
Wilderness Coast Public Libraries

Serving Franklin, Jefferson, and Wakulla Counties

Margaret Key Library Petition to Join Wilderness Coast

Ongoing Project Summary as of March 29, 2021

OVERVIEW

Sondra Taylor-Furbee, Board Chair for the Margaret Key Library, and Caroline Kienzle, library director, contacted me for a meeting to discuss their strong interest in joining the Wilderness Coast Public Libraries Cooperative. When we met, they expressed to me that they would like to have the support of WILD in order to integrate their collection with ours (move them to Koha and share in our ILL system), have access to our digital materials, and gain IT support. They want to maintain their independent status as a municipal library while improving the resources for the community they serve.

GOAL

- To assess whether adding the Margaret Key Library would be beneficial or detrimental to the Wilderness Coast Public Libraries Cooperative.

Research

- Marian Deeney

I have contacted Marian Deeney, Library Program Administrator for the Department of State, to ask her opinion on adding the Margaret Key Library (Apalachicola) to our Cooperative. She outlined six observations:

1. By joining Wilderness Coast, Apalachicola would then be eligible to apply for State Aid. As a member of the cooperative the eligibility requirements would be met at the cooperative level.
2. Statute and rule regarding public library cooperatives only mentions counties in terms of multi-county grants. No mention of municipality participation in a multicounty, but nothing to prevent it either.
3. Apalachicola's local expenditures will not count toward Wilderness Coast's grant amount as the multicounty grant funding amount is based on member counties' expenditures up to one million dollars (257.12 FS)

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4. The only way Apalachicola's local expenditures could help in getting more State Aid would be if they either joined in a cooperative agreement with Franklin or became part of Franklin County's library system. If they did that, then Apalachicola's expenditure could count toward Franklin's and thus increase Franklin's State Aid and then also help WILD as the county's expenditures count toward WILD's grant amount.
 5. In looking at the 2020-21 State Aid formula, it will not matter in either case, as WILD is already over one million dollars in local expenditures (\$1,064,372). Until (hopefully not) their expenditures dropped below one million, it would not make any difference.
 6. If Apalachicola applies for State Aid to Libraries Grant funding, they would have to offer services to all residents in the three counties.
- Cooperative Library Directors Robyn Drummond, Natalie Binder, and Whitney Roundtree
 - The library directors have concerns that switching the Margaret Key collection to Koha will be time-consuming and costly.
 - IT services will be expensive and potentially difficult because of the library's location.
 - DLLI service is expensive and adding another location could potentially strain the budget
 - Franklin has shown resistance in the past to taking on the responsibility of adding Apalachicola to their library system
 - Wakulla is facing a potential budget cut and stretching our resources at present may not be wise.

Potential Benefits

- Access to the Margaret Key collection, including their unique Florida collection
- Shared programming
- Access to their Memory Lab

My Opinion at Present

Future economic uncertainty not only for the funding of multicounty library cooperatives, but for the Wakulla County Public Library in particular, raises concerns about WILD's ability to take on more expenditures and responsibilities. While I would like to help improve services to the community of Apalachicola, now is not the time to strain our budget. This could be revisited in the future when we have a better understanding of how library funding will be supported.

Update 6/22/21

Funding for library cooperatives has been reinstated. Additionally, the Margaret Key Library has stated that they would like to be added with minimal financial impact on the cooperative. They are willing to accept an associative membership status, which provides them with the ability to apply for State Aid, access our digital collection of services, and participate in ILL services with the member libraries, but excludes them from financial support for IT services. Further research on whether this is a viable option is required.

Update 8/4/21

Research on an associative membership has concluded that it is not a viable option. According to Marian Deeney:

"The State Aid program is not set up to work in the scenario that you described. The multicounty cooperatives were set up to encourage and support counties who choose to join together to provide library services to their residents. A member must either be fully a part of the Cooperative or not.

The way in which the funding formula is set up would not allow a municipal library's expenditures to count toward the determination of the multicounty grant amount.

The only way that a municipal library's (Apalachicola) expenditures would benefit the cooperative would be if the municipality was a part of a cooperative arrangement with the county (Franklin). By doing so, the municipality's expenditures would be included

with the county's expenditures so the county would receive more State Aid. This larger amount of expenditures from a member county would allow the cooperative to receive increased funding. Cooperative funding is determined based on the amount of the member libraries local expenditures."

The Margaret Key Library has hired a new director. We would like to invite her to our monthly directors' meetings to catch her up on our goals and objectives as a cooperative and to give her advice and guidance on how to apply for State Aid. We would also like to provide guidance and support in aligning the Margaret Key library with ours so that we could eventually invite them to join the cooperative.