

2013 Library District Task Force
September 23, 2013

Background

Through the work of the Montana State Library (MSL) the 2001 Legislature passed legislation that allowed for the creation of Public Library Districts codified as [Montana Code Annotated 22-1-7](#). Public library districts are established through the electoral process and include dedicated mill levies to provide funding to support the operation of the districts. It is because library districts have the ability to generate dedicated funding that can be more secure and, can therefore offer more services to their patrons, that they are strongly encouraged by MSL.

In 2005, Stevensville created the first public library district known as the North Valley Library District. Since then several public library districts and one multi-jurisdictional library district have been formed, all in Western Montana.

While Montana has had its share of successful public library district campaigns (most recently in May with the creation of the Ronan District Library), over the past 12 years, the library community and MSL staff have identified problematic sections of Montana Code that make the creation and/or administration of public library districts challenging. With the aid of those most experienced with library districts, the Montana State Library seeks to evaluate potential improvements to the code that may be presented to the 2015 Legislature.

Appointees

- Harold Blattie – Montana Association of Counties Executive Director
- John Conlan - former trustee with the North Valley Public Library District
- Kim Crowley – Flathead County Library System Director
- Susan Gregory – Bozeman Public Library Director
- Jane Hamman - North Jefferson County Public Library
- Judy Hart – Montana Library Association Government Affairs
- Representative Ed Lieser – House District 4
- Marilyn Trosper, North Lake County Library District Director
- Mary Vail – Whitefish Community Library trustee

MSL Staff

- Jennie Stapp – State Librarian
- Sarah McHugh – Statewide Library Resources Director

Timeline

September 23

Orientation meeting of the task force:

Overview of districts in Montana, legal background and history, MSL support for districts, discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the current district process in order to identify specific MCA items to address, goals and timeline for the task force, assignments

Members are asked to review the current code ([MCA 22-1-7](#)) prior to the meeting and to be prepared to discuss their experience with library districts.

September-mid-October

Discussion via listserv on follow up assignments, to include: mutual opportunities and/or issues of concern in the current district process, studies of other neighboring states, relating success stories, understanding trustee and local government roles, MACo role, possibilities for legislative change and other related topics.

Mid-October (to be determined by polling).

Second meeting of the task force:

Discussion: Recommend any proposed changes to MCA

Discussion: Review ways to strengthen the process of creating library districts

Discussion: Discuss what new kinds of assistance can MSL provide to local libraries interested in creating a district?

ACTION ITEM: recommendations to MSL

November

Draft report to State Librarian (MSL staff). Share draft report with task force via listserv, gather feedback from task force.

Mid-December

Final report and recommendations to State Librarian

January and February, 2014

Share report with Montana librarians for feedback and input. Preparation and planning for statutory change process if needed.

Share report with the Montana Library Commission at their February, 2014 meeting.

Spring, 2014

If changes to MCA are recommended, share them with the Governor's Office during the Executive Planning Process.