

## Library Board Lowers Salaries for Open Positions

Trustees vote to decrease library director and children's librarian pay before listing the positions, against the advice of interim director and county human resources

BY MICAH DREW OF THE BEACON

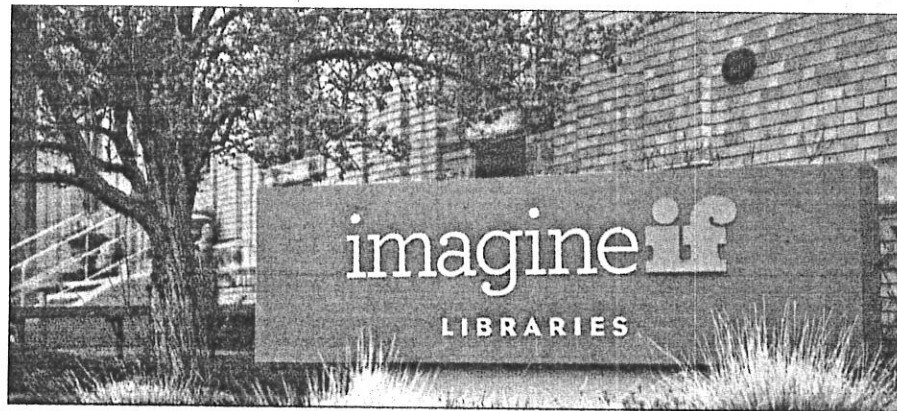
At its Aug. 26 board meeting, the ImagineIF Library Board of Trustees voted to lower the proposed salary for the library director ahead of listing the open position.

The previous director, Connie Behe, resigned from her position in July after 12 years at ImagineIF, including three as director. Behe accepted a position at the Pierce County Library in Tacoma, Washington.

"It will be difficult to leave our vibrant library and excellent staff, not to mention this beautiful area, but it is time for me to take on new challenges," Behe said in a press release at the time.

When the five-member board met to review the open position, Flathead County Human Resources Director Tammy Skramovsky explained the county's standard pay matrix, including the various grades and increases. She recommended keeping the director's pay at its current grade, which is a starting salary of \$84,552 plus benefits, and expressed concerns about filling the position with a lower wage.

Three motions were made to lower the salary, first down to pay grade 37 (\$59,303), which failed; then to grade 42 (\$68,748), which passed 3-2 but was later rescinded; and finally to grade 45 (\$75,123) which



ImagineIF Library in Kalispell. HUNTER DANTUONO | FLATHEAD BEACON

passed in a 4-1 vote.

On Sept. 23, the board met again and had a similar discussion over the recently vacated children's librarian position. The board voted to reclassify the position from pay grade 31 to 27, an 11% decrease.

"I'm concerned that if we fail to attract qualified candidates that we think can do the job, the positions will remain open and it will be an incredible strain on our staff and services to the public would either be paused or canceled for an indefinite amount of time," interim library director Martha Furman told the board. "But the reality is the community has not really paid for the level of service that we've been providing over the years and there is going

to be a pinch."

The board opted against filling an open cataloguer position, instead directing the salary savings toward increasing wages for other positions, specifically materials handlers, which Furman said are critical to the library but difficult to hire and retain.

"We are trying to show the county commissioners that we are being fiscally responsible and that will bode well for the library in the future," said board member Doug Adams, who advocated for increasing savings anywhere possible. "If I'm wrong [and we don't get a quality candidate] we can always go back and change the scale."

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