

https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/arrowhead-lakeshores-library-systems-exploring-merger/article_8f047944-06f5-11ed-b0ee-8fe353c6cddd.html

Arrowhead, Lakeshores library systems exploring merger

By Ryan Spoehr Adams Publishing Group. Jul 18, 2022

Two library systems that currently operate across three counties, including Rock and Walworth, are considering a merger to improve their services. The change could be finalized as early as September.

The Arrowhead Library System currently serves much of Rock County, and the Lakeshores Library System serves much of Walworth County and part of Racine County.

At a special meeting Thursday, July 14, the Milton Library Board voted to formally support the merger, Milton Library Director Ashlee Kunkel said. That followed recent statements of support submitted to the committee from the Barrett, Graham, Walworth and the Waterford libraries.

“We’ve been sharing a catalog and other resources with Lakeshores since 2017,” Kunkel said. “This would further streamline resources and services.”

The Arrowhead Library System is made up of the Milton, Clinton, Edgerton, Beloit and Orfordville public libraries. It also includes Hedberg Public Library in Janesville and Eager Free Public Library in Evansville.

The Lakeshores Library System consists of the Darien Public Library, Aram Public Library in Delavan, the Brigham Memorial Library in Sharon, the Fontana Public Library, the Matheson Memorial Library in Elkhorn, the Lake Geneva Public Library, the Genoa City Public Library, the Barrett Memorial Library in Williams Bay, the Walworth Memorial Library, the East Troy Lions Public Library, the Burlington Public Library, the Graham Public Library in Union Grove and the Waterford Public Library.

The “Forming the New System” document details how in the first year after the merger, the new system would have to engage in strategic planning, including understanding the needs and expectations of the individual libraries. It would also have to build a new culture for the libraries across the three counties and determine, develop and prioritize services.

The document further says that in the second year, priorities would include consolidating delivery service, determining where the new system offices would be located and refining the staffing model.

To see the committee’s agendas, related documents and virtual meeting links, go to www2.lakeshores.lib.wi.us/library-system-merger-exploration-1.

The Lakeshores Library System also shares resources with the Kenosha County Library System. There is no current discussion about the Kenosha County Library System being a part of the merger.

https://www.hngnews.com/milton_courier/news/local/milton-library-board-supports-possible-merger-of-arrowhead-lakeshores-library-systems/article_a3aa023a-9b81-5cf9-921b-12b26f702fed.html#tncms-source=infinity-scroll-summary-sticky-siderail-next

Milton library board supports possible merger of Arrowhead, Lakeshores library systems

By Ryan Spoehr Adams Publishing Group Jul 18, 2022 Updated Jul 25, 2022

Two library systems that operate across three counties, including Rock County, are considering a merger to improve their services. The change could be finalized as early as September.

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The Milton Library Board voted to formally support the merger at a July 14 special meeting, Milton Library Director Ashlee Kunkel said. That followed recent statements of support submitted to the committee from the Barrett, Graham, Walworth and the Waterford libraries.

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The Rock, Walworth and Racine county boards must still approve the merger if it is to happen.

In August 2021, the Arrowhead and Lakeshores system boards each approved exploring whether the systems should merge. The two boards established a committee to weigh the potential benefits of a merger, consisting of two trustees and two library directors from each system. Wisconsin Library Services has been working with the two systems in preparation for a potential merger.

The committee has met virtually eight times since December 2021. The next meeting will be Aug. 1. No agenda or documents had been made available as of Monday.

A document titled, "Forming the New System," was made available for a July 11 meeting of the committee.

According to that document, the committee is anticipating the Racine County Board to approve a merger resolution Aug. 22. It's also expecting a vote by the Rock County Board in early September and by the Walworth County Board sometime in August.

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The Lakeshores Library System also shares resources with the Kenosha County Library System. There is no current discussion about the Kenosha County Library System being a part of the merger.

<https://www.wclo.com/2022/07/19/local-library-systems-considering-merger/>

Local library systems considering merger

JULY 19, 2022 **NEWS LOCAL**

Two library systems that operate across three counties, including Rock, are considering a merger to improve their services.

Arrowhead Library System Director Steven Platteter says that merging with the Lakeshore Library system will help streamline the administrative process.

Platteter says that the merger was approved by the Arrowhead Board, but it still needs approval from multiple boards, including the Rock, Walworth and Racine county boards.

At a special meeting last week, the Milton Library Board voted to formally support the merger.

https://www.hngnews.com/milton_courier/news/local/arrowhead-lakeshores-library-systems-to-meet-for-next-merger-steps/article_f6f03b1c-0c61-11ed-8cd3-3f8330cdce35.html

Arrowhead, Lakeshores library systems to meet for next merger steps

By Ryan Spoehr Adams Publishing Group Jul 25, 2022 Updated Jul 27, 2022

The next steps in a potential merger of the library systems that serve Rock and Walworth counties will be discussed at a Zoom meeting on Monday, Aug. 1.

The board of the Milton-based Arrowhead Library System that serves Rock County has approved a system merger with the Lakeshores Library System, which serves Walworth and Racine counties. The Lakeshores board also approved the merger.

The next meeting of a committee that has been exploring the potential merger since last year is coming up on Monday, Aug. 1. At the meeting, Arrowhead Library System Director Steve Platteter and Lakeshores Library System Director Steve Ohs will give presentations on the next steps. That could include drafting a plan for a proposed combined system that would be due to the Department of Instruction by Oct. 15, per Chapter 43 of the Wisconsin State Statutes.

According to merger meeting documents at www2.lakeshores.lib.us under a “governance” tab, the Aug. 1 meeting is at 1:30 p.m. There is a zoom link listed on the agenda that’s in the online link.

All three counties’ respective boards of supervisors need to approve the merger. The committee anticipates the Rock and Racine county boards to discuss and potentially soon approve of a resolution to merge the systems. The committee expects a resolution presented before the Walworth County Board in October.

Platteter noted that the two systems have already been collaborating since 2018.

“One of the most difficult parts of a merger process has already happened. That was getting Arrowhead into the SHARE program,” Platteter said.

The Lakeshores’ SHARE consortium allows sharing of resources with public libraries in the Lakeshores’ system, as well as K-12 schools and school districts. According to the Lakeshores website, the SHARE program allows member libraries to combine resources for less money and time and provides “county and municipal governments a strong return on investment.”

Platteter said the collaboration was born out of Arrowhead's 2016 strategic planning process and a need to upgrade software. Platteter said software, called RockCat, that Arrowhead had been using to assist with checking out materials and connecting with other libraries in the system, was reaching the end of its life. With no updates expected, system officials looked elsewhere, he said. SHARE replaced RockCat.

"We started an enormous amount of collaboration with Arrowhead and Lakeshores. We started working together and using our strengths. They are really good with IT. We are good with public relations," Platteter said.

One downside, he said, has been that every decision that is made in collaboration has to be approved by both the Arrowhead and Lakeshores boards.

Platteter said money savings is not the primary reason for exploring the merger. He said the primary reason is to provide more services and to eliminate duplicated work across both systems.

"One efficiency is administrative work. Eventually there will be a reduction in operating expenses like with delivery systems and when office space gets consolidated, but that would probably occur over a period of time and not right away," Platteter said. "We are also looking at two staffs that compliment each other very well. That staffs would be integrated as well."

Collaboration between library systems and even mergers have been recommended on the state level, Platteter also noted.

In March 2019, a committee established by the DPI regarding a "public library system redesign" submitted a report to the state superintendent's office. The report recommended enhancing collaboration by "creating incentives and removing barriers among the Wisconsin public library systems" and reducing the number of the state's library system."

Arrowhead is only one of three library systems left in the state to cover only one county. The other two are the Kenosha County and Milwaukee Federated library systems.

Lakeshores also has a SHARE agreement with the Kenosha County Library System. There are no plans for the Kenosha County system to be part of the merger.

https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/libraries-across-southeast-wisconsin-planning-first-of-its-kind-merger/article_84bc97dd-bef6-5303-81be-ea40a3d90a57.html

and

https://journaltimes.com/news/local/libraries-across-southeast-wisconsin-planning-first-of-its-kind-merger/article_8ad063ca-0db6-11ed-9a35-978f67a8ec48.html

Libraries across southeast Wisconsin planning first-of-its-kind merger

Scott Williams Jul 28, 2022

BURLINGTON — In what could become a statewide model for consolidation, merger talks are underway to combine management of libraries from Racine to Beloit.

The merger of the Lakeshores Library System and the Arrowhead Library System would involve 22 libraries with a combined membership exceeding 280,000 throughout the neighboring counties of Racine, Walworth and Rock.

If all three county boards give their approval, the two library networks would combine effective Jan. 1, creating a single governing board to oversee facilities in all three counties.

Lakeshores includes five libraries in Racine County and 10 in Walworth County, while Arrowhead includes seven in Rock County. The consolidation would affect the Racine Public Library as well as others in Burlington, Lake Geneva, Elkhorn, Janesville, Beloit and elsewhere. While library visitors would not likely notice an immediate difference, officials say the merger would streamline operations, improve efficiency and save money.

State officials who help to fund libraries and have been urging consolidation for years think the potential Racine-Walworth-Rock alliance would encourage other library mergers.

Ben Miller, library services director for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, said he is confident that other library administrators would take note and would engage their neighboring library systems in merger talks.

“This opens the door,” Miller said.

Read the merger report < https://www.kenoshanews.com/read-the-merger-report/pdf_e47a3682-5274-585c-a079-5884f57043ef.html#tracking-source=in-article>

All three county boards are expected to decide on the library restructuring by September.

Meanwhile, local library boards in both the Lakeshores and Arrowhead systems are stepping forward individually to offer their support for the merger.

The Burlington Library Board in Racine County voted unanimously Tuesday to become the latest getting on board with the proposal.

Burlington Library Director Joe Davies said the consolidation would eliminate needless duplication of administrative resources by putting all 22 facilities under one management structure.

“It’ll be a different dynamic,” Davies said. “But I think it’s a good opportunity.”

Racine Library Director Angela Zimmermann said she, too, welcomes the potential for increased sharing of resources among libraries, as well as maximizing the impact of the combined financial assets.

The Racine Library Board has likewise voted to get behind the merger.

“There are a plethora of benefits and reasons this merger makes sense,” Zimmermann said.

Wisconsin currently has 16 regional systems managing a combined 380 public libraries statewide. The libraries are funded through a combination of state appropriations and local support.

All of the library systems come under the ultimate supervision of the state Department of Public Instruction — the same state agency that oversees public schools.

State officials have spent years trying to persuade library administrators to consider merging as a way of increasing efficiency and stretching dollars.

Mergers with neighboring systems took place about five years ago after a breakup of the struggling Mid-Wisconsin Library System, which had been serving Dodge, Jefferson and Washington counties. But no consolidation has taken place on a purely voluntary basis.

Officials with the Lakeshores and Arrowhead systems agreed last year to consider such a merger. The two neighboring networks already were working cooperatively on information technology, marketing, and circulation.

Lakeshores has a total of 108,804 members in Racine County and another 47,654 in Walworth County. Arrowhead has 126,259 throughout Rock County.

Together, the two systems receive \$1.3 million a year in state aid.

After the two formed a joint committee to study consolidation, the committee called for a merger earlier this summer, saying, “This merger will benefit the member libraries and the public they serve.”

On the eight-member committee, only one person voted against moving toward a merger: Racine County Board Supervisor Bob Miller, who serves on the board of the Lakeshores system.

Miller, no relation to the state's Ben Miller, said he had misgivings about whether the merger concept was vetted thoroughly enough. After system administrators promised to draft more detailed plans later, Miller said he agreed to add his support.

The board of the Arrowhead system endorsed the new alliance July 13, and the Lakeshores system board did the same on July 19.

Miller added that he suspects the library consolidation will pass muster with the Racine County Board, too.

"I cannot predict how everyone is going to feel about it," he said. "But I think there are plenty of pluses."

All public libraries that receive state funds are required by Oct. 15 to present DPI with operating plans for the coming year. If the merger receives support at the county board level, Lakeshores and Arrowhead officials plan by Oct. 15 to present the state with detailed plans for the as-yet-unnamed consolidated library network.

Steve Ohs, director of the Lakeshores system, said the new tri-county system then would "go live" when the new year begins on Jan. 1.

Ohs said he has heard no opposition from any local library board, and he is feeling increasingly upbeat about the merger's future.

"I think there's a good path forward," he said. "It's very heartening to see."

Libraries across southeast Wisconsin planning first-of-its-kind merger

Scott Williams Jul 28, 2022 Updated Jul 31, 2022

https://www.lakegenevanews.net/news/local/libraries-across-southeast-wisconsin-planning-first-of-its-kind-merger/article_1df2c311-fdc6-502d-a8a1-803546c2d573.html

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Comstock Park @ Beloit - MLB Game Preview for August 09, 2022 7:08 PM[menu](#)

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<https://www.wclo.com/2022/09/13/rock-county-board-of-supervisors-approves-library-system-merger/>

Rock County Board of Supervisors approves library system merger

SEPTEMBER 13, 2022 NEWS LOCAL



Rock, Racine, and Walworth Counties are another step closer to joining their two library systems.

The Rock County Board of Supervisors approved a merger between the Arrowhead Library System and the Lakeshores Library System at their meeting last week.

County Board Supervisor Bill Wilson says as part of the agreement, Rock County funds will remain in Rock County.

Wilson says the merger will result in less dollars being spent on administrative costs.

Racine and Walworth Counties still need to approve the plan.

The new Prairie Lakes Library System would begin operating on January first.

https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/arrowhead-and-lakeshores-library-systems-merger-heads-to-racine-walworth-county-boards/article_fd09b6a8-354d-11ed-bd5e-2fb01943e534.html

Arrowhead and Lakeshores library systems merger heads to Racine, Walworth county boards

By Ryan Spoehr Adams Publishing Group. Sep 16, 2022

The potential merger of the Arrowhead and Lakeshores library systems has been approved by Rock County, clearing its first hurdle.

The Arrowhead Library System is made up of libraries in Rock County, including Hedberg Public Library in Janesville and the Milton Public Library. The Lakeshores Library System is comprised of libraries in Walworth and western Racine counties.

The merger is next expected to be up for approval Oct. 4 by the Racine County Board. In Walworth County, it will go through the finance committee, which can recommend it for county board approval Oct. 11. That committee meets next Thursday.

According to state statute, a proposal for a library system merger is due by Oct. 15, effectively setting the deadline of Oct. 14. It will be a time crunch to get the approval from the other two counties, Arrowhead Library System Director Steve Platteter admitted.

“One advantage is we’ve already written a plan,” Platteter said.

The two systems have been collaborating since 2016 when they started sharing software, which allowed for all libraries in both to share books. However, to make decisions, items need to be brought before library systems, which slows actions down, Platteter said.

If approved, the new system will be called the Prairie Lakes Library System. The Arrowhead system is based in Milton and the Lakeshores system is based in Waterford. It is unknown where the new headquarters will be, but Platteter said it would be “centrally located” to serve all three counties.

In March 2019, a committee established by the DPI regarding a “public library system redesign” submitted a report to the state superintendent’s office. The report recommended enhancing collaboration by “creating incentives and removing barriers among the Wisconsin public library systems” and reducing the number of the state’s library system.”

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<https://www.wclo.com/2022/10/19/walworth-county-approves-library-system-merger/>

Walworth County approves library system merger

OCTOBER 19, 2022 **NEWS LOCAL**



The Arrowhead Library System is on track to merge with the Lakeshores Library System to become the Prairie Lakes Library System on January 1st.

Walworth recently became the third and final county to approve the merger, behind Rock and Racine Counties.

Arrowhead Library System Public Information Coordinator Tovah Anderson says it's going to save money on administrative costs.

Anderson says local library boards will maintain local control over their policies and procedures, and because library systems are funded through state appropriations, county budgets need not be altered.