Maine Library Commission Work Session

Work Session Notes

Wednesday, August 19, 2026

Summary

The Maine Library Commission (MLC) convened a full day work session to edit and develop draft rules for a vote at the September 14 meeting, as agreed upon by consensus. The draft rule language will be posted on the MLC website one week in advance of the meeting.

Major decisions included removing the two person staffing requirement, requiring a designated paid person, establishing a standard of 12 average open hours per week, and creating a compliance ramp up period and process for noncompliance.

Overall, the purpose of the Standards is to support the long-term sustainability of Maine's libraries while ensuring state funds are used intentionally and efficiently, in partnership with local support.

Meeting Notes

MLC Chair, Bryce Cundick, provided opening remarks regarding use of the physical meeting space and virtual (Zoom) room. A quorum was confirmed.

Attendees: Bryce Cundick (Chair), Andrea DeBiase, Sarah Forster (Assistant Attorney General), Wynter Giddings, Heidi Grimm (Vice Chair), Joseph Houston, Sarah Moore, Judith Moreno, Heather Perkinson, Lori Stockman (State Librarian), Ben Treat, Marijke Visser (Director of Development), and Krystie Wilfong.

Key Decisions

Section 5, D (3): The library ensures the safety of its staff and the public by having two representatives of the library (employees or volunteers) on site when the library is open to the public

- Removed the requirement for two staff/volunteers on site at all times.
- Commission consensus that staffing levels alone do not guarantee safety and needs may vary according to library.
- Replaced with language requiring libraries to maintain policies covering safety and security of staff and the public, added to the existing policy review list.

- Related procedures and training may be addressed through State Library guidance and professional development.

Section 5, D(4) c.: The library has a dedicated person who serves as director of the library and is responsible for the day-to-day management and oversight of the library on behalf of the board of trustees (in the case of a non-profit library) or the municipality (if the library is a municipal department). This may be a volunteer position. This position may not be filled by an individual who also serves as a trustee on the governing board of the library.

- Changed "dedicated" to "designated paid person".
- Removed the sentence "This may be a volunteer position" to avoid undermining paid librarianship and to emphasize that paid staff are more reliable than unpaid volunteers, impacting long-term sustainability of a library.
- 28 of Maine's 257 libraries do not have paid staff, and a requirement for paid staff does not mean a person on payroll needs to be present every hour a library is open to the public.
- Decision made to omit any specific amount to be paid; state and federal Department of Labor oversees labor law functions.

Section 5, D(4) a.: It has a strategic plan that is reviewed at least once every three years.

- Retained but revised to require a publicly available strategic plan reviewed at least every 3 to 5 years.
- Commission agrees that plan should be "meaningful, publicly available, and flexible enough for libraries to tailor it to their communities".

Section 5, D(4) b.: It receives annual funding from the municipality in which it is legally situated.

- Eliminated entirely; 5 of 257 Maine public libraries receive no municipal funding, and Commission members identified a number of scenarios where the benefit of this item was unclear.
- Maine's current legal definition of a Maine Public Library addresses funding sources.

Section 5, D(5) c.: It is open to the public for at least 12 hours per week year-round. (The above subparagraph does not apply to a library located on an island with a legal service area of less than 300 year-round permanent residents.)

- Changed to: Library is staffed and open to the public for an average of at least 12 hours per week. MLC members clarified that "open" should mean both a physical library space and staff available to the public.
- The wording will retain "year-round" to clarify that the average must reflect the full year.
- Removed the island library carve-out (population <300); average wording addresses seasonal variation.

Section 5, C(3): E-Rate Language

- Removed reference to Category 2 E-rate discounts; NetworkMaine does not provide internal wiring services, making the clause vestigial.

Compliance Timeline & Non-Compliance Process

Phased Implementation

- Most requirements: effective immediately upon rule filing (5 days after Secretary of State filing).
- 1-year from the Secretary of State effective date: Strategic plan requirement.
- 2-years from the Secretary of State effective date: Paid designated person and 12-hour (average per year) open hours: items with financial impact.

Non-Compliance Pathway

- Libraries self-certify annually via the Public Library Data Service (PLDS) report; April 1 deadline. Annual self-certification will be the primary compliance trigger.
- At the next regular MLC meeting after April 1, MSL provides a list of non-compliant libraries. The MLC approves notification of those libraries in writing.
- Libraries have at least 60, no more than 90 days to respond. The response must include a compliance plan, timeline, and identified assistance needed.
- First extension granted automatically if library is actively working in good faith to come into compliance; further extensions require Commission approval on a 6-month renewable basis.
- Failure to respond or comply ultimately results in removal from MRLS.

Remaining Rule Process

- September 14 meeting: Vote on final draft rule. Draft rule will be posted to website a week ahead of the meeting.
- October 6 meeting: Placeholder if September vote not achieved.
- After MLC approval, a different AAG (not Sarah Forster) conducts a 2-week independent pre-review.
- Rule filed with Secretary of State → published in Kennebec Journal → opens 45-day public comment period.
- Public hearing required; at least three (3) but fewer than a quorum of voting MLC members must attend in person.
- Public comment will be organized into buckets; MLC responds to each; substantial changes may trigger a second comment period.

Action Items

- MLC to consider petition for alternative rule at meeting on September 14.
- MSL Staff: Incorporate all rule changes for September 14 review. Include draft compliance procedures.
- MSL Staff: To clarify whether existing language sufficiently establishes access to Area Reference and Resource Center (ARRC) support, including for libraries that are not a part of the MRLS system. Intent is to ensure support for all libraries.
- Sarah Forster: Share sample comments-and-responses document with MLC members. Coordinate legal pre-review.
- Lori Stockman: Prepare two rulemaking timelines: one based on Sept 14 approval, one on Oct 6, showing public hearing window.
- Final revised draft rule to be posted publicly and sent to MLC members at least one week before next scheduled meeting on 9/14.