Great Falls Public Library
Board of Trustees Board Meeting
Tuesday, February 24, 2026
Great Falls Public Library – Montana Room (3rd Floor 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 (zoom), Ms. Sam DeForest, Ms. Noelle Johnson, Ms. Whitney Olson (zoom)
BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Jessica Crist

EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Shannon Wilson – City of GF Commissioner (zoom)
EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Joe Briggs – Cascade County Commissioner

GFPL STAFF, GFPL FOUNDATION, GFPL LEGAL COUNCEL PRESENT: Bill Bronson – Legal Counsel for GFPL, Amy Dissmeyer, Terri Gordillo, Treva Higgins, Cody Hughes, Aaron Kueffler, Brianne Laurin – GFPL Foundation Executive Director, Sara Linder-Parkinson, Rae McFadden

PUBLIC COMMENT PROVIDED BY: Richard Irving – Resident of Great Falls, Cameron Swathwood

Ms. Bulger called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

I. AGENDA APPROVAL

Ms. Johnson 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 Great Falls resident and library cardholder, addressed the Board and commented that the prior month's materials appeared to reflect two separate agendas that may have been inadvertently combined into one report.

Ms. Bulger asked if there was any addition board or public comment; upon hearing none, she called for a vote. Motion passed by unanimous vote of members present.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

Cody Hughes and Terri Gordillo introduced themselves to the board.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Richard Irving, a Great Falls resident and library cardholder, addressed the Board regarding the library's master planning process. He stated that library funds, whether public or donated, should prioritize necessary improvements rather than discretionary features. He also expressed

concern about the level of public input in the planning process and indicated he may provide additional comments in the future as more information becomes available.

Cameron Swathwood, a Great Falls resident and library cardholder, addressed the Board as a private citizen. He expressed concerns about safety, cleanliness, and the presence of individuals he perceived as loitering in and around the library, stating that these conditions have negatively affected his family's experience when visiting the facility. He encouraged the Board and library leadership to consider how these issues impact families and other patrons and asked that they ensure the library remains a welcoming environment for community members.

V. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

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

Richard Irving, a Great Falls resident and library cardholder, addressed the Board regarding the approval of prior meeting minutes. He expressed concern that the minutes being approved did not correspond with the meeting listed on the agenda and encouraged the Board to ensure the record accurately reflects the correct meeting to avoid potential issues. He also clarified a prior comment, stating his concern was that a board member indicated they could communicate with staff regardless of policy, and he noted that the Board did not address that statement at the time.

Ms. Johnson clarified that the Board held only one regular meeting in January, which occurred on January 27, and that the Board did not hold any other meetings in January or December.

Ms. Bulger asked if there were any more comments; upon hearing none, she called for a vote. Motion passed by unanimous vote of members present with one member abstaining.

VI. ACCEPTANCE OF THE FINANCIAL REPORTS

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

Ms. Johnson noted on page 6 the taxes that have come in.

Ms. Bulger inquired about differing amounts listed for Amazon maintenance supplies on pages 10 and 11. Mr. Kueffler explained that one payment was made via vendor invoice and the other via credit card.

Ms. Johnson asked about issues with the drive-up window on page 12; Mr. Kueffler noted the microphone had malfunctioned but reported it has been addressed.

Ms. Bulger highlighted a donation from the Montana Arts Council, confirmed by Ms. Johnson as part of a grant.

Ms. DeForest moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees accept the financial reports as presented. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Ms. Johnson stated that she had met with Ms. Dissmeyer and Mr. Kueffler regarding a matter, it is good now and she will have discussions with them going forward.

Ms. Bulger called for a vote. Motion passed by unanimous vote of members present.

VII. REPORTS

MANAGER REPORT

Ms. McFadden presented her Manager's Report.

DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Dissmeyer presented her Director's Report and reported that the library's new phone system has been installed and is functioning, with staff continuing to become familiar with the system. She credited staff for coordinating the installation and noted the transition was completed earlier in the week.

Ms. Dissmeyer also reported on an introductory meeting with project consultants regarding the building project. She stated that staff feedback and her own experience prompted several suggested revisions to the current plans, including exploring relocation of the children's area to the third floor, consolidating restroom locations for efficiency, and evaluating the removal of the proposed automated materials handler due to cost and space considerations. She noted that revised plans incorporating these options would be developed for further review.

Additionally, Ms. Dissmeyer reported that she has begun the state library certification process and has completed initial coursework toward the required training hours.

Board members asked questions regarding staff introductions and coordination with City officials. Ms. Dissmeyer stated she has met with most City department leaders and expects additional meetings as orientation continues.

GFPL FOUNDATION REPORT

Ms. Laurin presented the Foundation Report. She reported that the "Love Your Library" campaign was highly successful, generating nearly 600 letters from community members expressing support for the library. She noted that many messages highlighted themes of community, belonging, and the library as a welcoming and supportive space. Ms. Laurin added that the Montana Library Association expressed interest in replicating the campaign statewide in the future.

Ms. Laurin also reported that Great Falls will host the upcoming Montana Library Association conference. The library will host the welcome reception for conference attendees, and she

noted the event will provide networking opportunities for library professionals and board members from across the state.

Board members discussed potential roles for trustees during the conference, including attending sessions, networking with other library boards, and assisting as hosts during conference activities.

Ms. Laurin also provided an update on the Early Literacy Outreach Specialist position funded through a private family foundation grant. She reported that the grant was renewed for a second year with increased funding of $40,000 and that the program continues to be well received. She explained that the grant allows applications for three consecutive years, after which the foundation and donors hope the program will transition to a sustainable funding model supported by the library and additional donors. She noted the position is currently structured as a part-time city employee funded through a designated project account created for the grant.

CHAIR REPORT

Ms. Bulger had nothing to report.

BOARD REPORT

No board reports given.

CUSHING TERRELL REPORT

Ms. Laurin reported that there were no additional updates. She noted that the current work is winding down and that any changes discussed by Ms. Dissmeyer remain within the scope of the original contract and previously approved plans.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Ms. Bulger opened discussion on the strategic plan, noting that Ms. Dissmeyer had met with Ms. Sloan, who is available to assist the Board in developing the plan. Ms. Sloan is willing to attend in person or virtually, and the Board can set the timeline for moving forward.

The Board discussed coordinating the timing of the Director's evaluation with the strategic planning process. Ms. Bulger shared guidance from Human Resources that the evaluation should not occur too early, suggesting a goal to have evaluation input, goals, and compensation recommendations ready by June 1, with the final submission due June 15. Compensation for the Director would be prorated based on months worked since her January start date.

Ms. Johnson recommended adding a formal agenda item for the March meeting to clarify expectations for the Director, including desired goals for the coming year. Ms. DeForest suggested that this year's evaluation may be more informal, given the Director's recent start and limited exposure to the full scope of responsibilities. Ms. Bulger agreed, noting that the focus for the Director in this initial period is on learning the staff, budget, and stakeholders in the community.

Regarding the strategic plan itself, the Board agreed to hold a special meeting separate from a regular board meeting to allow sufficient time for training and discussion. Ms. Bulger will coordinate with Ms. Sloan to schedule the session, and Board members are encouraged to prepare ideas and suggestions in advance. Ms. Dissmeyer offered to assist in preparing any materials or information the Board may want ready for that session.

The Board confirmed that multiple sessions might be required, reflecting the time-intensive nature of developing a comprehensive strategic plan.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS: QUARTERLY TRAINING

The Board discussed trustee training requirements. Ms. Bulger noted that the Board previously completed training during the October session and asked whether additional training was needed. Ms. Dissmeyer stated that the October meeting satisfied the quarterly training requirement and that the agenda item was included so the Board could discuss future training opportunities.

Ms. DeForest suggested the Board attend an upcoming screening of The Librarian followed by a panel discussion, and Ms. Dissmeyer agreed it would be a valuable program.

Ms. Johnson asked for clarification regarding the state requirement referenced in the Montana Code, noting that it appears to recommend three hours of training per year and asking whether the Board's quarterly training practice exceeds that requirement. Board members discussed that the quarterly approach had been adopted previously to distribute training throughout the year rather than completing it all at once.

Ms. Dissmeyer stated that the continuing education expectation applies to trustees individually and that trustees may complete the recommended hours either together as a board or individually and report completion. Ms. Bulger stated she would seek clarification regarding the applicable timeline for the training requirement.

LIBRARY BOARD 2026 TASK CALENDAR

The Board briefly revisited discussion of the 2026 Task Calendar. Ms. Bulger reported that, based on guidance from City Human Resources, evaluation and compensation timelines can be adjusted when employees are hired mid-year, as many City positions are filled throughout the year. She noted that the calendar itself could remain unchanged, with adjustments made as needed for the current year due to the timing of Ms. Dissmeyer's hiring.

Ms. Johnson suggested adding a specific agenda item at a future meeting to discuss the process and format for the Director's evaluation, including potential questions or goals appropriate for the shortened evaluation period. She recommended placing the evaluation discussion on a future agenda so the Board could determine its approach.

Ms. Bulger agreed to include the Director evaluation discussion on a future agenda and noted she would also speak with Ms. Sloan regarding timelines for beginning the next strategic planning process. Board members clarified that the evaluation discussion and the strategic planning process are separate matters.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented.

X. PROPOSALS/COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES

No proposals or comments were presented.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Johnson 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 by unanimous vote of members present.

Ms. Bulger adjourned the meeting at 5:34pm.