

Memo

To: Montana State Library Commission

From: Jennie Stapp, State Librarian

Date: June 1, 2021

Re: Continued Telework Authority

Acting under the authority granted to the State Library Commission to “*make rules and establish standards for the administration of the state library and for the control, distribution, and lending of books and materials*” (Montana Code Annotated, 2.1.103 (4)), staff requests authority to continue to enter into telework in accordance with the State of Montana telework policy which states that agencies have the sole discretion to designate positions for telework (Telework Policy, July 1, 2020).

Background

On May 28, 2021 the State of Montana issued guidance directing agencies and state employees to begin a phased return to the worksite effective June 14, 2021. Much of the guidance is in keeping with plans the State Library has in place with exceptions noted below.

Montana State Library managers have identified 14 positions not eligible for telework because the nature of their positions require that they be in Helena and that they conduct business, in person, at MSL. These positions include MSL leadership, human resources, information technology, administrative staff, Talk Book Services circulation, the Volunteer Coordinator, and the Government Documents Librarian. All other positions have been deemed eligible for telework. Consistent with State guidance to bring 50% of the workforce back first, persons in these positions who are currently working remotely will return to MSL on June 14.

An additional 13 staff stated their preference for their primary workspace to be in MSL. These persons will return to MSL in a matter consistent with future State guidance.

Under a temporary directive, the State guidance states that no new telework agreements will be granted for now. This decision is to allow new agency directors appointed by Governor Gianforte, who have not known their workforce prior to the pandemic, to become more familiar with their operations. Unlike those agencies, MSL leadership is very familiar with our staff and operations both prior to and during the pandemic. We are confident in our plans for returning to MSL and are similarly

confident in our staff who will continue to work remotely. Over the past year our work practices have evolved. In our planning we have been deliberate in our consideration of the impact to patrons and employees, taking into account the purpose of the Library and our services to meet our patrons needs. These changes to our work environment reflect our new normal, and we do not want to delay or disrupt our new practices.

Furthermore, as directed in House Bill 5 passed by the 2021 legislature, a study is to be conducted of the Mazurek Building to determine how best to use our space. The Department of Justice remains interested in occupying a significant portion of MSL space. It would be disruptive to return staff to MSL, only to have them return to remote offices if the likely outcome of the study is to have fewer staff work from MSL. This could also be disruptive to our patrons and the services they rely upon.

This request follows current practice to seek authority from the Commission for MSL policy decisions that are exceptions to State policies.