement.

To write their sections, Working Group members will need to revisit the video recording of relevant meetings, minutes, written testimony submitted, and any supporting documents or presentations on their topic.

Working Group members should consider not just the specific meeting when a topic was discussed, but also to incorporate discussions that took place on **September 23, 2023**, when we revisited a number of topics we had previously considered and developed possible recommendations.

#### **XIV. Community Comments on Social Services [00:43:40]**

**Randal Smathers**, Director, Rutland Public Library [00:43:40]

Supporting document:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/RandalSmathers\\_RutlandFree.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/RandalSmathers_RutlandFree.pdf)

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

The group discussed the issues Randal described in his oral presentation and Randal spoke of some possible solutions for addressing the issues.

**Margaret Woodruff**, Director, Charlotte Library [00:59:23]

Supporting document:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/MargaretWoodruff\\_Charlotte.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/MargaretWoodruff_Charlotte.pdf)

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Catherine Delneo asked Margaret Woodruff to suggest guidance for understanding and utilizing the many organizations and resources that support the topic of emergency preparedness.

**Cindy Weber**, Director, Stowe Public Library (2:15pm-2:35pm) [01:12:53]

Supporting presentation:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/CindyWeber\\_StowePublicLibrary.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/CindyWeber_StowePublicLibrary.pdf)

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

The group shared their concerns and support for the issues Cindy shared in her presentation.

#### **XV. Presentation on COVID 19 Impacts on Libraries by Josh Muse, Department of Libraries [01:31:19]**

Supporting document:



[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/CovidImpacts\\_Presentation\\_032423.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/CovidImpacts_Presentation_032423.pdf)

Josh provided an overview of the Department of Libraries data related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public libraries in Vermont. Data was based on the Department's Status Questionnaire, which began in June 2020 and ended in March 2023.

The Working Group had the opportunity for questions and comments.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup thanked Josh for his presentation and the extensive data included. He commented that for his organization, the return of in-person attendance for programming is going very slowly, and that some of the audiences have permanently switched to virtual attendance.

#### **XVI. Discussion of Working Group on Social Services [01:46:50]**

Catherine Delneo shared that the following individuals provided written comment but did not attend the meeting and asked Working Group members to review their written comments:

Monika Antonelli, Minnesota State University

Supporting Document:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/MonikaAntonelli\\_MinnesotaStateUniversity.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/MonikaAntonelli_MinnesotaStateUniversity.pdf)

Barbara Ball, Director Windsor Public Library

Supporting Document:

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/BarbaraBall\\_WindsorPublic.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/BarbaraBall_WindsorPublic.pdf)

Catherine Goldsmith, Director, Starksboro Public Library

[https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/CatherineGoldsmith\\_Starksboro.pdf](https://libraries.vermont.gov/sites/libraries/files/InitiativesProjects/LibraryWorkingGroup/Testimony/SocialServices/CatherineGoldsmith_Starksboro.pdf)

Catherine asked Working Group members to pay special attention the resource list provided by Monika Antonelli, professor at Minnesota State University, who is involved in national research related to public libraries in emergency response that will be published later this year.

The group discussed the content shared and recommendations to consider in response.

Andy Kolovos shared it's difficult to generalize the focus of the content. The term 'social services' needs a very specific definition and how it's distinct from emergency preparedness.

Wendy Sharkey spoke to Cindy Weber's comment that social services in the library could be provided by the state. Wendy shared that she has found that state agencies are struggling with their own level of staffing which makes it difficult to provide extra staffing for libraries.

Kelly McCagg shared that there are libraries in larger urban areas who have social workers on their staff, and while many Vermont libraries cannot afford to have social workers on staff, she suggests offering training to library staff on issues such as de-escalation.

The Group discussed recommendations on the topics of Emergency Planning and Social Services.

### **Possible Recommendations re: Emergency Planning**

- Individual libraries should develop emergency plans that address environmental and societal emergencies for their institutions.
  - Periodic revision
  - Visit from local fire, police, first responders
- Libraries should be at the table as the State Hazard Mitigation Plan is developed.
- Libraries (both incorporated and municipal) should be included in municipality's emergency plan
- Facility plans
- Shared pool of resources for libraries
- Include public libraries in plans for local cooling/warming centers and shelters
  - Provide training and support for library staff in serving in this way
  - Develop staffing plans to facilitate expanded hours

### **Possible Recommendations re: Social Services**

- Behavioral Guidelines to foster welcoming environments
- Recognition that libraries are part of the social safety net and the intervention team – even in incorporated libraries
- Provide training resources for library staff to support patrons in crisis
  - available social services
  - de-escalation techniques
- After-school care, libraries providing de facto child care
- Unresolved social services issues can easily become public safety matters

Catherine invited group members to share recommendations with her on any topic at any time via email so that these recommendations could be considered by the Working Group in a future meeting.

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup moved to adjourn the meeting. Wendy Sharkey seconded the motion.

### **XVII. Adjournment [02:04:43]**

Respectfully submitted,  
Gina Hruban, Executive Staff Assistant, Vermont Department of Libraries

Please note all time stamps are recorded as: Hours, Minutes and Seconds with annotation as [HH:MM:SS]

The recordings of this meeting can be found at:

<https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/initiatives-and-projects/working-group-status-libraries-vermont>