

Great Falls Public Library
Board of Trustees Board Meeting
Tuesday, November 26, 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)
4:30 p.m.

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

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

EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

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

GUESTS PRESENT: Molly Beck – Resident of Great Falls, Bill Bronson – Library Board’s Attorney for renegotiations with City Commission on the 7 Mills agreement, Matt Hudson – Resident of Great Falls, Richard Irving – Resident of Great Falls, Gerry Jennings – Resident of Great Falls, Brianne Laurin – GFPL Foundation Executive Director, Paul Lloyd-Davies – Resident of Great Falls, Sandy Rice – GFPL Foundation Liaison, Bill Tacke – Resident of Great Falls, Sue Warren – Resident of Great Falls, Jane Weber – Resident of Great Falls

Ms. Olson called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm. Due to Ms. Olson’s internet connection, she asked Ms. Bulger to take the lead.

I. AGENDA APPROVAL

Ms. Bulger asked for an agenda approval.

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

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board with various concerns including the library’s Mission Statement, and his objections to Youth Services placement in the library redesign.

Ms. McIntyre reminded Mr. Irving that this is the time for public comment regarding the Agenda, not other topics.

Bill Tacke, a resident of Great Falls addressed the board regarding old business on the agenda. He recommended that no motion be called for the agreement between the Library Board of Trustees and the City Commission. He suggested that time be used for discussion, public comment, and education about the current situation.

Ms. Bulger asked if there were any public or board comments. Upon hearing none, Ms. Bulger called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board with concerns regarding the ALA; and to not put the children in the basement.

Jane Weber, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board regarding her excitement for the Arm Chair Traveler series as well as the decorating outside the library.

III. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

Ms. Bulger asked for a motion on the adoption of the October meeting minutes.

Ms. Crist moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the October minutes as amended for grammatical issues. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any public comment.

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls addressed the board. He complimented the library for lowering the agenda on the community board for people to see. He voiced his concerns with being censored by the library. He also voiced concern that the library has not had a presentation regarding the Israeli view point, but has had one about Palestine.

Ms. McIntyre stated that after the Palestine presentation, the library reached out to members of the Jewish community leaders regarding their perspective. They declined.

Ms. Johnson asked if the Cushing Terrell Design report on page three was actually the negation committee report. Ms. McIntyre stated that it was.

Ms. Bulger asked if there were any more public or board comments. Upon hearing none, Ms. Bulger called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. ACCEPTANCE OF THE FINANCIAL REPORTS

Ms. Bulger asked if anyone had questions regarding the Financial reports.

Ms. Johnson asked for clarification on line item 34694 on page 7. Ms. McIntyre answered.

Ms. DeForest asked for clarification on line items 31101 and 31103 on page 7. Ms. McIntyre answered.

Ms. Johnson asked for clarification regarding the library cash flow on page 11. Ms. McIntyre answered.

Ms. Crist asked for clarification regarding the Gathering of Families refund on page 16. Ms. McIntyre answered.

Ms. Bulger asked for a motion.

Ms. Crist moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees accept the financial reports as presented. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment. Commissioner Wilson asked for clarification on the cost of MANGO languages. Ms. McIntyre answered. Ms. Bulger asked if anyone had more comments, upon hearing none she called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

V. REPORTS

Director Report

Ms. McIntyre give the director's report.

Statistical Report

No questions were asked regarding the statistical report.

Personnel Report

Ms. Bulger asked for clarification on the new hires. Ms. McIntyre answered.

GFPL Foundation Report

Ms. Rice gave a Foundation report. She covered the book-a-thon PSA premier, the Foundation's monthly e-blast, training sessions with the non-profit association, the Foundation's January board meeting, as well as an update on the Book-a-thon and Books & Brews revenue.

Chair Report

Ms. Olson stated the board should have received an email from the City Manager's office regarding the termination of the City Agreement. More will be discussed in Old Business.

Board Reports

No board reports were given.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND THE CITY COMMISSION

Ms. McIntyre presented the staff report on the agreement. She read an update that was approved by the City Commission to Section 7, on page 33, of the agreement. This update clarified when the agreement would take effect.

Ms. Johnson asked for an explanation on why the wording of Section 7 on page 33 in regards to the 3.5 mills is different than the wording of the agreement sent to the board by the City Manager's office. Ms. McIntyre explained that neither agreement explicitly states that the 3.5 mills will be continued. It is in the summary, because both parties agree that if the agreement is extended that would include the funding.

Mr. Bronson recapped the language of section 7 of the agreement.

Ms. McIntyre continued presenting the staff report.

Mr. Bronson explained the process of the agreement once it is approved. It should be a seamless transition.

Ms. DeForest asked if signing should be postponed due to timing. Ms. McIntyre asked that it be signed so the library can move forward with plans.

Ms. Bulger asked for a motion.

Ms. Johnson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the agreement proposed by the City of Great Falls City Commission. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Sue Warren, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. She stated her appreciation on the City Commission, the Library Board, and the Library Staff. She stated her confidence, that once this decision is made, we have the opportunity to move towards success. It is time to move forward.

Bill Tacke, a resident of Great Falls addressed the board. He understands the importance of making this decision. He voiced his concerns on educating the community and getting the word out.

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls addressed the board. He feels that the library has received an overly generous result with this agreement. He also voiced his concerns with misinformation regarding the mill levy as well as his concern with where the children will be placed in the remodel.

Gerry Jennings, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. She disagrees with the previous statement made regarding misinformation. She agrees with agreeing to the agreement.

Jane Weber, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. She is disappointed that not all 7 mills were left intact. She agrees it is best to approve the agreement and move forward.

Ms. Bulger added that this agreement was a long, hard process. She feels that because of this situation, more people know about the inner workings of the library. She feels education the public is very important. She added that this agreement is as good as we are going to get at this time and that is why she is voting yes.

Ms. DeForest stated that we must make the best of a bad situation. That is why she is voting yes.

Ms. Crist appreciates all the hard work. She is disappointed, but feels it is the best we can do. She will be voting yes. She has concerns about the misinformation regarding the renegotiation, and asks that everyone just be civil. She also voiced her concerns that the agreement no longer lists the library director as a department head.

Ms. Johnson thanked the committee and everyone that has spoken. It is important to continue to educate. She added that part of the education needs to be that the city did not touch the current mill levy. It is important that the community know that the library will still have 20.5 mills.

Ms. Olson stated that she is disappointed in the city commission and does not feel they entered into the negotiations in a fair and productive way. She thanked the committee members as well as the community that has comments. She believes this is the best deal that the library can get, that is why she is voting yes.

Ms. McIntyre added that the library will continue to educate people on this issue, and agrees that it needs to be a civil conversation.

Ms. Bulger asked if anyone had more comments, upon hearing none she called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

ANNUAL REPORT

Ms. McIntyre presented the annual report.

Ms. Crist stated that it is a wonderful report.

Ms. Bulger asked for a motion.

Ms. Crist moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the annual report as presented and direct Library staff to deliver the report to the City Commission. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. He asked that the board does not approve the annual report. He stated that it is not information, but propaganda. He added his concern with where the children will be placed in the remodel.

Ms. Johnson stated that the document looks beautiful, but feels it looks more like a marketing campaign than an informational report.

Ms. Bulger asked if there were any more public or board comments. Upon hearing none, she called for a vote. Motion passed by 4 (voting YES: Ms. Olson, Ms. DeForest, Ms. Crist, Ms. Bulger. NO: Ms. Johnson.)

VII. NEW BUSINESS

2025 LIBRARY HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Ms. McIntyre presented the proposed 2025 Library Holiday Schedule.

Ms. Johnson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the 2025 Library Holiday Schedule as presented. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Ms. Crist stated that she respects the staff, but this schedule is for the staff not the public. We owe it to the public to think about what works for them in terms of holidays.

Ms. Johnson added that the impact fiscally needs to be considered as well.

Ms. Linder-Parkinson addressed the board with concerns about staff morale if the library were to be open on holidays. The morale of staff is already low and we may lose employees.

Ms. Bulger called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

2025 LIBRARY BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Ms. McIntyre presented the 2025 Library Board Meeting schedule.

Ms. Crist moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the 2025 Library Board Meeting Schedule as presented. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Ms. Johnson added that since the library operates by a fiscal year, December is actually a mid-year month.

Ms. Bulger called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

FOUNDATION APPROVED PROJECTS PROPOSAL

Ms. McIntyre presented the foundation approved projects proposal to the board.

Ms. Johnson asked for clarification on why we would add Kanopy as new service, if in a couple of months, we will need to make budget cuts due to the new city agreement. Ms. McIntyre stated that this is funded by the foundation and not out of operational funds which will have cuts. Ms. Johnson stated she understood this, but voiced concern that the general public may not understand the different sources of revenue. She added that it sounds like a great service, but we should put it on hold.

Ms. DeForest asked how much staff time will be needed to run the digital platforms. Ms. McIntyre stated very little beyond staff training.

Ms. Crist asked if this was an all or nothing ask. Ms. McIntyre stated that the board can pick and choose what to approve. Ms. Crist asked how are the items decided on. Ms. McIntyre stated that she gets input from the managers, who in turn get input from the staff. Ms. Laurin added that she works with Ms. McIntyre in regards to what the foundation may or may not fund.

Ms. DeForest moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the Foundation approved projects proposal as presented. Ms. Crist seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment. Upon hearing none, she called for a vote. Motion passed by 4 (voting YES: Ms. Olson, Ms. DeForest, Ms. Crist, Ms. Bulger. NO: Ms. Johnson.)

VIII. PROPOSALS/COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES

Ms. Crist thanked Ms. Grulkowski for her service as an Ex Officio board member.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Bulger adjourned the meeting at 6:30 pm.