Great Falls Public Library
Board of Trustees Board Meeting
Tuesday, July 28, 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, Ms. Jessica Crist, Ms. Noelle Johnson, Ms. Whitney Olson, Mr. Brian Patrick
BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: None
EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Joe Briggs – Cascade County Commissioner, Shannon Wilson – City of GF Commissioner

GFPL STAFF, GFPL FOUNDATION, GFPL LEGAL COUNSEL PRESENT: Bill Bronson – Counsel, Amy Dissmeyer, Aaron Kueffler, Sara Linder-Parkinson

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

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

I. AGENDA APPROVAL

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

Richard Irving, a Great Falls resident and library cardholder, suggested adding two items to the Board agenda. First, he requested discussion of the swearing-in of the new Board member, including whether the swearing-in occurred during a properly noticed public meeting. He suggested that legal counsel advise the Board regarding the applicable requirements.

Second, Mr. Irving requested that the Board address its prior discussion regarding individual communications among Board members before meetings. He questioned whether Board members may communicate individually about pending matters, including by telephone or electronically, and reach a consensus before discussing and voting on the matter at a public meeting. He expressed concern that such a practice could give the appearance that Board decisions are made outside public meetings and requested clarification regarding compliance with Montana open meeting requirements.

Ms. Bulger asked if there was any addition board or public comment.

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

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Richard Irving, a Great Falls resident and library cardholder, expressed continued concern regarding the Board's prior discussion of the swearing-in of a new Board member and the Board's discussion of individual communications and consensus-building outside public meetings. He characterized the lack of clarification on these matters as disrespectful to library patrons and taxpayers and expressed concern that the public could perceive Board decisions as being made outside regular meetings.

Mr. Irving also raised concerns regarding the accessibility and posting of public meeting notices. He stated that he was able to locate the meeting notice on the library's website but was unable to locate it on the City website or on two bulletin boards near the elevator that he checked. He requested that the Board ensure meeting information is readily accessible to the public and stated that the difficulty locating notices could create the appearance that meeting information was not being adequately publicized.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

Ms. Olson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the minutes 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, raised a concern regarding the meeting date identified in the Board packet, noting that the minutes section was labeled “Tuesday, May 26, 2026” rather than identifying the June meeting. He requested that the Board clarify which meeting's minutes were being considered for approval and ensure that minutes from separate meetings are not inadvertently combined.

Mr. Irving thanked the individual responsible for recording his comments for what he considered an accurate summary. He also expressed continued concern regarding the accessibility and organization of information on the Great Falls Public Library website, stating that he found information increasingly difficult to locate. He encouraged the Board to address the website's accessibility so that members of the public can more readily find meeting and library information.

Ms. Crist made a motion to amend the minutes to reflect the correct date. Ms. Olson seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment. Upon hearing none she called for a vote. Motion passed by unanimous vote of members present.

Ms. Crist requested a clarification to the minutes regarding the discussion of the holiday closure. She noted that the minutes stated that the Director had proposed closing the library on Sundays following a holiday weekend when the holiday falls on a Saturday, which could be interpreted as establishing an ongoing policy. Ms. Crist stated that her understanding was that

the Board had acted specifically regarding Sunday, July 5, 2026, following the July 4 holiday closure.

Ms. Johnson noted that the motion recorded later in the minutes specifically identified the date and therefore clarified the action taken. Ms. Crist nevertheless stated that the wording of the discussion could imply a broader policy than intended and suggested revising it to specify the July 5 closure. Ms. Johnson explained that changing the motion itself would require another amendment. Ms. Dissmeyer confirmed that the proposal applied only to the July 5 closure. Ms. Crist indicated that she was satisfied with the clarification.

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

V. ACCEPTANCE OF THE FINANCIAL REPORTS

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

Ms. Johnson raised a concern regarding percentage calculations appearing on pages 12 and 13 of the financial reports. She noted that a reported 852% figure for net gain or loss appeared inconsistent with the underlying financial information.

Ms. Johnson explained that, after discussing the issue with Ms. Dissmeyer, it was determined that the accounting software was calculating the percentage by dividing the projected annual savings or gain of $37,421 by the actual year-to-date amount rather than using the corresponding year-to-date figures. She noted that the same calculation issue appeared on page 13, where a percentage of 383% was reported.

Ms. Johnson stated that the percentages were generated by an incorrect formula in the accounting software and did not reflect the library's actual percentage of budget. She emphasized that the issue was with the software's formula rather than with the Board or staff.

Ms. Olson asked Mr. Patrick whether he had questions regarding the various vendors and expenditures reflected in the financial reports, noting that some vendors may be unfamiliar to him. Mr. Patrick stated that he planned to spend time with the Director reviewing the budget and its various categories to better understand the information going forward.

Ms. Johnson asked about an expenditure identified as advertising through Meta. Ms. Dissmeyer explained that the expense was for Facebook advertising used to boost social media posts and increase visibility for library events.

Ms. Johnson also asked about an expenditure associated with Magpie for Indigenous programming. Ms. Dissmeyer indicated that the expense was likely related to catering.

Ms. Bulger asked about the absence of an amount next to AAUW donations on page 37. Mr. Kueffler explained that the entry was carried over from the previous month's report and had inadvertently not been removed from the current report.

Ms. Olson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees accept the financial reports 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 unanimous vote of members present.

VI. REPORTS

DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Dissmeyer reported that staff had been busy with internal work and highlighted several neighborhood meetings concerning activities in the park. Officer Ryman participated in one meeting, and residents appeared satisfied that their concerns had been addressed. A resident later reported noticing improvements. Ms. Dissmeyer explained that residents should contact the police regarding concerns when the library is closed, particularly suspected illegal activity, so that the police department can track activity in the area. Officer Ryman also explained the distinction between trespassing on private versus public property.

The Board discussed the role of the library's safety specialists and maintenance staff in monitoring the park. Ms. Dissmeyer said staff are regularly present in the park, although there is not necessarily a fixed schedule. Ms. Bulger expressed concern that staff may not be interacting directly with people in the park regarding prohibited activities such as sleeping. Ms. Dissmeyer clarified that interaction with members of the public in the park is part of the safety specialists' responsibilities. The Board also discussed the distinction between daytime and overnight activity and noted that park closure hours are posted. Ms. Crist asked whether neighbors who participated in a previous park-related committee had been included in the recent meetings, and Ms. Linder-Parkinson said that some additional neighbors had participated.

Ms. Dissmeyer also reported on her attendance at the American Library Association (ALA) conference, which included a celebration of ALA's 150th anniversary and several prominent speakers. She attended sessions related to facilities and planning and met with the library's EnvisionWare software provider regarding a potential software update. She also learned that the library's two self-checkout units are reaching end-of-life status this year, although both are currently functioning and can continue to be used without ongoing manufacturer support.

Ms. Dissmeyer described visiting the Obama Presidential Center and the Chicago Public Library branch located on its campus while attending the conference. She noted the public amenities and the library's specially selected collections, including a room containing books chosen by the Obamas. Ms. Bulger shared her positive experience visiting the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and commented on the educational value of presidential libraries.

GFPL FOUNDATION REPORT

No report given.

CHAIR REPORT

Ms. Bulger reported that she and Mr. Patrick attended the recent City Commission meeting. She praised Ms. Dissmeyer for her presentation and said that, despite being nervous about addressing the full Commission for the first time, she did an excellent job explaining the budget. Ms. Bulger noted that Ms. Dissmeyer demonstrated a strong understanding of the budget and expressed confidence in the information she presented. Ms. Dissmeyer said she felt reassured by Ms. Bulger's and Ms. Kinzler's support during the presentation.

BOARD REPORT

Ms. Bulger noted that the Board needs a representative to attend the Pathfinders meetings in Fort Benton, which Ms. DeForest had regularly attended. She said the meetings occur four times a year and asked for a Board member to be willing to serve in that role. Ms. Crist asked which day of the week the meetings are held, and Ms. Dissmeyer said she would find out the meeting schedule and the date of the next meeting.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

No Old Business was discussed

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS: ELECTION OF OFFICERS (CHAIR)

Ms. Olson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees elects Anne Bulger to the position of board chair. Ms. Crist seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any public or board discussion.

Ms. Johnson asked Ms. Bulger how she felt about her experience serving as Chair. Ms. Bulger said she had learned a great deal in the role and had enjoyed working with Ms. Dissmeyer on several projects. She expressed that the Board was moving forward positively and had moved beyond some of the mindset of the previous few years. She said she felt honored to serve as Chair.

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

PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS: ELECTION OF OFFICERS (VICE-CHAIR)

Ms. Olson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees elects Jessica Crist to the position of board vice-chair. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any public or board discussion.

Ms. Bulger expressed appreciation for working with Ms. Crist as Vice Chair, noting that her experience and knowledge have been valuable, particularly regarding Board procedures and amendments. She also appreciated Ms. Crist's involvement in the community and awareness of the needs of different populations in Great Falls.

Ms. Olson noted for Mr. Patrick's benefit that she will be the next Board member whose term ends, adding that the Chair and Vice Chair positions could potentially be filled from year to year.

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

LEGAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN LIBRARY BOARD AND MR. BILL BRONSON

Ms. Bulger introduced the legal services agreement between the Library Board and Mr. Bill Bronson and asked whether there were any questions. Ms. Olson asked whether there were any changes from the previous agreement. Mr. Bronson explained that the only change was the term of service. Ms. Johnson noted that the previous agreement had not been included in the Board packet. Ms. Olson asked whether the Board should consider a term longer than one year, and Ms. Bulger remarked that circumstances could change during that time.

Ms. Olson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the legal agreement between the Library Board and Mr. Bill Bronson. Ms. Crist seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any public or board discussion.

Ms. Johnson suggested that the Board track how and how often legal counsel is used, noting that Mr. Bronson was initially engaged in response to questions she had raised. She questioned whether the current level of use justified the expense in the long term, particularly given that much of his participation in Board meetings had involved parliamentary matters. She also noted that there had been relatively few other legal questions and suggested monitoring the costs and purposes of legal services as the Board considers its future needs.

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

POLICY MANUAL: REMOVAL OF FORMS FROM POLICY MANUAL

Ms. Bulger introduced the proposal to remove forms from the Library's policy manual. Ms. Dissmeyer explained that all forms would be removed except those directly associated with the Collection Development Policy, including the Request for Reconsideration and Patron Withdrawal Reconsideration forms. She noted that some forms are obsolete, such as the device checkout form, while others require routine changes that staff should be able to make without bringing the entire policy manual back to the Board for approval. Many of the forms are also for internal staff use rather than public use.

Ms. Johnson suggested adding a page to the policy manual explaining that the Library uses various forms as part of its daily procedures, identifying which forms are policy-driven and directing patrons to the appropriate forms available at the library or on the website. Ms. Dissmeyer agreed that this would distinguish policy from procedure while ensuring that the manual does not appear to contain any forms. Ms. Olson raised the memorial form as a concern because of its connection to naming opportunities. Ms. Dissmeyer said the Foundation is also reviewing that form and intends to bring its related recommendations to the Board, recognizing that the Board should remain involved in naming policies.

The Board discussed examples of routine changes staff might need to make to forms, including updating the library card application to improve its format, streamline questions, and clarify language concerning authorization for others to pick up materials and privacy issues. Ms. Dissmeyer emphasized that such changes would not alter Board policy. Mr. Patrick asked how the Board would be informed of changes to forms. Ms. Dissmeyer said Ms. Linder-Parkinson was developing revised drafts and that updated forms could be provided to the Board as an informational update.

The discussion expanded to how policies are organized and reviewed. Ms. Dissmeyer noted that individual policies must be reviewed every three years, but that many items currently included in the policy manual are actually procedures. She questioned whether staff should be able to bring individual policies, such as the Meeting Room Policy, to the Board for review without having to bring the entire section or manual. The Board agreed that individual policies could be brought forward separately. Ms. Johnson suggested adding an "updated" date to individual policies to clearly document when changes were made. The Board discussed using the existing policy dates as a baseline and adding subsequent update dates as individual policies are revised.

Mr. Bronson advised that the Board is responsible for establishing policies and determining which policies it wishes to review, while staff can recommend policy changes and generally develop forms and procedures consistent with Board-approved policies. Ms. Johnson suggested that, as the policy manual is reviewed, staff identify other sections that contain procedures so they can be addressed separately from actual policy. Mr. Patrick emphasized that policy development and oversight are among the Board's primary responsibilities, along with the budget and evaluation of the Director.

Ms. Crist moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the Director's recommendation to remove Section Six, "Forms" from the Great Falls Public Library Policy manual. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any public or board discussion.

Richard Irving, a Great Falls resident, commented on the Board's new member, complimenting his approach to reviewing the meeting materials and noting that he appreciated the member reading through the information so everyone was working from the same material.

Mr. Irving then raised a concern regarding the new member's participation in votes at the meeting. He questioned whether the member became legally seated upon appointment by the City Commission or only after being formally sworn in, and whether the swearing-in could legally take place in a private session. Mr. Irving objected to all votes taken during the meeting based on this unresolved question and requested a legal determination regarding the member's status. He noted that legal counsel was present and could have been asked to address the issue.

Ms. Bulger addressed Mr. Irving's concern regarding the status of the new Board member, explaining that Board positions are volunteer appointments rather than elected positions and that there is no formal swearing-in ceremony. She invited Mr. Bronson to respond. Mr. Bronson said that, based on his experience, City-appointed board members, including Library Board members, are appointed by the City Commission and take office according to the Commission's action, without a separate swearing-in or ceremonial process. Ms. Johnson confirmed that the appointment is made through a vote of the City Commission. Mr. Bronson stated that his understanding was that Mr. Patrick's appointment became official when the City Commission voted to appoint him and that he took office at the first regular Board meeting.

The Board then returned to the policy manual discussion. Ms. Johnson suggested that the remaining forms associated with the Collection Development Policy be revised and brought back to the Board for approval as a separate section. Mr. Patrick asked whether the motion to remove the entire forms section should clarify which forms would remain. Ms. Dissmeyer explained that the Request for Reconsideration and Patron Withdrawal Reconsideration forms are already included within the Collection Development Policy and therefore remain part of the policy manual even though the separate forms section was removed. Ms. Johnson confirmed that the Board's action to remove the entire section was therefore appropriate.

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

IX. PROPOSALS/COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES

Ms. Bulger invited comments and proposals from the Trustees, and Ms. Johnson welcomed Mr. Patrick to the Board. Ms. Bulger then raised concerns about the appearance and maintenance of the Library campus, noting that while the Library's interior and services are excellent, the exterior is looking tired and could be more welcoming. She mentioned chipped yellow sidewalk markings, overgrown landscaping, dry planters, and the general condition of the grounds. She also noted that relocating the benches had been a positive improvement and suggested that the Board consider ways to further improve the campus.

Ms. Johnson suggested that community members could potentially become involved by forming a group or committee to brainstorm beautification ideas and bring recommendations to the Board. The Board discussed the Garden Club's involvement with the landscaping behind the Library and the turnover among maintenance staff. Ms. Olson asked whether there was a regular schedule for seasonal maintenance tasks, such as turning on the water, and Ms. Dissmeyer said she believed there was.

The Board discussed the challenges of maintaining the grounds and building. Ms. Dissmeyer noted that the Library currently has two full-time and one part-time maintenance staff members who are responsible for both the building and grounds, as well as cleaning, and that the workload has left them behind. She also noted that repairing the sprinkler system is expensive and that the sprinklers are repeatedly vandalized. Ms. Olson suggested reviewing the maintenance needs at a future meeting, including tree trimming and other work that has not been done recently.

Ms. Johnson suggested that community involvement or volunteer support could help with some beautification efforts, noting that other organizations sometimes rely on community groups for grounds-related projects. The Board also discussed whether the Library Foundation might be able to support some of the work. Ms. Olson noted that the Foundation has previously funded certain maintenance and beautification projects. Ms. Bulger suggested discussing possible Foundation support including such needs in future requests.

The Board distinguished between tasks appropriate for volunteers and those requiring professional services. Ms. Olson noted that tree trimming for large trees and pressure washing the building would require professional contractors with appropriate equipment and insurance, while tasks such as picking up litter and cleaning gutters could potentially be handled by staff or volunteers. She suggested establishing a maintenance schedule for less-frequent projects such as tree trimming and pressure washing so that the costs could be anticipated in future budgets.

Ms. Johnson clarified that when she suggested community involvement, she had been thinking primarily of general beautification efforts rather than major maintenance projects such as tree trimming and pressure washing. Ms. Bulger noted that because the Library property falls outside the City's regular maintenance responsibilities, the Library may need to address these needs independently, potentially with Foundation assistance. The Board continued to discuss the difficulty of adequately funding and maintaining large public facilities and grounds.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Olson moved that the Great Falls Library Board of Trustees adjourn the meeting. Ms. Crist seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger called for a vote. Motion passed by unanimous vote of members present.

Ms. Bulger adjourned the meeting at 5:28 pm.