

NH ALA Councilor Report from ALA 2020 Annual Conference (virtual)

ALA Council, is the membership governing body for the American Library Association (a 501(c)3, consisting of 184 councilors). Representation comes from state chapters, ALA divisions, and ALA Roundtables. NH Library Association is a chapter of ALA.

This is the first time that ALA Council (and ALA Annual Conference) has been held virtually. While it was a little challenging to do this whole process online, overall I think it went well – particularly the ease of voting online as a Councilor.

My report below includes an Executive Summary with highlights, and then a listing of the major agenda items for each Council meeting, with links to reports and resolutions. Unless noted otherwise, I voted yes when the vote occurred. I was there for all discussions, but what is clear to me (having been present) may not be clear to the reader of this report. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about anything related to this report, ALA Council, or ALA in general: 603-271-2393; lori.fisher@dncr.nh.gov.

Executive Summary

For NH librarians and NHLA, there are four major issues to highlight from 2020 ALA Annual Council meetings: ALA's financial situation; the vote for the Council to own the process for Forward Together (ALA governance reorganization, formerly done by SCOE); a resolution about protecting patron privacy in library COVID-related policy; and a resolution on developing library security policies. Details about all Council actions are referenced in my full report.

1. **ALA Financial Situation:** As mentioned in my report from ALA 2020 Midwinter Conference, ALA finances are in a precarious position. Please see the following linked documents, which were reviewed during ALA Annual Council meetings:
[ALA CD#13.2-13.3](#) – ALA Treasurer's Report and Annual Estimates of Income for FY21
[ALA CD#48](#) – ALA Financial Questions from Councilors & Responses from Exec Board
[ALA CD#48.1](#) – ALA roundtable Net Asset Balance appendix 1
[ALA CD#48.2](#) – ALA Division Net Asset Balance appendix 2

In particular, please read ALA CD#48, and ALA CD13.2-13.3 (PowerPoint). These two documents give the best overview summary that Councilors received during the meeting. Bottom line: ALA is cash poor due to declining revenues (primary revenue sources, plus cancellation of annual conference), overspending in capital IT projects, increased operational costs due to COVID-19, and unanticipated costs for the ALA Chicago headquarters move. Due to the outsourcing of accounting overseas and the pandemic, monthly financial reports have not been available since January. While ALA Council normally approves the FY21 budget at Annual, we could not do that because of the lack of financial reporting. There will be a special Council meeting in September in order to approve a FY21 budget ceiling number, which sets the stage for the ALA executive board to approve a FY21 budget. ALA budget year runs September through August. In addition, the decision was made by ALA Executive Director Tracie Hall to have ALA

staff furloughed for six weeks during FY21 – these weeks will be distributed throughout the fiscal year. Actually all ALA staff will also experience a two week furlough in FY20 during August. A resolution was created by a Council member asking that ALA leadership do everything possible to reduce the number of furlough weeks for ALA employees (I was a seconder on that resolution) but the resolution never made it to Council for a vote.

The situation is quite dire. We are facing the loss of our Association if they cannot regain their financial footing in a sustainable way.

2. Forward Together next steps:

[ALA CD#42](#) – Forward Together report & draft action item (original document)
From the document above, Council was asked to vote to take responsibility for the Forward Together process going forward. A number of Councilors took issue with how the resolve was worded in CD#42, and a substitution was created and approved at Council III:

CD#42

Move to amend the motion presented in CD# 42 by substitution to read as follows:

1. ALA Council, as the policy-making body of the Association, takes responsibility for the decision making on the Forward Together process;
2. ALA Council requests that the ALA Executive Board present the SCOE Report with specific action items and a draft timeline to ALA Council along with consolidated feedback from the various conversation sessions, hearings, and email commentary prior to a fall meeting;
3. That the President call at least one meeting of ALA Council (fall meeting) prior to the Midwinter Meeting devoted exclusively to discussion of changes to the structure of ALA governance and the detailed plans for a Constitutional Convention;
4. ALA Council requests the Forward Together Working Group and the Forward Together Fiscal Analysis Working Group provide regular, ongoing formal updates to ALA Council for discussion prior to ALA Annual Conference in Chicago in 2021;
5. ALA Council requests that the timeline include scheduling a Constitutional Convention before and during the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago in 2021.

I personally have issues with the governance model in the Forward Together report, especially as it relates to the voices of chapters and chapter members. Since Councilors have not been able to see the feedback from the many town halls and other feedback sessions, I am trying to reserve judgment until I can review that information. The NHLA executive board will be discussing this issue again once we have more information from #2 in the resolution above, and at that point they can decide if they want to issue a statement about it (previous discussion at the NHLA Executive Board meeting in April 2020 resulted in no action taken at this time). For more information about Forward Together, visit <https://forwardtogether.ala.org>.

3. [ALA CD#43](#) - Resolution on Protecting Privacy and Safety in Coronavirus-related Library Policy

This resolution is important for all librarians to read, as it addresses the information collected by libraries and how that information should be used. Information collection can create “disproportionate barriers for members of marginalized communities and erode hard-earned community trust.” If you share one item from ALA Council with your governing bodies, this would be it given the NH privacy law on our books for libraries ([NH RSA 201-D:11](#)). At minimum this is a good reminder for a lens to use when creating any library policy.

4. **[ALA CD#45](#) – Resolution on Developing Library Security Policies in keeping with ALA Policy**

This resolution is in response to the police violence seen in the United States against people of color (BIPOC), and how libraries need to review and change their securities policies to rely less on police presence/action and look more toward social work, de-escalation tactics, and mental health resources. There was significant debate about this resolution (first presented in Council I, and then re-presented with a changed resolution clause in Council III). A few people felt that the new resolution clause watered down the document and took the “teeth” out of it, but the majority felt it was a good change because it tasked the ALA president with convening a working group comprised of representatives of different kinds of libraries to create guidance in this area. Look for more on this at ALA Midwinter 2021.

Last, Mary Ghikas, longtime executive director, retired as of 6/30/2020 after nearly 3 decades at ALA. Tracie Hall, the new executive director, started in February 2020.

Below is my detailed account of Council activities. Please reach out with questions.

Submitted by Lori Fisher, NH ALA Councilor (2019-2021)

ALA Council I – Tuesday 6/23/2020

ALA CD#13.3 – [Approval of the Annual Estimates of Income for FY 2021](#)

This vote did not happen because ALA has not received financial reports from its accounting firm since January. There will be a special Council meeting called in September to approve the annual estimates of income (which sets the budget ceiling for FY21) and allows the ALA executive board to approve a final budget. FY21 starts 9/1/2020.

ALA CD#43 – [Resolution on Protecting Privacy and Safety in Coronavirus-related Library Policy](#). This resolution passed by majority vote.

ALA CD#45 – Resolution on Developing Library Security Policies in keeping with ALA Policy. Withdrawn for revision and re-presented at Council III.

ALA Council II – Tuesday 6/23/2020

ALA CD#27.2 – [Committee on Organization \(COO\) Report & action items](#)

The action items were significant: Dissolve three division of ALA (Association for Library Collections and Technical Services - ALCTS, Library Information Technology Association - LITA, and Library Leadership and Management Association LLAMA; create a new division Core – Leadership, Infrastructure, and Futures as a division; dissolve the ALA division Association of Specialized, Government, and Cooperative Library Agencies - ASGLA; allocate ASGCLA to the following ALA units:

- State library agencies will go to the ALA Chapter Relations office which will include LSTA coordinators, library development, and youth services consultants from state libraries;
- Library services to underserved populations will go to ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services (ODLOS), including deaf, dementia, Alzheimers, print disabilities, incarcerated/detained persons, tribal librarians, and universal access;
- Library cooperatives/consortia will go to Core;
- Federal and armed services libraries will go to ALA Reference & User Services Association (RUSA).

The first vote on these dissolutions and distributions passed. The second vote (required by ALA bylaws) occurs at the special Council meeting after Council III.

ALA CD #25.1 – [Constitution and Bylaws Committee report and action](#). The changes outlined in the document to the ALA Constitution and ALA bylaws to allow electronic meetings and voting were passed by majority vote.

ALA CD#20.3 – [Committee on Legislation report](#)

I will be joining this committee for a two year appointment beginning 7/1/2020.

ALA CD#18.2 – [International Relations Committee report](#)

ALA CD#19.6-19.10 – [Intellectual Freedom Committee report & action item](#)

The resolution presented condemned police violence against Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), protesters, and journalists passed by majority vote.

ALA CD #22.1 – [Freedom to Read Foundation \(FTRF\) report](#)

ALA CD#42 – [Forward Together/Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness \(SCOE\) report and action item](#). This item was presented, but discussion and vote on this action item was moved to Council III.

ALA CD#46 – [Resolution Condemning US Media Corporations' Abridgement of Free Speech](#). Moved to Council III due to time.

ALA Council III – Saturday 6/27/2020

ALA Budget Discussion

As mentioned in my report from ALA 2020 Midwinter Conference, ALA finances are in a precarious position. Please see the following linked documents, which were reviewed during ALA Annual Council meetings by ALA Treasurer Maggie Farrell:

[ALA CD#13.2-13.3](#) – ALA Treasurer’s Report and Annual Estimates of Income for FY21

[ALA CD#48](#) – ALA Financial Questions from Councilors & Responses from Exec Board

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In particular, please read ALA CD#48, and ALA CD13.2-13.3 (PowerPoint). These two documents give the best overview summary that Councilors received during the meeting. Bottom line: ALA is cash poor due to declining revenues (primary revenue sources, plus cancellation of annual conference), overspending in capital IT projects, increased operational costs due to COVID-19, and unanticipated costs for the ALA Chicago headquarters move. Due to the outsourcing of accounting overseas and the pandemic, monthly financial reports have not been available since January. While ALA Council normally approves the FY21 budget at Annual, we could not do that because of the lack of financial reporting. There will be a special Council meeting in September in order to approve a FY21 budget ceiling number, which sets the stage for the ALA executive board to approve a FY21 budget. ALA budget year runs September through August. In addition, the decision was made by ALA Executive Director Tracie Hall to have ALA staff furloughed for six weeks during FY21 – these weeks will be distributed throughout the fiscal year. Actually all ALA staff will also experience a two week furlough in FY20 during August. A resolution was created by Council asking that ALA leadership do everything possible to reduce the number of furlough weeks for ALA employees (I was a seconder on that resolution) but the resolution never made it to Council for a vote.

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ALA CD#42 – [Forward Together/Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness \(SCOE\) report and action item.](#)

Council Parliamentarian Eli Mina explained the options for changing ALA’s constitution and bylaws as a precursor to the discussion on Forward Together. From the document above, Council was asked to vote to take responsibility for the Forward Together process going forward. A number of Councilors took issue with how the resolve was worded in CD#42, and a substitution was created and approved at Council III:

CD#42

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7. That the President call at least one meeting of ALA Council (fall meeting) prior to the Midwinter Meeting devoted exclusively to discussion of changes to the structure of ALA governance and the detailed plans for a Constitutional Convention;
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I personally have issues with the governance model in the Forward Together report, especially as it relates to the voices of chapters and chapter members. Since Councilors have not been able to see the feedback from the many town halls and other feedback sessions, I am trying to reserve judgment until I can review that information. The NHLA executive board will be discussing this issue again once we have more information from #2 in the resolution above, and at that point they can decide if they want to issue a statement about it (previous discussion at the NHLA Executive Board meeting in April 2020 meeting resulted in no action taken at this time). For more information about Forward Together, visit <https://forwardtogether.ala.org>.

ALA CD#46 – [Resolution Condemning US Media Corporations’ Abridgement of Free Speech](#). This resolution was referred by majority vote to the Intellectual Freedom Committee and the International Relations Committee, who will report on the matter at Midwinter 2021 Council meetings.

ALA CD#47 – [Resolution on Financial Autonomy and Collaboration among ALA Management, Divisions, and Roundtables](#). This resolution was drafted due to the shock Councilors felt at Midwinter 2020 upon hearing that revenues from PLA were used by ALA with no communication to PLA membership or leadership. Due to the financial discussion at the beginning of Council III, with input from BARC and PBA, along with new communication protocols being put into place by the Executive Board, there was a majority of Councilors who wanted to hold off on ratifying this resolution. It was defeated in a majority vote.

ALA CD#45 – [Resolution on Developing Library Security Policies in keeping with ALA Policy](#). This resolution passed by majority vote.

This resolution is in response to the police violence in the United States against people of color (BIPOC), and how libraries need to review and change their securities policies to rely less on police presence/action and look more toward social work, de-escalation tactics, and mental health resources. There was significant debate about this resolution (first presented in Council I, and then re-presented with a changed resolution clause in Council III). A few people felt that the new resolution clause watered down the document and took the “teeth” out of it, but the majority felt it was a good change because it tasked the ALA president with convening a working group comprised of representatives of different kinds of libraries to create guidance in this area. Look for more on this at ALA Midwinter 2021.

ALA Council Special Session – Saturday 6/27/2020

Second votes required by ALA by-laws:

Vote to disband ALCTS, LITA, LLAMA and create CORE – passed by majority vote
Vote to disband ASGLA – passed by majority vote.