Director’s Meeting
April 16, 2020 at 10am.

Welcome, logistics, ground rules – Lori
Question: Share where would you go if you could go?

Updates from NHSL – Lori
Working on virtual SFP platform to use statewide; $122K through CARES Act. More info. will be available soon.
Waiting for the webinar recording on NH Unemployment through the NH Center for Nonprofits that happened last Friday to post to the NHLA COVID19 web page.
Tomorrow there is a webinar on paid family leave (FMLA) through NH Center for Nonprofits, email with registration sent to the NHAIS list this morning. Free webinar: 1-2:30pm. NH Dept. of Labor will be speaking about this topic.
Re-opening libraries; next Tuesday will the first meeting. Lori has been talking to libraries in other states. Things to think about, general best practices to have a re-opening plan.

1. Communicating with staff:

WSJ article: “You’re Fired, From a Distance” will be posted on COVID19 page as a pdf.
If employees are having a change in hours you should do it in person but the game has changed. Turn off the camera and microphones for employees on online platforms if group difficult discussions. Managers should make sure that employees know that a difficult conversation will take place. They can prepare where they can take the call in their home. Difficult video conversation: make sure at least 2 managers will be present, include a trustee. Feedback was that employees appreciated being able to see their manager deliver the news to them, so managers should leave videos on.

Susan, Kensington: How many libraries have had to furlough employees? More than a handful of libraries are going through this.

Is there a trustee email list: sign up on the NHLTA website.

How can we get accurate number of libraries that are furloughing? It is difficult to gather accurate information. They may consider including the question in the Annual state survey. Suggestion to ask NHLTA to lead that effort.

Pat Fickett, Wilton: having had to have difficult staff conversations over online platforms, suggests to have a script and get to the point, do not have a long lead in.

Dena, Loudon: Staff appreciate emails. It was difficult to call everyone. Everyone is getting the same information. She asks all staff to stay in contact with her weekly.

Denise van Zanten, Manchester: All divisions at MCL are meeting weekly now, management meeting 3 times a week. Also doing daily "question of the day" e-mails with all my staff which has been a lot of fun and we are learning more about each other!

Chat comment: Staff meeting on Jitsu and there were tech issues.

Julie, Jaffrey: specific time for calls and Zoom.

Chat comment: staff of five, text constantly and call. Using Slack.
Question:
Pat, Wilton: the building is closed. The staff wants to go into the building. Trustees have said no. It is hard to manage because it hard to know what they are doing. How are other libraries handling this?

The State Library has also been firm that the library is closed to staff working in building. Consistent and firm. Social distancing; we need to stay away from each other.

Lynn, Tucker Free: Be firm, trustees say no. The community sees staff going into the building and they want to go in too.

Julie, Jaffray: No is no.

Chat comments: You can gather keys, blame the trustees (Trustees need to make the decision about the building use).

Sue, Harrisville: She is the only one who is allowed in the building, she had to tell a trustee they could not be in the library.

Lesley, Stratham: Staff anxiety; they do not want to come into the library.

How do we balance the interest in being in the building and anxiety about being in the building. The Task Force will be addressing this issue. The consensus is that the opening has to be staged.

Question:
Pat, Wilton: How are you communicating with furloughed staff? Seems somewhat of an imposition since they are not working, but doesn’t want to lose touch with staff or make them feel forgotten.

Lynn, Tucker Free: The are our staff, they are like family. I would involve them in updates on the library.

Chat comments: Check in with them. Ask them if they want a call. Invite furloughed employees to a coffee happy hour? No pressure, no time constraints. Do a CRAFTernoon, send a cute postcard. Send mail. Staff want to talk on the phone, want to hear about family.

LF: at another meeting, Todd at Concord PL stated he held a coffee check in for all staff, invited (not mandatory), parameter was that you could not talk about work at the library. Went very well.

2. Communicating with trustees:
Questions #1 – What do do about a trustee chair that will not respond:
Brittney, Minot Sleeper: Go to the vice chair.
LF: Baker Free (Bow) trustees did not have a vice chair. Talk with the trustees. Send email to all the trustees. Use “Please reply so that I know you read this.” You can put the dreaded “read receipt” in the email. Be persistent.

Question:
Deb, Sandown: Are trustees not meeting because of this situation? Check your trustee bylaws because meetings are mandated in by-laws and still need to be done during an emergency unless there is a provision to deal with this in by-laws.

Jon, Center Harbor: Weekly meeting Monday mornings.
Nancy, (difficult to hear) Meeting next Tuesday. No subcmte. meetings. If you are holding meetings you have to follow the warning requirements. Do not have email chains with your trustees. Email correspondence has to be informational. Decisions have to be made in a meeting. If you are not having trustee meetings, there may be the impression that nothing is going on at the library. Check the NHLA COVID19 page for meeting guidelines and share this info. with your trustees.

Lesley, Stratham: The trustees have been provided with the meeting guidelines from the NHLA COVID19 page. Trying to behave as if the crisis is not going on, trustee meetings are going on as usual. You have the potential that decisions may be made in email, which is still illegal and against Right to Know law. They are being careful. Doing everything you can do to make sure the public has access to the trustee actions.

Yvonne: One person library, 10 hours per week. She is going in each week. It is important to keep the trustee meetings going, helpful to the community to see that the librarian is working and they are busy.

LF: Traditional perception of libraries is that we are closed and not doing anything. It is important for the trustees to meet.

Chat comment: Two trustees had issues with virtual meetings. They met in person, stayed 6 ft. from each other and had a phone line open for the public.

Sylvie, Merrimack: Trustees may postpone a meeting.

Question from chat:
Bandwidth as a director: This issue came up on Monday. Any comments.
Being on the computer takes a lot of bandwidth. The personnel management is more challenging virtually; dealing with projects, staff reactions. It is difficult to work virtually in online meetings. It seems easier in person.

LF: There is scientific evidence that only communicating with people virtually takes a lot more mental and emotional effort than physical meetings. Have empathy for ourselves and each other. It is difficult to expect people to work at their regular pace. Be empathetic. Go off all devices at a certain time; have boundaries, know your priorities. Let it go.

Question:
Michelle, New Ipswich: Are you trying to keep track of hours, keep a schedule. Are you winging it?
LF: Make sure staff is tracking hours and tasks. X amt. on calls, Email – amt. of time. What are staff working on and planning their day and checking on what actually happens during the day. The director should also be doing the same thing. Documentation is going to be key for justifying paying staff and director.

Dena, Loudon: She hopes that they can transition that the trustees can trust the staff to be doing the right thing with their time.

Deb, Sandown: This week staff wanted more structure and priorities. The priority was to contact 2 patrons. They wanted more direction. Work tasks are becoming more defined. The first week was setting up a computer for them to work. Now there are tasks: April vacation – 3 programs per day, ordering books. Staff wants to know what the priorities are now.

LF: The question you can ask staff is how are they feeling about structure, tasks, what they want to work on. This is not a stagnant situation. We are not in crisis mode anymore. How can we conduct business that staff can count on.
Chat comment: Important to keep track of hours not worked. This could be important for FEMA funds for your town down the road. Make sure it is easy to tally.

Deb, Sandown: Tracking hours is important for any additional monies. Supplies, extra work related to COVID-19, etc. I keep a separate chart the town gave us to use (see employment section of NHLA COVID19 web page)

Shared articles listed in chat will be put in meeting notes:


Stop feeling guilty about your to-do list: https://hbr.org/2020/03/stop-feeling-guilty-about-your-to-do-list?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter_daily&utm_campaign=mtod_actsubs


Chat question: Is it okay to track IN and OUT hours.

LF: Telework should be total number of hours and you should have documentation; emails in the morning and end of the workday staff supplies a summary of tasks and time each task took.

Chat comment by Julie, Jaffrey: IN, OUT time is related to Worker’s Comp and physical presence in building, not relevant to telework.

3. How much is too much for Directors: balancing communication vis-à-vis other work?

Sylvie, Nesmith: Sending an update email to the trustees. If they have a question they will email her. Sometimes she will send them a snippet of the weekly email sent to staff. She is not spending a lot of time back and forth with trustees.

Chat comment: We are small, there is not a lot of problems with this. Larger libraries have much more.

Heather, Hooksett: Trustees were not aware of what was affecting the director, they wanted her to work on projects. The trustees got a clearer picture by looking at the director call notes. Communication and planning is a priority.

Will be discussed next week:
Sourcing for re-opening supplies: (PPE sourcing) Will be discussed at the Task Force meeting on Tuesday.

Happy National Library Week.

Topics for the next call: Send them to Lori at lori.fisher@dncr.nh.gov

Next Employment call will be on Monday at 8am.
Telework policies, etc. send any topics to Lori.


Respectfully submitted,

Rebekka Mateyk