

Great Falls Public Library
Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting
Thursday, September 5, 2024
Great Falls Public Library – Cordingley Room (Basement of the Library)
(Virtual access to meeting was available upon request)
(zoom recording of meeting is available on the Great Falls Public Library YouTube page)
5:30 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Jessica Crist (via zoom), Ms. Sam DeForest, Ms. Noelle Johnson, Ms. Whitney Olson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Anne Bulger

EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Rae Grulkowski – Cascade County Commissioner, Ms. Shannon Wilson – City of Great Falls Commissioner (via zoom)

EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Ms. Sarah Cawley, Mr. Aaron Kueffler, Ms. Susie McIntyre, Ms. Sara Linder-Parkinson

GUESTS PRESENT: Nancy Anleesa – Resident of Great Falls, Molly Beck – Resident of Great Falls, Jeffrey Brainard – Resident of Great Falls, Bill Bronson – GFPL Attorney, Keith Duncan – Resident of Great Falls, Gary Goettel – Resident of Great Falls, Alan Henry – Resident of Great Falls, Rebecca Henry – Resident of Great Falls, Matt Hudson (via zoom), Richard Irving – Resident of Great Falls, Bob & Cindy James – Resident of Great Falls, Gerry Jennings – Resident of Great Falls, Bob Kelly – Resident of Great Falls, Candice Kramer – Resident of Great Falls, Brianne Laurin – GFPL Foundation Executive Director, Catherine A Leffler – Resident of Great Falls, Paul Lloyd-Davies – Resident of Great Falls, Sharon McGowen – Resident of Great Falls, J Mortenson – no indication, Patty Myers – Resident of Great Falls, Sharon Patton-Griffin – Resident of Great Falls, Sandy Rice – GFPL Foundation Liaison, Judy Riesenbergl – Resident of Great Falls, Jenn Rowell – The Electric (via zoom), Carole Schile – Resident of Great Falls, Becky Scott – Resident of Great Falls, Melissa Smith – Resident of Great Falls, Mel Gurdotti – Resident of Great Falls, Terry Nelson – Resident of Great Falls, David Saslav – Resident of Great Falls, Corey Sloan – Montana State Library (via zoom), Trevor Sterns – Resident of Great Falls, Bill Tacke – Resident of Great Falls, Sue Warren – Resident of Great Falls, Donna Williams – Resident of Great Falls, Ena Woods – Resident of Great Falls, Nancy Zadick – Resident of Great Falls, GFPL Patron (via zoom), Carol (illegible) – Resident of Great Falls, Illegible – Resident of Cascade County

Ms. Olson called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Ms. Olson gave a quick overview of the reason for the special meeting and how the meeting will proceed.

I. AGENDA APPROVAL

Ms. Olson asked for an agenda approval.

Ms. Crist moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the agenda items as presented. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Olson opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Ms. Johnson clarified that the board would not be taking any votes until after the public has had an opportunity to speak. Ms. Olson confirmed.

Upon hearing no public comment or board discussion Ms. Olson called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Olson explained how public comment works at the library. If you would like to make a comment, you must come up to the podium, state your name and whether you are a city or county resident. You will be given three minutes to talk about anything on your mind. Ms. Linder-Parkinson will be running the timer. The timer will beep when you have 45 seconds left, and then again when your three minutes are up.

Ms. Olson reminded everyone that this is the time for public comment on things that are not on the agenda.

She asked if anyone would like to make public comment. Upon hearing none, she moved on to New Business.

III. NEW BUSINESS

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND THE CITY COMMISSION

Ms. Olson asked Ms. McIntyre to give some background regarding the work with the commission and the levy the library put to the voters. Ms. Olson added that this part was going to be a little bit historical. Since this is the public record, we would like to make sure everyone is aware of how the levy came to be.

Ms. McIntyre stated that, thanks to funding from the Foundation, we had spent a long-time planning for the levy before we sent it to the voters. We were able to go through a master plan process where we spent time doing surveys and focus groups and getting feedback from the community to understand their needs.

The Foundation was able to pay for polling to find out what the community would support and what they were interested in. With all the data, we held a couple work sessions. In the October work session, we had the initial conversation with the City Commission. We had meetings with the county commission as well as meetings with other libraries. A lot of work was done.

In December 2022, we presented a proposal to the city commission. I looked at the input of everybody understanding what we proposed and what the commission understood.

At this time Ms. McIntyre shared a video clip of the conclusion of that meeting.

Ms. McIntyre added what was shown was what was put in front of the community.

Some people have asked why the 7 mills were not on the ballot; the answer is your existing funding is never on the ballot. When the City put the public safety levy on the ballot, they did not list any existing entitlement or general funds. The school district doesn't list their existing funds either.

What the voters were asked is if they were willing to pay extra taxes in order to support expanded library services.

Every presentation we did, our website, and in all of our communications we were very clear that the budget we planned included the seven mills but did not include the \$350,000 general fund subsidy. That is what we based our promise on.

In order for the library to meet all those promises, we hired staff because it takes staff to expand services.

Ms. Olson asked if any board members had questions regarding the funding package that was put before the voters as part of the levy. Upon hearing none, Ms. Olson asks if Ms. McIntyre would talk about the current budget situation.

At this time Ms. McIntyre displayed the Putting Meaning to the Numbers handout on the screen.

Ms. McIntyre stated that there are a few options that the negotiation committee has put before the board.

One option is the library's proposal to lose 2.5 mills, giving back a little over \$300,000 annually to support other city priorities. This is in addition to the \$350,000 in the general fund that was already given back.

The city's proposals are to take 3.5 mills for two years and then take all 7 mills permanently. This means that for the first two years that would be a cut in the library's budget of \$421,400 and then going forward \$842,800. We are using pretty specific numbers. These are based on FY 2025 values.

We all learned last year that the value of a mill goes up and down, we cannot predict what the Department of Revenue will do with the millage. Going forward, we are using the value of the mills based on our budget.

With our current budget, we are meeting our promises. We are open 7 days a week, we're providing a lot more educational programming, we've expanded our digital resources, the bookmobile is running six days a week, parking is free, and we have greatly improved library safety. We used to be in the top five places, year in and year out, that called dispatch. In June we didn't call dispatch a single time. We did have a couple calls in July and August, but they were for behavior and then we had some due to heat stroke and other medical stuff. The drop has been significant. Attendance at the library is up. We've restarted the homebound services for seniors and those with disabilities. Our programming has just gone through the roof. We were able to hire a fantastic community engagement coordinator, and a communication person, and our community interaction has increased.

For the way the budget is billed; We have the two voting mills. Back in 2000, the city of Great Falls voted to provide two mills of funding to the library. There are the 15 voting mills that we're so grateful that the community supported in 2023. There are seven mills by agreement. The intergovernmental funds are the funds we get from Cascade County, from the State of Montana, and then the other income is rent from the places that rent from us, parking usage, paying for copies, a very minor part of our budget.

We understand that the city is having budget difficulties and we also understand that the value of a mill is larger than when we first proposed it, but that is mostly offset by the fact that our expenses are up.

We remind everybody that in December of 2022, we didn't know that we would be negotiating 8% raises for our union employees or that our elected utilities cost would triple. We've all experienced inflation, so we know prices have gone up.

If we accept the library proposal, and we get the city to come back to the negotiation table and consider our offer, it would look like this:

We have the two mills, we have the 15 mills, we have 4.5 mills, and then the other things stay the same. That's about \$300,000.

Without the 3.5 mills, we would be looking at cuts. 3.5 mills is a sacrifice and it would mean we would have to delay some things. It would mean we are not going to be able

to invest for deferred maintenance, and we all know this 56-year-old building has a lot of deferred maintenance.

Taking out another mill will really mean that the board has to make some decisions about what they want to cut. We are not saying that you need to do all of these things, but we would probably have to do up to half of these things, depending on which ones you pick.

That would mean everything stays the same but you can see the red portion which is the funds from the agreement drops in half. That would be for the first two years of if the agreement was in place which would be fiscal year 26 and fiscal year 27

Step two would be the library budget without seven mills. Basically, half of the increased money that was voted, would have come to the library. We would basically then be giving back pretty much half of our increase and so we wouldn't be able to meet our promises. The board would have to make some really hard decisions about what they wanted to cut.

In this case, our revenue would look like this: the entire Mills by Agreement is gone and we are just supported by the two voted mills, the 15 voted mills, the intergovernmental, and then the other revenue.

For the zero scenario, we would have to be open fewer hours, and that would probably mean cutting two days. It could mean being open six days a week but much shorter each day because we would have to lay off staff. We would have to lay off up to eight staff depending on which people we choose to lay off. We were able to add a new IT person and then begin to offer open tech hours. We have plans for doing more training for technology. Without additional staff, that's not going to be able to happen at all. We might have to cut programming staff. It is possible that we would not be able to continue to have the safety specialists and so then we would be back to having library folks doing de-escalation. We would not be able to control the grounds; the presence just would not be there.

We wouldn't be able to keep all of our youth services staff, so we would have to cut back. This September we have more than doubled our weekly early literacy programming so we now have early literacy programs five days a week. We would also not be able to have the bookmobile run six days a week.

Ms. Olson asked if those are all decisions that this board would be involved in. Ms. McIntyre said "Absolutely, those would be board decisions. When we approve the budget, then we would have to define what your priorities would be. My work plan is based on a strategic plan that you guys have given me. These were all in the strategic plan, but you can only do the things that you have the funding and the staff to do. I would have to say to you, yes, you have assigned me to do all these things and I do not have the resources to do them, so what would you like me not to do?"

Ms. Olson thanked Ms. McIntyre and asked what questions the board and ex-officios have regarding the putting the meanings of the numbers document?

Ms. DeForest wanted to clarify, if we reduce by the 2.5 indicated on page 3, it says staff training. Does that include cuts to staff, or just staff training?

Ms. McIntyre stated it was cuts to training. We had plans to do a big customer service training for all of the staff. We also had plans to have people go on field trips to Missoula to see some of the really innovative things that they are doing. That just would not be in the cards because we won't have that extra income.

Ms. Johnson had a question on the same page. One of the three things listed as a possible impact is the delay in building repairs and maintenance. At prior board meetings it was asked when planning the budget that there's no particular projects that were budgeted for in this year's budget in regards to maintenance. When it says that's a cut, one of the three that could total \$301,000; what projects, building repairs, and maintenance are we talking about? There were not specific long term items for projects that were accounted for.

Ms. McIntyre explained that Fiscal Year 2024 was a big year with lots of changes. We went from 19 to 34 full time employees. We had a lot of changes and the management staff and the team said, please do not do any projects for this upcoming year. We need to get the things done that we need to do. Our plan as a management team and with our new custodian was to really spend some time this year to look at what our deferred maintenance needs are. We're still having water in the basement. We're still having several other things. We're in the midst of the design work with Cushing Terrell. The plan was that we would get to some of those critical things and see if we could address them in the next fiscal year. If these cuts happen, then we will not be able to try to do any of those things next year.

Ms. Johnson asked Ms. McIntyre, "In your tenure as the library director, you mentioned that mills go up and down. I know, and at least in the past, there hasn't really been a season when mills have gone down. In your tenure at the library, what is your known history of that mill value; because most typically that value is only going up?"

Ms. McIntyre replied that that is correct, historically the mill value has gone up. In extensive conversations with Ms. Kinzler, the fiscal director at the city, there is a lot of concern about the mill values going forward. Calumet is the biggest property taxpayer in Cascade County. They have protested their taxes year after year and my understanding is that they are considering applying to have their entire biodiesel set off into a non-profit which would reduce their taxes. I'm being very conservative, as directed by the city, that we should not assume that the mill values will continue to go up because we are not sure what's going to happen. If I said in the past, they thought that, I misspoke.

In talking with Ms. Kinzler, I have been told many times that there's a possibility that it will go down because of that.

Ms. Wilson asked Ms. McIntyre to remind everyone what service calls were from the Great Falls PD before we had the safety specialist, a monthly average before we had safety specialist?

Ms. McIntyre stated that it went up and down, and that we were in the top 5. She would estimate that we called the police a couple times a week. Ms. Linder-Parkinson added that it was closer to 15-25 calls a month.

Ms. Johnson said in general conversations in the public, the thought is that this money is going towards or could potentially go towards safety. Somebody pointed out to me today that the seven mills are actually that agreement. In 1993, legislature did MCA 22-1304, and that allowed the city to make an agreement for up to seven mills, and it actually says, that the governing body can establish the agreement, but not to exceed seven mills on the dollar. It goes on to say that that money can only be put into a library fund. So it's not voted on; it's just the governing body agreement, so that money isn't part of the general fund. My question then lies in, and this is maybe for the negotiating committee, did discussions come up in the negotiating committee that if, because the phrase is used to give it back to the city, but is it being given back to the city or is it just gone? That's why I said maybe that's a Ms. Wilson question, a negotiating committee question, because I can't find it anywhere in the city budget stuff that the city has said it's going somewhere.

Ms. Olson introduced Mr. Bronson. He is the library attorney on the negotiation committee. He will be taking us step by step through what happened in the negotiation committee meetings between the city and the library.

Ms. McIntyre added that it changed in 1993, and that it is her understanding that those seven mills have been coming from the general fund and that it would go back to the city and they can spend it on other priorities.

Ms. Johnson asked Ms. Wilson if in her knowledge are they part of the general fund. Ms. Wilson said that I'm not sure I can answer that, whether I've got enough experience to be able to answer that.

Ms. Olson asked if there were any more questions regarding this document. Upon hearing none, she asked Mr. Bronson to give some background on how the negotiations work.

Mr. Bronson addressed the board and said, "I've been around the trustees and members of the public here during a very short version of this and I'm certainly able to answer any particular questions about the negotiation process.

As you know, the commission in March of this year requested that the parties reopen negotiations on the terms of the agreement between the Library Board of Trustees and our City Commission.

Based on that, both entities will appoint negotiation teams to conduct those negotiations. From the city, we have commissioners McKenny and Wolf, city attorney Dennis, and city manager Mr. Doyon. On one occasion Mr. Doyon was not available so acting city manager Mr. Larson participated in conversations

The library's negotiation team consisted of trustees Olson and Bulger, Director Ms. McIntyre, and myself as legal counsel.

There were two sessions that were held on April 2nd, the second on May 1st. It's fair to characterize those as general discussion sessions in which the representatives of the city spoke in very general terms what they hoped to accomplish in the course of their negotiations. It was also an opportunity for the trustee representatives to represent to the city team what they felt was most important in terms of the library, and the library continuing to function.

On June 3rd, the third meeting in the cycle, the City then presented a draft of what they wanted to see in terms of their proposal. Much of that proposal that was presented at that time is still part of this agreement that they refer to now as their last best final offer. The important thing to consider though at that time was that the city's position with prospective funding is that they simply wanted to have the library trustees work on the available mills that had been approved in the event of the city charter back in 2023. In other words, the seven mills that were part of the 1993 agreement would go away. And in a more specific answer to trustee Johnson's question, at that time at no time had the city discussed in detail how they viewed the seven mills, where it came from, what it was considered in their terms of their overall budget. They simply proposed at that time to no longer provide the seven notes and that would begin in the fiscal year 25-26 because they are still bound by the terms of the agreement for the specific year.

The fourth meeting that was held was on June 24th. At that time, the library presented its counter proposal to that. There was some agreement on some of the city's proposed changes. There were some alternatives that were suggested to others, but on the principal question of funding, their trustee representatives simply proposed that we keep the existing seven bills in addition to the voted bills that would be available under the conditions of the charter. The city representatives then went back and then they asked for a meeting which was held on July 23rd. They presented a new proposal at that time. This was when they proposed that in the next fiscal year the commission was

willing to divide three and a half mills They were willing to continue that into the following fiscal year, but then in subsequent fiscal years, that contribution would be up.

I should mention that from the get-go, the parties have been working with the idea that whatever agreement was reached would be a five-year agreement. So in other words, what the Commission was telling them is that for those first two fiscal years after this one, it'll be three and a half, three and a half, and then nothing for the remaining two.

Your trustees took that proposal and after some consideration went back and asked for a meeting with the city representatives that was held on August 14th of this year. Basically the library's counter-proposal on funding was that they would be willing to forgo certain appropriations this year. In other words, even though the Commission already agreed to appropriate a certain amount of funds for this fiscal year, the trustees were willing to suggest that they would give back approximately \$250,000 in appropriation this year, and likewise do the same in the subsequent two fiscal years.

The city representatives took that back for consideration and asked for a meeting on August 28th. At that time, they indicated they were not going to move off the prior proposal which was to leave things as they are this year then only provide three and a half mills the next two fiscal years.

The representatives of the city at that time indicated this was what they considered their last best final offer. In other words, this is what your representatives will prepare to take to the city commission for an up-and-down vote, or whatever other action the majority of the commission has to take that time is considered.

Because of that, your trustee representatives felt it best to bring that proposal to you for board consideration. Obviously you have seen in your packet your trustee representative has come up with, what they believe is a better response to the city proposal if the City will be willing to reopen negotiations.

But that is pretty much a fair summary of what was discussed. The only other thing I would add is that in the process of coming to an agreement, the parties have essentially agreed on most of the other terms of what would go into an agreement. There is one provision of that agreement. It's one dealing with indemnification. City Attorney Dennis and I have been talking about that and depending upon what, if anything is agreed to, that may have to be discussed because of some issues related to the Montana Municipal Authority. But it's not a critical issue at this time. It's not one that really gets in the way of the parties coming to a resolution that is possible. But other than that, Madam Chair, I think that further summarizes the negotiation process."

Ms. Olson asked if Mr. Bronson would speak to the process we went through in terms of the department head.

Mr. Bronson stated that it would require a little bit of history. Back in 1993, when the city negotiated the agreement with the then trustees, the one that's still in effect today, there was some conversation back and forth between the parties about how do we deal with the position of the library director.

By statute, by the provisions of the library code that were adopted in 1967, it's contemplated that the library director would basically be somebody appointed by the trustees and would be managed solely by the trustees.

The agreement that was entered into with the city back in 1993 does have some role towards city manager, but the hiring and evaluation of the library director, although again the library director is somebody that, at least according to the statute, should be hired by the trustees.

I can't speak to all the reasons why they agree to the language that they give back in 1993 except to say that there is some effort to try and populate some very conflicting provisions of law. You have the 67th statute dealing with libraries, library trustees operate how staff are required to. You have the 2001 amendments that were adopted to develop budgeting laws. You have the fact that since 1986 the city has operated under a city charter, which to some extent gives the city much more leeway in how it conducts its relationship internally with its departments. You have references in a number of city statutes to the library director being quote-unquote a department head.

What has happened up to this point in time is that the library director has had much more free reign to run daily affairs of the library as a department of city than other department heads have had in terms of their operation and management in their respective departments.

The city has worked through negotiation with the process of saying we just want to abide by the statute and welcome trustees to appoint the director. We don't want to be involved in that particular management scenario. Your trustees certainly understand that, but what they tried to get across was the fact that we still have all these provisions and other statutes and ordinances identifying the role of the library's department. It may have also felt that it was critical that the library director be considered, to some extent, part of the management team in the city, being able to offer his or her advice for guidance to the manager and other department heads in the overall operation of the city.

It took a while for both parties to really kind of come to a better understanding, I think, of what each must find in the language that you see in the current proposal from the city, which your trustees said they are willing to work with. Basically it continues to identify your director as a liaison to the city. There are some specified situations in which the library director will be consulted, will be part of the overall management functions of the city. But again, I think it's best to characterize it as a compromise

between the parties and all of the different statutes in trying to reconcile some varied situations.

Ms. Olson asked if anyone had questions for Mr. Bronson about how the actual renegotiation works.

Ms. Johnson asked if she could ask a legal question about the agreement. Ms. Olson stated that we are going through the agreement next, and that Ms. Johnson can address the question then.

Ms. DeForest had a question about being the head of the department. The city has brought this up that the directors would not be a head of the department, and they wouldn't do it unless it was beneficial to them. What are the pros and cons as to whether it should or shouldn't be a head of the department?

Ms. McIntyre stated, "this has been a complicated question. One of the things that's been really hard for me through this whole negotiation is there's the city and the library. The public library was established by Paris and Valeria Gibson when they established the city of Great Falls. We have been part of the City of Great Falls for over 130 years. We're important. That said, we also are a weird duck because of the Montana Code and our independence. So it's complicated. The value of being a department head is that we get internal service charges from the city. I work with the head of fiscal on our budget and on our invoices, and I work with the head of HR, and I work with the city attorney, and right now being a department head, that's really clearly laid out. We're both department heads, if we have a disagreement, we can go to the city manager, and we can work that through. Most of the time, department head to department head, we can work things through, but the truth is that sometimes we disagree about how things go.

The value of being in the department is being able to sit at the table and give the perspective about what's happening at the library and how well the things is going. It's easier to build relationships. Having two different managers because I answer both to the library board and to city manager to go in can sometimes be difficult to manage. I feel like we've done really well and historically over the 30 years it has worked well.

Termination of this agreement would not have been good and so I think that this is something, if it is a barrier to getting to yes and getting those people back at the table, I think that this is something that can be worked through. I think everybody will make good faith efforts, and that I certainly hope that I and future directors continue to build good working relationships with all of the city departments."

Ms. Olson asked if it is fair to say then that you would not be at the meetings with all of the departments learning about overarching city scenes and what's going on across the board?

Ms. McIntyre stated that, "it is my understanding is that I would be invited to the twice a month department head meetings where we discuss the upcoming city commission meetings and then I would be invited to trainings or other meetings at the invitation of the city manager and that then I would be able to establish my own relationships with other departments.

If we're paying for HR services, I will certainly feel comfortable picking up the phone to talk to the head of HR. When we're paying for those services, we will be interacting with them. I think it will have to be worked out. We haven't done it that way before, so we would have to figure out a good way to do it. I have very strong hopes that everyone will just continue to work in good faith to build strong relationships together."

Ms. Johnson had a question about the renegotiation. In the packet, on page two, there was a statement that said Library Renegotiation Committee Principle. When was that decided upon? Ms. Olson stated that our biggest concern with coming to the negotiation table is that we have gone to the voters and specifically said if you pass this mill levy this is what we will take. We laid out a very clear plan A to the community of here's what you get if you pass this mill, and a very clear plan B if it did not pass. If you remember that included cuts and we were not at the point where we could even maintain what we were doing. We felt that by passing that mill that our biggest obligation is to the voters of Great Falls and following through with the commitments that we have made to this.

So I think very early on all four of us were aligned that we had the legal and moral obligation to follow the will of the voters and provide essential library services.

Ms. Johnson asked a follow-up question: "If just this principle was developed early on, and then, and I guess as the rest of the board, I know there was reports given and brought. I believe most every time the answer was, you know, we're still working on it, the ball's in library court, or the ball's in the city's court. A board member, I actually think that should have been shared with us at the beginning of the process if that was the principle that the board was going forward. That's not a question. I just feel like that should have been shared with the board as a whole. It wasn't in regards to specific details of the negotiation. I think that is easily something that could have been shared with the board."

Ms. McIntyre replied that she believed she had said that, early on, when we started this. I can go back and look but I believe I said that.

Ms. Crist added that the board has kind of gone back and forth with the commission on the requirement to report annually to the city commission and for some years the director reported and then this last year we were told that no that wasn't adequate we need to be here from the board and so the board all showed up and did our reporting. Does either of these agreements make any change the relationship between the

trustees and the city commission? Ms. McIntyre stated that it is in the Montana Code Annotated that we provide an annual report.

Ms. Olson stated that we're ready to move on to the actual Agenda report. She said, "Those of you that aren't familiar with these, basically what happens is we have committees that have served through various topics at the library. The things that come to mind recently are, we had a committee to address the situation in the park. The recommendation that came out of that was taking down the band shell. We had a remaining committee when folks were interested in looking at whether or not the library should be renamed after Alma Smith Jacobs. We had a board Job description committee. We've had several things that we've worked on. And so at the end, we've provided a document so that you understand what we've done and what the recommendation of that committee is to the board.

I'm not going to run you through this verbatim because everybody's got the opportunity to look over this, but it talks about the history of how we got where we are today. I think Ms. McIntyre did a good job taking us through these work sessions with the commission where we identified that we were going to go for the 15 mills. We talked about the library negotiation principle already. The thing that we came out of that, the thing that became very clear in the renegotiation committee was that there's no scenario where the 7 mills can be reduced to zero and we can still provide the level of service that we do right now. I think you saw that when Ms. McIntyre took you through the Putting Meaning to the Numbers, all of those charts.

We also realize that we need to adhere to the Montana rules and the city rules in this agreement and that we also definitely need to take into account that we need insurance for this building and the way that we get that is through MMIA and that the agreement is going to have to be written in a way that MMIA will approve liability insurance for us.

We talked about the renegotiation process, I think Mr. Bronson did a good job taking us through that. The structural impacts, this really lays out what's different between the agreement that the city gave us and the agreement that we're talking about in the regular bargaining business, what we would potentially go back to the city with. You can see that there are a lot of similarities. What I want to point out though are the differences.

The area that we that we are talking about having some differences in are the number of mills that would be that the city will give us in each year.

The part that I do want to draw your attention to and I will read what our actual Re-negotiation committee is the fiscal impact and I'm on page 4. So in fiscal year 25, the library budget revenue from the seven mills designated to the library that provides \$842,820, which is 27% of the budget revenue.

The city renegotiation committee will reduce the city funding to the library from seven mills in fiscal year 2025 to three and one half mills in fiscal year 26 and fiscal year 27. It then eliminates city funding for the library.

The library renegotiation committee strongly objects to this severe reduction in library funding. Without needed funding, library hours will be reduced. We will no longer be able to be open seven days a week. Early literacy and family education programming will be reduced. We will not be able to expand our home-bound program. Expanded digital resources will not be able to be maintained and library safety improvements will not be maintained.

The people of Great Falls voted for and passed a levy to increase library services, not for the money already allocated to the library to be repurposed to make up for the failed public safety levy. For 130 years, the City of Great Falls has provided funding for the library because our community understands the importance of literacy and access to information.

We are disappointed by what appears to be the view of the majority of this commission to ignore the will of the voters. This decision by the City Commission is a bait and stitch. They told voters that these mills would be used to increase the library's hours on programs, but now they are retracting their promise and using these funds to shore up their budget, knowing that the take-back will not be sufficient to address their stated public safety needs.

With this proposal, the library will not be able to meet its promises to voters because the Commission is reneging on its commitment to the library and the Great Falls community."

Ms. Olson stated "that was our response to the first part of the agreement from the city. The second part is what we're coming to this board and recommending that we give back to the city.

The library renegotiation committee proposal reduces the city funding for the library from seven mills for each fiscal year to four and one half mills for each fiscal year.

The Great Falls Public Library is incredibly grateful to have the support of our community. We know that times are tough for many and they pass the library levy anyway. We do not take that lightly. We are doing everything we can to treat those

resources with the care they deserve. We quickly implemented the programs and services our friends, neighbors, and business community asked for and needed. Since the library levy passed we hit the ground running, we made promises and we are keeping them. Visits to the library, checkouts of material, and attendance at library programs have already increased significantly. We've already improved access by making library parking free. We are providing more educational programming and access to more digital resources including ebooks and language resources and hosting free online classes for job seekers and local business owners.

The library is now open seven days a week and the bookmobile provides service six days a week. We restarted our homebound services for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. We are providing more educational programming for children and families. We have improved library safety.

In going out with a library levy, the library proposed a budget that provided \$181,000 for necessary library improvements and unexpected expenditures. Any responsible fiscal agent knows that it is unwise to create a budget that spends all incoming revenue without considering deferred maintenance and emergency needs.

Due to the property reevaluation done by the Department of Revenue in the summer of 2023, there was an increase in revenue from the projected amount of library mills.

To be good partners, give back to our community, and assist the commission in dealing with the consequences of the failed public safety levy, the library renegotiation committee proposes as a compromise to reduce the city's financial support of the library from 7 mills to 4 and ½ mills. The library's return of the \$350,000 general fund subsidy already provided and the proposed \$301,000 reduction in funding by the agreement will result in approximately \$650,000 yearly for the city to use to address other needs. This proposal will allow the library to retain needed staff, meet our promises, and meet our promises for expanded services."

Ms. Johnson had questions. "On both the city's document and the library document, who is legally signing these documents? Are these agreements between the city commission and the library board? Mr. Bronson said he could answer the question. With respect to the city, the way that they handle these types of agreements is that when the commission votes to approve an agreement such as this? What they are doing is they are delegating the signatory authority for it to the city manager, but it's still the city commission that's approving the agreement.

Likewise, in the case of the library, the trustees have to approve the agreement and then either the chair or the designated representative of the trustees can sign it and they can delegate the signatory authority to you."

Ms. Johnson added, “one of my biggest comments really stems from the last five days with communications in the public and that was really when our packet came out too. It's really disingenuous to really make the statements of this is ignoring the will of the voters and it's reneging on its commitment to the library because it is two completely separate boxes of funding. There is 17 mills, which is exactly what was in the ordinance that the public voted on, and there is seven mills. I know you did mention this, that somebody had asked you about why the seven mills were not in the agreement, because it's not something the city has ever voted on. No voter has ever voted on it. It's really disingenuous to even use the charged language of the city is ignoring the will of the voters and reneging.

I know, something that was even pushed and shared at the city commission meeting, as well as in the emails that were shared with the commission, which have also been shared with the library board. I think that needs to be made very clear to the public, which even in this report, it's not made clear that these are two totally separate boxes of funding. And yes, they both impact the library budget because they're very separate boxes of funding. And I think that's really important to remember in our discussion because it is, it's part of the budget, but it makes it different how we're handling it because promises were made in regards to a 17 mills and a budget was prepared on full 24. I think it is messy, but the separation of funds is not messy. They're very delineated and I think that just needs to be made very clear which is not.”

Ms. McIntyre said “I respect that Ms. Johnson has that opinion. I disagree with that opinion. I think it was clearly shown in the work session that the Commission supported putting it before the voters, an additional fifteen mills with the expectation that they would continue to fund the seven. We say the library needs more money and they vote to give us fifteen mills of more money and then they take seven mills and give it to public safety. I still believe that it's correct to say that that goes against the law. The people did not vote to pay more taxes so that it could be taken for public safety, they voted to pay more taxes so that we could expand library services, so I respectfully disagree.”

Ms. Olson added, “as part of somebody that was in the room for that meeting, that is my recollection of how that went as well. That they were very clear that if we gave back the \$350,000, the City Commission would continue to fund the library with the seven mills.”

Ms. Johnson added, “I understand even from the clip you played, the 7 mills was brought up once in that. But I do want to go back, I spent the last five days also scouring and going over lots of the Yes for the Library, levy stuff, newspaper articles, all of those pieces. The 7 mills is not discussed in any of it. And I just want to even say, and thank you for sharing, but to make the statement that the public voted on an additional 15 mills and the city is taking away 7 is a little twisty and shadowy because the city is not touching any of those 15 plus 2 mills. And so I think that just needs to be very clear.

The city is not touching what the voters voted on. I reread the ordinance, even the word additional is crossed off.”

Ms. Crist added, “in a lot of the conversation that I have heard, it has been said, the library got all this money so we can take some, we can take some back. I mean, that may not be, you know, maybe there are two separate sources, but the way I've heard it talked about, not just from the side of people who want as much money for the library as possible, but also for people who really think the library doesn't need the extra money. I've heard it talked about, I've heard them lumped together. It's happening both ways.”

Ms. Johnson replied, “but that seven is not, and I think it's part of just the whole conversation, it is for the transparency in general. And you guys covered this well, especially in your, in this packet. Ms. McIntyre, you did a fantastic job of delineating the different boxes of funding. And I think the public in general, we are in the weeds. We've looked at the stuff; we've really looked at it. There's a population of over 60,000 in Great Falls, most of which are not in the weeds. And so we get that there's different boxes of funding, but I don't believe that's clear to the public. And so, I think it's important that that is very clearly delineated. I think the other piece which was brought up earlier in the meeting is there's uncertainty whether the city is really taking this back. Because nowhere in the city's budget does it allocate even the seven mills. If you look at the city budget documents for this fiscal year that was already undergoing, there is no mention of seven mills of library funding even under the library section. So it's not in there. And so I think that is definitely an unclear piece of, is this really going to happen in the city or is it just going to work?”

Ms. McIntyre said, “I'd just like to share, so I take issue with the statement that in none of the vote yes or none of the vote library, I was not in charge of the vote yes, I was in charge of the library and so I just think that I want to share the proposal that was on our website and was presented at every public meeting.”

Ms. Johnson said, “it doesn't mention the seven.” Ms. Olson asked that Ms. McIntyre be allowed to finish.

Ms. McIntyre continued “I start with what the ordinance is, what kind of communities we want, what the ballot will look like, what will happen if the levy passes, what will happen if the levy doesn't pass, here we make all of our promises. Then I put up the budget. If you attended any of the meetings that I did at, I made very clear, and you can see here, that we say, if the mill levy passes, we will get this money, and we will get the two voting mills, and we will get the seven mills by agreement, and that is what our program is based on. If it fails, this is what will happen. And this is our current budget. So I was out in the community a lot. We had this on our website. We provided this information to everyone who asked. You are absolutely correct that most voters are low information voters. And they probably have no idea, is it seven mills, is it this mills, is it

that mills. I think we just respectfully disagree. We disagree about how it's going forward.”

Ms. Olson asked for comments from Ms. DeForest.

Ms. DeForest said, “I feel like even if the public weren't in the meeting, they knew we were not starting off with zero. They knew that there was a certain amount of funding and we were asking for more. The optics on this do not look good because the public voted yes for the library and no for the safety and now the commissioners are just going to siphon off money to give to the safety. The optics don't look great on that.”

Ms. Johnson said, “I agree, but I also think that I'm not sure where that optic came from, because Susan Wolf and the Negotiating Committee have said they're not sure where that money is going. It was not talked about where, if that money is going anywhere. Mr. Bronson has even mentioned that. Just to lay on the table, it's unclear if that money is going anywhere, which therefore means it's not taking from Peter to pay Paul. That's an unknowing, we don't know that.”

Ms. DeForest read a statement from Ms. Bulger who was not present.

“I am disappointed not to be able to attend today's board of trustees special meeting, but I am a member of the library renegotiation committee that met with the city's renegotiation committee.

I've helped craft our report to the board and subsequent proposal to the city. Although, I am reluctant to give up funds in the community work so hard to procure through the passing of the levy, I fully support the Library's current proposal as crafted by the Library renegotiation committee.

The City's renegotiation committee is composed of Commissioners Joe McKinney and Susan Wolff, as well as the City's legal counsel David Dennis and the City Manager Greg Doyon.

At the very first negotiation meeting, Commissioner McKinney started out with a statement that he wanted the Library to be successful now, and in the future and believed in the importance to Great Falls of a strong and vital library.

As was evidenced by the Commission's office to remove all seven mills that the City electorate agreed to in voting for and passing a library levy, his statements were patently and plainly false.

The library and its director laid out the levy proposal to the City Commission four times with videos and slides and communicated exactly what That the library levy proposal

included the seven mills the library received through the agreement between the city and the library.

Both Rick Tryon and Joe McKinney stated that they would place the levy on the ballot, quote, to let the voters decide, end quote.

The voters did decide and now the commissioners are trying to circumvent their will.

The library promised and has given back to the city its \$350,000 funding. The voters were also promised many things if the levy passed. Expanded outreach programming for seniors, homebound and others, more stops and expanded hours of bookmobile, safety specialists to deal with problems within the library, no book finds, free parking and so many other improvements. Much of that has already been instituted.

The library will not be able to keep those promises because the commissioners have not kept theirs.

The commissioners' last and final offer is to allow the library the seven mills next year. The 2025 city budget has already been approved. 3.5 mills for the two succeeding years and absolutely no funding from the city thereafter. These 7 mills are 27% of the library's budget. This will set the library back substantially in a myriad of ways.

We believe that safety is very important to Great Falls for cutting the library budget to give the three departments each a drop in the bucket compared to what was asked from the safety levy is falling.

On another note, the commissioners are trying to take away the director's stand as a department head.

The library is a city department and under the library's charter and the city ordinances, her job is overseen by the city manager. She is the de facto department head. This arrangement has worked for 30 years, but our team was told, quote, it's confusing, end quote, and should be abolished. Our team disagrees very neatly. The director has developed relationships with other department heads, builds her position, allows her to have access to the city manager if any confusion exists among the departments and makes her an integral part of the city management team.

Very little actual negotiation took place in our meetings. The city made three offers, two of which were basically identical, one to take all seven mills now and forever and the other to take all the mills in three years.

Either way, these offers will hog-tie the library, force it to cut programs, hours of services and staff, and ruin the morale of those left.

We need to move forward, not backward, in surely making this library the one we all voted for, we all use, and we can offer to those arriving in great force for something we are very proud of.”

Ms. Olson stated that at this point I would like to talk about the agreement between the Library Board of Trustees and the City Commission. The City, with the City Commission as their last, best, final offer.

Ms. Olson asked if there was a motion.

Ms. Johnson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the agreement proposed by the City of Great Falls Commission. Ms. Olson asked if there was a second. Upon hearing none Ms. Olson asked if there was another motion.

Ms. Crist moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the agreement proposed by Library Renegotiation Committee. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Olson opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. “I'm going to speak very differently than all of you here tonight. I think what I've heard from a lot of people and their directors, to me, is smoke and mirrors, which has been a bit irrelevant to some of them in their behavior. And frankly, certainly, it would seem to me that we are pretty familiar with the specter of the situation.

I'm going to talk about your political situation. I think you are, and are very weak, the issue of political circulation. What are the four factors in that political situation? There's board, if you're appointed to a single council, the state council, the voters, and the courts, if you're in the city or the long run where you can't assume what's not to go. The most important matter is the voters, because the voters could Another year or two will reduce the number of members on the city council or increase the number that a year would. And what you need to consider there is the voters know nothing at all about buildings. One percent at most. They know nothing of all about this, that, all they know is, and you saw it tonight, is your director saying, if you pass this money, this is the amount of money you will pay on your property taxes.

Now if you said never leave the night, you should learn the ickiness of what a lot of you guys can do with producing tax dollars. But that's what they remembered. If their tax payment is more than they were promised it was going to be, they're going to hold it against you. You're going to hear a lot of stuff from a lot of good friends in the libraries here tonight, which I consider to be warm fuzzies. The political situation is the facts, but that's what you need to deal with. That's what you need to think when it's going to be voted before you stumble under something.”

Sharon Patton-Griffin, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "The way that I, the way that I am seeing the situation, if you vote for this, if we If you vote for this, your levy, your proposal, and the city votes for its proposal and votes against your proposal, what happens? That's my question."

Sandy Rice, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "I just have a really quick answer. The 7 mills is a separate box of funding. However, the existence of that 7 mills was a part of the voters' decision-making process. When they decided to vote for the levy, the 7 mills was included in their decision-making process."

Judy Riesenber, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "I was on the board for 10 years so it's very much support all the things that the library does. I think that in general the public does not know nor does the city even think about the fact that the library is open more or there's been any other city offices except police and fire.

When I was on the board we were open 56 hours a week and most of the other city offices were open 24 hours a week.

Another thing, when the library is open, it cannot be just the first floor, the entire library has to be open. Therefore, when I was on the library board, 75% of our budget was for staffing operations and so forth. The foundation could give books, supplies, things like that, the money from the foundation could not be used for staffing operations and paying for their salaries.

And also, the foundations money could not be used for capital improvements, so there's some big issues on the big parts of the budget that can only be provided for by the mill levy and by other things like that.

On the next door neighbor, a local thing online, someone just mentioned about the last legislature that the Montana Department of Revenue would notify the legislature that there would be skyrocketing home values so that would bring a major rise in residential property taxes and the lawmakers could lower the tax rate to keep the revenue neutral. Now she explained that a little bit more and I'm not too familiar with that but as a result of that a cause they did not do with as a result of our property taxes have quite a rise. The safety levy of 13 mills a year. Our money that would go for that is just kind of a drop in the bucket but it's close to 30 percent a third of the library's budget, they should yield a lot. I think it's really unreasonable of the City Commission to expect that of a library budget."

Alan Henry, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "Tonight, I'm in a meeting with 20 years experiencing government and 30 years experiencing non-profit. And I do understand budgets and cuts and I appreciate the challenges that you're facing. 27% in four-year period is a very significant cut. However, what has not surfaced or has not been talked about tonight that I'll try to spell out quickly and that is with the 27% cut in

force, that's still roughly 50% above what the budget was before the 2023 mill levy passed. There is still a significant increase from the community's perspective in the funding of the library.

I do strongly support the city's most recent proposal.”

Judy Mortensen, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. “I do agree with what Ms. Johnson said about the confusion between a levy and a bond issue. Majority of people with whom I spoke before the vote on the levy had no idea how it was tied to the taxes and how it was implemented. And also, the problem that we have particularly in the city and in Cascade County, getting those mills where they're staying where they tend to go and how they were intended to be used. I don't know how this library is going to be able to survive with only a 50% increase, but I think that they will be able to figure out where we need to go. I'd love to see the library have a lot more money, because I think the library is such an important piece of the city, but I do think that there was much confusion with the way the levy was perceived and the way it was presented in some of the meetings in which I attended.”

Paul Lloyd-Davies, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. “I'm going to talk about this because when Ms. McIntyre went through what will happen when the city takes that money, I lived it several years ago. I was a library employee; I got laid off. I suffered both as losing a job, and as a card holder in the huge reduction in hours and services. And people, you know, the city talks about, well, they need this money for public safety. And there's been a discussion tonight about what the reduction in the impact on city police services with the passage of the levy and the start of all those services. If that's not public safety, I don't know what it is. Plus, the fact that nobody seems to talk about all the studies that have been done on the value of literacy in reducing crime. What they're doing is this shell game, you know, guy on the street, okay, thinking about where the pea is. Well, you either take the money and you have to start providing all these additional services to the public safety, or you have the services that are preventive and reducing crime because of the positive impact of the services that the library provides. I think that's just crazy. I don't think the trustees should give the city anything. You know, other than that, what was it, \$300,000 that was in agreement on? Sure, fine. But, you know, they're just trying to pick the pocket and the pocket of all people who benefit from the library services provided. So, Go for it.”

Jeffrey Brainard, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. “I understand the choice that you are contemplating at this moment is one of Sophie's choice. Nobody likes either of them. Which one tastes worse? I get that. This building and this foundation was established in the spirit of great civic progress. Great Falls, in its early days, invested heavily in the spirit of great civic progress. With that spirit, I am attempting to speak to you now. Despite the probable fact that either which way that this decision goes, the library is going to be detrimented in some way. I urge you very strongly to allow the withdrawal of funds from the city in whatever respect, to only occur in the presence of

your vocal opposition. Do not agree. Tell them, fine, we'll put up with this, we disagree with it. Tell the town, we disagree with this. But do not go mild. If the city government is going to do this, perhaps there is nothing we can do if they got their minds made up. Force them to expend all their political capital that they have in order to do so. Because when the electorate of Great Falls saw the library levy, saw the educational information put out by the foundation and by the library itself, we did so with the full understanding that the city would maintain its funding of the library and we wish to enhance that funding. I believe we still wish to enhance that funding. So, if this is to come to pass, force them to spend their political capital because they too will be up for election soon and we will speak again."

Keith Duncan, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "You, as library board members, are faced with a tough decision. City Commission is also faced with a tough decision. You have a very narrow piece of the entire city pocket to consider. City commissioners have to consider the full pocket and all the residents of the city. Those of us that are business owners, those of us that run a household know that tough choices always have to be made. Every time in these days, every time you go to the grocery store, tough choices have to be made. I think the city has come back with a very reasonable offer and I'm disappointed the motion on that offer died for lack of a second. I'm not sure that this is a fight that is advisable, that you want to have, and probably most importantly, is winnable."

Bill Tacke, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "Just one clarification to point out. In the agreement that stated what the city wished on page 11, number 7, under term, when I compare that to page 17 in the current proposal, there was some wording that wasn't included on page 17 and I don't know if that was typographical or intentional. The last sentence was missing. I'm not sure if that makes a difference but I thought I would point that out.

I would just state that I think you do have political capital. I think it was pointed out in the board meeting that there is a city commission meeting later. Most likely a significant percentage of the people who voted for the library was the ones who supported the safety levy. Why they want to make us their enemy, I'm not sure. Why they came to terms with this negotiation in an offensive way, rather than saying, we as a city have a problem, how can you help us with this? They should be going to all the departments doing that, saying we're all on the same team, we're dealing with the same problems. I think that's the message they need to hear.

I kind of agree with the gentleman who stated, you know, don't give them any leeway, just say we want those 7 mills; cause that's what the community said. You know, you've got the 7 mills, now we want to add this to that, so you can provide the services that you said you can then provide, and that's what you've been doing. And it's a stepwise process. So, I think political capital is on your side. Yes, they can legally just take the 7 mills. They can cancel the negotiation and cancel the contract. The terms are there.

That's understandable. But do they really want to do that? Do they want to make enemies of the people that can be their best support in trying to solve this problem and going out and getting more support within the community to provide the funding that's needed to expand our public safety needs. And I think that's the message they need to hear. We want to be on the same team. We don't want to be on opposing teams."

Sharon Patton-Griffin asked if she may continue with her remaining two minutes. Ms. Olson asked Mr. Bronson for clarification. Mr. Bronson stated "Ultimately, you have a discretion to decide how you wish to handle that within the confines of your rules. I can tell you from past experience as a city commissioner that if somebody can come up and ask a question, which really is public comment, it's really wanting some time, the mayor will generally allow that person to come back. But if you do that, you must afford that same privilege to somebody else as well. Ms. Olson stated that Sharon Patton-Griffin could continue her public comment after the next speaker."

Donna Williams, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "If somebody has been giving me seven apples every year since 1993, I think I'm going to assume that that was the deal and I was going to get another seven apples. But, you know, that's... and no, I wouldn't care which box it was coming out of. I would just begin to rely on those seven apples.

I paid my taxes and I paid my, I can see now there's line items, so I can see that I'm paying 17 mills to the library, so I get 15 additional mills, and I want everything that the 15 additional mills provide. I want my money's worth, I want the full meal deal, I want the 15 apples, and I want the 17 apples, and I want all 24 apples because that's what I paid for. I want what I paid for."

Sharon Patton-Griffin, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "I have the same angry feelings, so I have to be careful when I say, but I believe and fight very hard for democracy. We have a democracy. We have both. Both spoke. That has nothing to do with How money is apportioned. The apportionment of the money comes after the voters speaking and the voters spoke. They want the library as it is described. Now I honor your gentle souls that want, collaboration, that want to work for a goal together and I will support you but I tell you don't move."

David Saslav, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "And representative of the warm and fuzzy crowd. I think every voter in this room understands the effects, now very clearly, right? Library board appointments. And a number of us are intending to do something about it very soon in November when we go to vote for new city commissioners and a new mayor.

But, having said that, I think we also intend, we say voters out here intend to do something this November about the state legislature that has caused this starvation of resources situation and forced us to squabble over crumbs when huge surpluses have

been available at the state level that have not been made available to cities and towns in Montana.

And as Commissioner Wilson pointed out at the last city commission meeting, none of those city legislators from Helena representing us here in Great Falls are attending these civic meetings or our city commission meetings or our county commission meetings or our library board meetings or our public-school board meetings. So that's the end of my warm fuzzy part.

I also like to make a suggestion. I know that Ms. McIntyre and Mr. Bronson have explained this to us all in the past as to why this is impossible, but I'm afraid my brain didn't retain it. And so I ask again, philosophically, would it not be smarter to have all of our levees in a single ballot every two years? All on one ballot. That way we can treat these levees as the shopping experience that other gentlemen just referred to a couple before me. Various departmental factors wouldn't have unreasonable asks, they'd be lowering what they're asking for from homeowners, so that one offering a 15 to 20 times larger levy proposal wouldn't harbor much hope of passing, would it? Right? Just like filet mignon doesn't sell quite as many units as skirt steak does. And if I support one as a voter, now if I vote for one, or if you like, I can support and afford one or two or all or none of those levees, then I get to mark that on my ballot. And there's no subsequent discussion of, well, what did the voter really want relative to one other thing, right? I mean, it would be very clear. We all want safety. We all want literacy. We all want good public schools, and we expect our state legislators to pass a budget that allows us as a city to fund it.

I also represent the strong pro-literacy contingent who are participating here in their civic process today and I'd like to put in a good word for those who are not mired in the weeds as I think was put here just a second ago. Their votes count just the same as those of us who have been following this sad saga from its very start and have understood its implications and have understood the various ideological standpoints that we've been forced to fight out with one another. But that doesn't make our votes more important than theirs."

Molly Beck, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "Thank you, board members, for all the work that you guys have put into this and I think it is very partnership spirited of you to make a connection to the city. Particularly when it's brought up about transparency. I feel like through the library process it has been incredibly transparent what the budget has been, what it would be promised, what would happen if the levy failed. I know it's shaded that this money would be potentially directed towards public safety. I did not feel that same level of transparency from the public safety levy that certainly these are the things that we would like. I did not see the comparable, these are the immediate things that will happen without that levy. And so, I feel that this is another instance of that lack of financial transparency in planning. So now there was maybe like this assumption, like of course that levy will pass, we should not have any

contingency plans. Yet here we are again, there's so much fruit talk tonight. Like this was low-hanging financial and political fruit. Then tonight we come with a very clear packet with clear indications of each plan. But yet the city has not come to us with how this money fits into their plan. So, they have said, like, well, you know, like, oh, there's some nice little things happening with the library budget over there. Let's see what we can harvest from that and figure things out from there. I would feel much more willing to play if I could see what the plan was and how, like, this library money fit into the bigger plan. Like, I want public safety as much as everyone else. But I'm not sure how this fits, other than this was the harvesting of the apples. It was low-hanging financial fruit and catering to a section that really has been against the library for a while. So, I appreciate your transparency and I would request more transparency as a voting citizen on the bigger financial plan and how these monies are going to fit together."

Bob Kelly, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. "I want to start off by just saying a couple things. First off, to the trustees, to Mr. Bronson, Ms. McIntyre, all the people that are working on this, thank you for what you're doing, not only for this headline story that we're here tonight, but the work that you do year-round is tremendous.

I know this is the first time I've been in a meeting, matter of fact, this is the first public meeting I've been at since I retired nine months ago.

I want to make a couple points here. One is, we are all one community. I can tell you that the city commissioners are trying their very best to help us solve an incredible need in public safety. I don't agree with the way they're doing it, but I do know that their motivation is pure. It is because we have dire needs in our community for better policing, for domestic violence, sexual abuse against children, drug abuse, and the various other crimes that we hear about. Not to even mention the fire department and the ongoing situations that are there. So they're motivated by the right things. But I can tell you, having been in the room, when Ms. McIntyre came and made the presentation, as you saw in the film there, we were very grateful to hear about the \$350,000 it was going to be freed up to come back. No one ever mentioned Going after the seven mills. Even when the library ballot was going on and on and our public safety levy was, the library passed. And then we put the public safety vote in front of the voters and we got creamed. Nowhere in that proposition going forward with the public safety levy that we say, hey, let's reduce it by \$700,000. That might make it more palatable. And on top of the \$350,000, we're already getting it from the library. That's a million dollars in savings. That's a good settlement. Let's try that. No one mentioned that.

I think when this was brought up in January, I've been told, and I apologize because I haven't looked at any tapes, that one of the comments from one of the commissioners was, why would we do that? Why would we punish the winners, meaning the library, and take their funds away to fund the losers, which was the city public safety levy? Very

disingenuous for these same commissioners that I shared a great experience with to come back and now go after that. This is not a big number for them. The \$350 they got should be helpful. I will tell you that the \$700 can be directed or the \$800 to \$70, which is almost a million dollars, can be very easily directed public safety and probably would be and should be.

I applaud the fact that you all recognize the problems and the issues that the community has with the lack of good public safety here and are willing to say, okay, we may not agree with your methodology. But we can spare some of these dollars. That is an extraordinary offer and I think one that the public would support strongly and I urge you to stay with this motion and present that to the city knowing that it's going to still be negotiated further at the Commission meeting. But I think the public will be behind you and I know I will be behind you for that proposal.”

Ms. Olson consulted Mr. Bronson regarding the agenda. Ms. Olson asked with the agenda, the way that it's laid out, talks about two motions, and so it would indicate that there's two opportunities for public comment. “We would not necessarily need to make two motions, correct?”

Mr. Bronson replied, “If I understand your question correctly, no you don't, we have a motion before you now to approve your proposed alternative to the city. By indication you are rejecting the city's last offer. So, you need to take action on this motion. If you have subsequent motions you will have to open for public comment.”

Ms. Olson informed everyone that there may not be another opportunity to make public comment and ask if there is anybody else that would like to speak tonight.

Rebecca Henry, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. “I'm under the wonder that there was a comment made before the levy that if we don't receive this our library is going to close. And I know if I would have heard that, I would have said, that can't happen. That can never happen. I'm raised my kids here, live in the library. So, I'm under the impression that maybe that's why he had passed. I would love to understand that, but that might be helpful to understand what is going on. “

Ms. McIntyre asked Ms. Olson if she could address the last comment. Ms. Olson Allowed. Ms. McIntyre stated, “This has been brought up at a couple of public meetings. When we did our library's presentation to the city commission at one of those meetings, there were reporters there. A KRTV reporter, I did not interview with him. He had all the packet information. Unfortunately, he did a story that was misleading. He then subsequently, understanding that that was the wrong thing, we shot a new interview. He came here, he did a bunch of background, we talked, and they put out a correction. I understand that not everybody got that correction, but none of us control the media. It was a mistake. We did say that we would close an additional day. As far as I know, nobody from the library, nobody from the foundation, nobody from the vote yes,

nobody from the board ever said that we would close. It was unfortunate that journalists made a mistake. I was quite deliberately not watching all of the coverage. I don't know if you've ever seen yourself on TV. But when it was brought to our attention that it had happened, we did start conversation with that particular reporter and we did have it corrected. Once the damage was done, the damage was done."

Ms. Olson opened to board discussion and stated "this is the board discussion part of this motion and I'd like to give everybody the opportunity to talk and we can talk about what the options are on the table. I would like to use my first comment to ask Mr. Bronson, there was a question from the public about the differences in section 7, the term. Mr. Bronson, could you give your legal opinion about the differences between the city's Term number 7 and the library proposed term number 7."

Mr. Bronson replied, "that under the city's proposal that was presented here about a week and a half ago, it's a five-year agreement. The agreement that would be expanded for successive longer renewal terms upon mutual agreement with parties before the expiration of the original term or the mill term. If for any reason the agreement is not renewed and the parties agree to abide by the agreement for 90 days which allows time for a transition from the city to the library of various things that the city agreed can go on. Under your proposal, I'm just going to kind of go through it, you know, line by line, you know, same thing. It's a five-year agreement that can be expanded for one year in the middle terms on a mutual agreement. If at the conclusion of any term the agreement is not renewed, parties that will abide by the agreement for 90 days can facilitate what you call a well-ordered transition.

My understanding that your selection of that language was to make it a little bit more broad so that you could deal with anything potentially that could come up in the transition. We discussed the fact that if the original agreement, the 93 agreement, goes away, there's nothing to replace it. We still have an ordinance providing for a library, in accordance to state law. We still have the permissions of the charters that need to be honored. We will have collective bargaining agreements in force at that time that will also have to be followed or which, depending on the circumstances, may have to be renegotiated in some way to effectually the transfer of the status of the city employees to library. The intention was to make it clear that you want that process to be well ordered. We don't know to date every possibility that may come up. The parties are just simply agreeing to use those 90 days to facilitate the city, and library as well."

Ms. McIntyre stated that it was her mistake. She and Mr. Bronson had some back and forth on that. "We had talked about changing it. I had thought that I had put it back the way that the city did. Had I realized. We put this together in two days. So that was a mistake. I did not in any way mean to do something that was not clearly, if there was any difference between them, I should have pointed that out to you. So, I'm sorry if there is a difference on number seven and I didn't point it out to you. I had taken it out

and then talked to Mr. Bronson, and I had thought that I put it back in. Obviously, you can amend it however you want. I just want to state that that was a mistake.”

Ms. Johnson asked if we should we amend it to put it back in so that it does match or amend it to have that in red and struck out. “I feel like either way, it needs to be amended so it's very clear when it goes back. I'll be honest, I didn't catch it because I saw the red differences. And so, thank you to the member of the public who found it. But if it is taken out, it should be in red with the strikeout. So I think either way, you need to have an amendment.”

Ms. McIntyre said Yes, and apologized again.

Ms. Crist stated that having made the original motion, she moved to amend it by changing number seven terms to match the terms proposed in the city proposal.

Ms. Johnson second that.

Mr. Bronson stated that there is an amended motion on the floor and the amendment is strictly related to the language of paragraph or section 7 of the agreement. Public comment is open again at this time but only as to the language to the amendment.

Ms. Olson asked if there was any public comment about the language to the amendment to item 7. A member of the public asked that the amendment be read again. Ms. Olson asked Mr. Bronson to read the amendment.

Mr. Bronson stated he would read the amendment in its entirety. “The term of this Agreement shall begin on date it is approved by the Great Falls’ City Commission and end on June 30, 2029. This Agreement may be extended for successive one-year renewal terms, upon mutual written agreement of the parties prior to the expiration of the original term or any renewal term. If, at the conclusion of any term, the Agreement is not renewed, the parties will continue to abide by the terms of the Agreement for ninety (90) days to facilitate a well-ordered transition of services provided by the City to the Library under this agreement and to effectuate the transition of Library personnel.”

David Saslav, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. “So I read that amendment before I came today and I had a question about it. Maybe Mr. Bronson can answer. Did it mean that if a year from now the voters of Great Falls drastically change the composition of our city commission that we may never see the third and fourth year of this agreement play out simply because the commission would be empowered to revoke that agreement, go back into a newer negotiation, or simply refund all mills that had been taken to that point? Is my question clear? Are we agreeing on something that would pertain or bind to future commissions, I guess is my question.

Mr. Bronson said, "to answer the gentleman's question, at any future, should the City Commission gets, let us assume this or some version of this agreement is up. The City Commission approaches the Library trustees and says they would like to revisit this again, and the library trustees agree, then yes."

Ms. Olson asked all those in favor of amending the agreement say Aye. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Olson opened for board discussion on the entire proposed motion of whether or not we accept the renegotiation committee's proposal.

Ms. Crist pointed out that Ms. Bulger already started the discussion.

Ms. DeForest commented, "I'll start off by just saying, I don't even know why we're even having this conversation, because I feel like the library levy passed, the safety levy didn't, and all our energy and resources should be in talking to the community about how we get the safety levy to pass. So, in saying that, I don't actually like either agreement yet. I certainly don't like the city's proposal. And I don't really care about our proposal either but I appreciate all the effort that you did on the committee and so if we need to move the conversation forward, I'm willing to go with it."

Ms. Crist commented, "Well, like Sam, I was not on the negotiating committee and when I heard the terms, I was a little taken aback. Like Sam, I thought it's not really what I want. I mean, I don't want to give up anything. And even as recently as today, I was feeling very much like I don't want to give up anything. But I am not just a citizen, I'm also a trustee with responsibility for the library. I heard last night a lot of people speaking on why it was important for the library to maintain all of the funding and, my heart is with them and it kind of breaks my heart to I mean I brought the motion so it sort of breaks my heart to be able to have to do that but I think I am going to be okay with us voting on this motion in part because we are trying to be as Mr. Kelly said, on the same team and part of this community together. The mills that we achieved through the levy ended up giving more money than we expected, so we're being a little bit generous in that. I'm not particularly pleased with nor do I totally understand the giving up of librarian being head of a department, but I think we are, we're not just standing our ground, we are being gracious. We've been gracious for a lot, for a long time, maybe too long and too much. And I, you know, I hear that and I feel that, but I think our job in this is to be gracious. Now, if we run into a stone wall in terms of the city response, then we will have a different approach to it. But for now, this is, I am in favor of this as the least worst possibility."

Ms. Johnson commented, "I kind of want to just address three little areas here and one is kind of to the public and I think there are a lot of members of the public that don't know who I am and I want to just make it clear and actually I had some stuff written down I think it was back in July or August to share that I never did. I don't have those

with me tonight. But I think it's very important to know that I love literacy. I was raised to love literacy. I taught kids to read for 18 years. And so for any member of the public to think I'm anti-literacy, that I don't love learning in literacy, is a falsehood. But I hope you can replace that.

At the same time that I love literacy, I've also been fiscally, my grandma worked at a bank. She was the first woman teller at a bank in Billings, moved up the ranks. Being fiscally responsible has been part of my life that I was raised with. My brother didn't get those same skills, but I did get them in the family. And so that is one of the pieces I promise you. If you have been at library meetings, you know, I ask a lot of questions about the money. Not always in judgment, sometimes often just in questions like, can you explain this? I'm curious about this. Because that's part of not only a board member's responsibility, but a citizen's responsibility is to worry about that. I both love literacy and I love being fiscally responsible, both of which play an important role. On that, I think the economic condition of the country, of our city, of our state, has continued to slide down and prices continue to rise since the levy was voted on. So things have changed. Government money tends to function very differently than often business budgets, but there's really zero reason for that to happen. And I think there's a lot of conversation about that locally, statewide, and nationally, about how budgets have to have to be looked at differently. If family and businesses have to make economic decisions and cuts, then this body should be no different, which we've all kind of talked about, you know, if we have to, okay, let's do it in a responsible way. There was a member of the public that talked about we should just be able to rely on it in the same manner that families and businesses can't always rely on what has always been the status quo. I think that also holds true in this body. You can't just rely on it because things have changed.

The kind of the third thing I want to talk about is it kind of came into tonight not with just two scenarios, not just with the city proposal and the library proposal. We kind of came into the night with four scenarios, and I think it's important that those of us sitting on the board that will vote know this.

One of those was the city proposal. The scenario was if we passed it, then most likely since it was the city's proposal, it probably would have gotten passed. Not a guarantee, but most likely.

The next proposal was the library proposal, which really brings two scenarios, which Ms. Sharon Patton-Griffin kind of discussed this and asked this in her question is what happens if they don't and that plays a part. So we're really not left with three scenarios since passing the city did not give us it.

The two aspects, two scenarios that play out with this one that we pass now is if we pass it and it goes to the city, they don't have to renegotiate. That's one option. The other option is they could choose to renegotiate it. Which I think is a very interesting

thing because they came with what they called the last best option. So I think there's huge question marks of if they're going to negotiate it. And so really of the three options left, the best scenario is they're willing to renegotiate it. And then we move forward with a middle of the road cut. So you have the option of they're not going to renegotiate it, and so what are the questions there?

And then really the fourth option is they can end the agreement at end of their deadline, which would make it end June 30th of next year. So with those two really questionable ones, I think a question we need to address is that's going, and this is mentioned at the very end of the packet, is that has the strong potential to add legal costs. So for us as a board, and I wasn't on the board during the last cycle that legal costs were incurred, but what kind of legal costs are we looking for? Because those will also set, as Ms. Bulger even said, with cuts setting back the library financially more, legal costs with two of the three scenarios that we're left with are going to set back or set the library back financially more also. That number is obviously questionable, but on page 7 in the packet, it did say that the city that terminates it, the board, library board, will need to seek legal counsel regarding the status of all the remaining things.

So, we have three options, and one is, it's sort of even crossing our fingers option at this point, and that is we pass it, but will the city even be open to renegotiation? And if not, then we are burdened with potentially even additional setbacks. And I think that's important for all of us to know that it wasn't just two scenarios.”

Ms. Crist added, this is perhaps a minor point, but the last time that we had legal representation, it was entirely pro bono.

Ms. Olson commented, “I participated in renegotiations from the very beginning and I think that we all bring certain things to the table when we enter into negotiations. And for those of you that don't know me, I used to own a Bison Ford. I sold the dealership in November of this last year. So, one could say that I spent a lot of time negotiating with car deals and this was really a unique scenario that we were in and I had thought when the city asked to renegotiate the contract that their opening offer wouldn't be and we're going to take them all away. You don't walk into a dealership and say give me the F-150, I'm not going to give you anything for it. That was especially what we saw at the beginning. I don't have the apples comparison or the low hanging three by half, the car version of this. And so, it was apparent to me very quickly that standing on the other side and saying, we are going to stand firm for these seven mills was one to get absolutely null. Which is disappointing. I participated very heavily in the attempt to get this levy passed and it was blood, sweat, and tears to get to that point. And I was so glad to see that the majority of Great Falls voters were behind the library levy. I thought we were in the clear. So, I most certainly was on the let's keep all seven of our apples side of the thing, but realized very early on that we wouldn't have gotten anywhere had we gone that route. And so, the thing that I think is most important is that we do not agree to a renegotiation that takes all seven of those mills away. I do not want to see us go to zero at any event. The city was never willing to give us that sort of agreement. They

never came to the table with anything other than, eventually, all seven of these mills will disappear. So, I feel very strongly that we go back and offer something that shows funding for the library for that entire agreement. Yes, if they decide that they just wanted agreement, we get to zero a lot quicker than they wanted us to get to, but I in good faith, cannot support approving an agreement that takes us to zero mills at any point. So that's how I feel about it.

Is there any more discussion before we take a vote?"

Ms. Wilson added that she appreciates the discussion on this and would leave it at that.

Ms. Olson called for a vote. Motion passed by 4 (voting YES: Ms. Olson, Ms. DeForest, Ms. Crist, Ms. Bulger. Voting NO: Ms. Johnson.

IV. PROPOSALS/COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES

Ms. Olson stated that the Library Board has approved this alternative agreement. She has asked Mr. Bronson what will happen next.

Mr. Bronson commented, "What I would propose is that since you are taking this action, I will contact Mr. Dennis, the city attorney. There would be a public meeting that you have Voted not to accept the city's offer, because there was a motion made for the bill to go back to the second, if you would have a clean and alternative proposal. I have no point about seeing them say it. By implication, you are prepared for your negotiations."

Ms. Johnson added, "I want to just comment to the board again, a member of the public made this comment last time, but us seconding it isn't really us turning down the motion. When we don't second a motion, it takes away the public's opportunity to comment that, and then our opportunity to vote for or against that motion comes when we vote. It doesn't come in a second. Our support or being against a motion doesn't come with a second. A second is simply a parliamentary procedure that allows the public to participate in that discussion. So, I think that's just really important for us to continue to remember moving forward. Seconding a motion isn't us voting yea or nay for the motion. It is us given the opportunity for the public participate in what we do."

Ms. Crist added that although she would just say that there were several people who said, "I would say that that motion that you didn't actually consider." So, people actually commented, but Ms. Johnson is right.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Johnson moved that the Great Falls Library Board of Trustees adjourn the meeting. Ms. Crist seconded the motion. Ms. Olson called for a vote.

Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Olson adjourned the meeting at 7:47 pm.