

RESOLUTION

ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Sup. William Wilson
INITIATED BY



8/23/2022
DATE DRAFTED

Approving Merger of Arrowhead Library System with Lakeshore Library System

WHEREAS, Rock County has partnered to establish a federated public library system known as the Arrowhead Library System pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 43.15(4); and

WHEREAS, Rock County established the Rock County System in 1974 and subsequently established the Arrowhead Library System in 1979; and

WHEREAS, the Arrowhead Library System Board expressed interest in exploring a merger with the Lakeshores Library System based on member library feedback and interest; and

WHEREAS, each system board appointed representatives to a Joint Merger Exploration Committee which evaluated the potential benefits or pitfalls of a merger, and the Committee recommended a merger of the systems; and

WHEREAS, the Arrowhead Library System Board has determined that a merger is in the best interests of both systems and is requesting Rock County approval, a copy of which request is on file with the County Clerk; and

WHEREAS, approval is required of all County Boards impacted by the proposed merger.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rock County Board of Supervisors duly assembled this 8th day of September, 2022, does hereby approve the merger of the Arrowhead Library System with Lakeshores Library System pursuant to the terms of the proposed Merger Agreement, a copy of which is on file with the Clerk.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County Clerk is directed to submit certified copies of this Resolution to the Arrowhead Library System and Lakeshores Library System and such other entities as may be necessary to effectuate the merger.

FISCAL NOTE:

Minimal fiscal impact for the County due to no longer processing ALS payroll and accounts payable. Property taxes will continue to be levied on property in the towns and the Village of Footville. The levy will continue to be used for services provided by municipal libraries in Rock County to rural Rock County residents and for services provided to Rock County residents by libraries in other counties.

Sherry Oja
Finance Director

LEGAL NOTE:

The County Board is authorized to take this action pursuant to §§ 59.01 & 59.51, Wis. Stats.

Richard Greenlee
Corporation Counsel

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

Recommended.

Josh Smith
County Administrator

Committee Action

County Board Staff Committee

County Board Staff Committee recommended this resolution for approval by a unanimous voice vote.
Supervisor Peer was absent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

APPROVING MERGER OF ARROWHEAD LIBRARY SYSTEM WITH LAKESHORE SYSTEM

This resolution approves the merger of the Arrowhead Library System and the Lakeshore Library System.

Library Systems are important parts of the public library ecosystem in Wisconsin. Systems and their member libraries rely on cooperative agreements and resource sharing to reduce duplication of services, increase buying power, and share costs. However, there are costs to maintaining a healthy system, including those related to staff, space, and resources. In the past decades, technology, and process advancements, coupled with evolving library needs, has made library system merger an increasingly attractive way to address service capacity issues.

Arrowhead Library System (ALS), serving the libraries of Rock County, and Lakeshores Library System (LLS), serving the libraries of Racine and Walworth Counties, have a strong history of working together. Both Library Systems share: a library automation software platform; IT support to the member libraries; marketing and public relations support; ALS staff; and, collaborated on numerous Federal and State grant projects to the benefit of the combined member libraries of the two systems.

The two systems have reached their collective capacity to work together as separate entities. A Joint Merger Exploration Committee was formed to evaluate a system merger. Numerous benefits to a merger were identified:

- Streamlined decision-making, reduced administrative overhead, and fewer meetings.
- Reduction in operating expenditures achieved through a phased consolidation of physical assets, such as office space.
- A single, integrated staff with complementary areas of expertise.
- Enhanced options for leveraging planned retirements, retaining additional staff, and providing member libraries with access to previously unavailable services.
- A larger pool of member library experts to engage in collaborative problem-solving.
- Reduction in expenditures, increases in efficiency, or both, resulting from a consolidation of library materials delivery services starting in year 2.
- Establishment of a blueprint for similar intergovernmental cooperation elsewhere in Wisconsin.
- Assurance that existing collaborative efforts remain viable and sustainable, regardless of changes in staff and leadership.

The Merger Exploration Committee voted 7-1 on June 27, 2022, to accept the updated recommendation report as presented with noted minor editing changes and that the committee move ahead with a vote on recommending merger between Arrowhead Library System and Lakeshores Library System. On July 13, 2022, the Arrowhead Library Board voted unanimously to recommend a merger of the two systems followed by a unanimous vote in favor of the merger by the Lakeshores Library Board on July 19, 2022.

Governance of the new merged entity would consist of 15 representatives from the following County Boards: four from Walworth County, five from Rock County and six from Racine County.

In order to establish a merged library system beginning in January 2023, all counties involved, must indicate their approval, by resolution, by the mid-October 2022 so that a new library system plan can be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction by October 15th.