



LIBRARIES

**Library Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday, December 2, 2021. 9am
ImagineIF Kalipell
MEETING MINUTES**

In attendance: Heidi Roedel, Doug Adams, Connie Leistiko, Marsha Sultz, David Ingram (Board); Martha Furman, Teri Dugan, Sean Anderson (Staff); Charlotte Housel (Library Foundation)

Guests present: Nancy Pensa, Jill Carlber, Susie Burch, Sue Votapra, Lynnette Hintze, Kathleen Wilson, Barbara Boorman, Wm. Cox, Valeri McGarvey, David August, Barbara Myers, Robin Graham, Julie Marotz, Dominic Vitiello, Roxie Lehl, Pam Haglund, Gary Stevens, Brian Marotz, Sharon Furlong, Barb St. John, John Fuller, Diane Taylor-Mahnke, Kelly Dougherty, Michael Renard, Trish Pandina, Lyn Bennett, Hunter D'Antuono, Carmen Cuthberston, Margene Berry, Vanessa Barrett, Tony Edmundson, Starr White, Judy Rosenfeld-Cox, Stu Wilson, David and Anne Mahoney, Micah Drew, Britt Carlson, Terry Falk, Emily Bolam, Susan Bodurtha, Susan Powers-Healy, Rosalee Skees, Ron Gerson.

- A. Call to Order:** Chair H Roedel called the meeting to order at 9:04 am. Roedel welcomed the guests and thanked them for the interest in the library. Roedel said part of the job of the library trustee is to know what the community is thinking. She asked for civility in the room, for speakers to speak for 2 minutes and for phones to be silenced. Roedel pointed out that the board is not seeking to keep information and books from people in the form of banning a book. Banning is making something illegal.
- B. Open time for persons to address the Board on matters within the Board's jurisdiction.**

Carmen Cuthbertson- Order of speakers from the last meeting listed in the minutes was not correct and at least two speakers spoke before her that mentioned the name of the book being challenged. Cuthbertson brought enlargements of the challenged book for the public to have access. Cuthbertson said the book is a graphic novel that is aimed at ages 9 and up. The book contains transgender lingo and is damaging to it's target audience. Keeping the book in the collection is an ill-considered choice and Cuthbertson is in favor of removing the book from the library.

Barbara Myers- Appreciated the public letter posted about the book challenge and the consistency in the steps explained that will be followed. Myers said they value library staff.

Brit Carlson- The library system is extremely important to the Flathead Valley. It is important that the library remains public and it would be sad if it were diminished or went away. Carlson urged the board to reconsider the purchase of the Bigfork Library Ark building.

Valeri McGarvey- Concerned where the library is heading. The community is worried that the library is being defunded. McGarvey said restricting access to library materials is discriminatory and is something that is happening across our country. People have the right to make their own choice. McGarvey asked the board to do their duty and uphold freedom of speech.

John Fuller- Montana House Representative. Concerned what we are allowing in the name of freedom and speech and access. It is not wrong to restrict access to children's materials. It is not appropriate to use tax dollars to buy pornographic materials. Fuller said he rejects the book in question.

Bill Cox- Objects to handing the authority to censor our library collection. Parents control access to what their children read. Cox objects to the proposal to remove the book from the collection.

Kelly Dougherty- Made clear to the board that this is a public library, not a school library and it is the parent's job to monitor their children's library materials.

Patti Mason- Thanked the board for serving in the difficult job of trustee. Concerned with the direction of increased interest to remove books from the library collection. The library serves as a safe place for people to find out about themselves. Mason asked that the board uphold the interests of the community at large.

Gary Stevens- Concerned about the Constitution of this country. The first amendment guides the culture and behavior and affords freedoms. Stevens expressed that these freedoms shall not be restrained. Censorship restrains freedoms. People are not forced to read the book, there is a freedom to choose. Stevens asked that the book stay in collection. Stevens added that if we don't have the choice to pick what we read, we don't have freedom.

David Mahoney- The support of freedom of speech is a grey zone. There is a responsibility to protect, not censor. Does the board have the capability, willingness and courage to take a protective view? Mahoney said contents of the book in question has risks. It is a board decision.

Lyn Bennett- Brought up movie rating systems and asked if that could be helpful with materials in the library.

Margie Berry- Expressed the need for library professionals with training to help make collection decisions. Berry said providing professional and intelligent leadership costs money.

Pam Haglund- Our library is an award-winning library. Haglund asked the board to let the professionals do their job.

- C. Approval of Minutes:** Board Meeting, Thursday, October 28, 2021
Moved by D. Adams "to approve the October 28, 2021 board minutes as presented."
Seconded by C. Leistiko

Discussion: Discussion took place regarding the subject of the order of speakers at the October meeting and whether the speakers mentioned the title of the challenged book previous to Cuthbertson speaking. Susan Bodurtha asked to be recognized by the board.

Bodurtha said she was a speaker before Cuthbertson and she did not mention the book title.

Furman said she mentioned the book title in the Director's report which is public information and posted on our library website.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

D. New Business

1. Staff Safety

DISCUSSION:

Specific solutions to help make staff feel safer while on the job in Kalispell were discussed. Some solutions included: upstaffing, locking the south door during evening hours, limited the number of patrons in the building, hiring a security guard or social worker and the use of security cameras.

Personal alarms are currently used by staff.

2. Winter Program Contract

Moved by C. Leistiko "to authorize H. Roedel to sign contracts for offsite winter programming on behalf of the Library Board."

Seconded by M. Sultz

Discussion: Furman said the offsite programming helps provide ample space for staff while at the same time provide program participants social distancing options.

Roedel questioned staff being away from the building which is already short staffed. Furman said that staffing will be covered to help the needs of both locations.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously

3. Determine best process for taking Board of Trustees meeting minutes

Moved by D. Adams "to digitally record and transcribe Library Board of Trustees meeting minutes."

Seconded by D. Ingram

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously

4. Collection Development

Moved by D. Adams "to move agenda item 4, Collection Development to discuss after agenda item 5, Succession Plan for Interim Director."

Seconded by D. Ingram

Discussion: Sultz questioned the reasoning for the agenda change.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously

5. Succession Plan for Interim Director

DISCUSSION:

Roedel offered three options going forward as a result of Furman resigning as Interim Library Director. The position could remain unfilled, an existing staff person could be placed in the interim position or the board could bring in an outside person for fill the position.

Leistiko reminded the board that they are charged with hiring the director and the county HR and county commissioners are not involved.

Sultz said the state library is a resource that could help the board decide. Sultz asked how S. Anderson felt about taking on the interim role.

Anderson said he is conflicted and would be proud to lead. He is supremely proud staff but has significant concerns and is not comfortable stepping into the role due to the self-inflicted chaos from the library board. Anderson said the actions of this board has driven out two directors and the answer is no.

T. Edmundson also declined the position.

Ingram asked what measures are taking place to make sure the necessary services will be offered in the absence of an Interim Director.

Furman said management is working on evaluating services and planning processes to continue, modify or temporarily suspend various services. Basic services will continue and the doors will remain open. Staff will be paid, doors open and bills paid. Furman said operations will be fine in the absence of an Interim Director. Most of Furman's time, she said, has been managing the library board.

Furman suggested the consideration of T. Dugan as the point person for the Board.

Roedel said a go to person on staff is necessary. Anderson said he can take the lead on operational things. Dugan can serve as the point person to the Library Board.

Leistiko reminded the board that members of the board should not making requests of library staff.

Moved by M Sultz "to make Teri Dugan the point person to the Library Trustees and to keep requests from the board to a minimum so as not to increase the work load of staff."

Seconded by D. Adams

VOTE: Motion passes unanimously

3. Collection Development

Adams requested information going forward about the ratios of library materials, newspapers and DVD's. Adam's said the requested information can be provided at later date. Adams would like to understand the collections selection process.

Leistiko said it is not the job of the board to involve themselves in collection management. Board members should study on their own and not burden staff.

Furman suggested webinars and learning opportunities through the state library trustee training. These are the tools that show how librarians do their work.

Housel reminded the board that Anderson made a presentation about collection development procedures to the board previously.

Ingram said he wishes to understand the process better so that he may participate more effectively in policy revisions.

Adams reminded the board that policy updates are behind schedule. Adams said the wording on the policies can be too vague.

Furman said it is the point of policy to be broad and sweeping while procedures are detailed and specific.

Leistiko said the procedure is that the policy committee meets with the director to update and review all and then bring the updates to the entire board for approval.

Furman questioned the intent of the policy discussion during a book challenge. The appearance of impropriety should be avoided.

Leistiko commented that the library has become an absolute jewel to the community. Leistiko does not agree with new people on the library board that feel they need to start things over. Leistiko said the library has lost wonderful staff in the last few months and she is trying to emphasize the role of a statutory board for a public institution. Leistiko said the boards biggest role is to let the library staff do their jobs. The board oversees the budget, reports are given monthly. Leistiko said in all 15 years of serving on the board, the library has always stayed within budget guidelines and never wasted money.

Adams said the board has a responsibility to the first amendment, but no obligation to be a yes man or woman. Adams said the library tenets are American Library Association based. Adams said he finds Montana Library Association to be hindering

and not genuine. Adams would like to disassociate from the ALA as well stating he does not agree with their agenda.

Furman stated the board is obligated to uphold the people's rights, ALA aside. The first amendment cannot be escaped.

Adams stated that he intends to defend the first amendment.

Moved by D. Adams "Due to the fact that we have two book challenges and there is obvious discord between staff and board about what is right and what is wrong and policy cannot be updated due to staff shortage, I move to stop all library materials ordering until a new Director is in place."

Furman stated this would be a violation of rights and impede the free flow of information that tax payers have paid for already.

Anderson needed clarification that this would mean no new library materials would be purchased until a new director was hired.

Furman said this action would shut down the main mission of the library.

Adams asked for clarification about preprocessed books and how they are selected. Adams rescinded the motion.

6. Library Closure

Moved by M. Sultz "to close the library at 3pm on December 24, 2021."

Seconded by D. Ingram

VOTE: Motion passes unanimously

E. Old Business

1. Hiring Director Updates

Discussion: Ingram reported the hiring team has reviewed 10 applications. Zoom interviews were held for 6 prospective candidates. The board will be asked to submit questions for the candidates in the next round of interviews.

Adams encouraged the hiring committee to fast track as much as they can. The board will schedule a special meeting for interviews in mid-December. Formal interviews will be a public meeting.

2. Bigfork Facility Update

Report from Roedel and Adams on facility conversations with Commissioners.

Adams reported that he and Roedel met individually with the county Commissioners to talk about the Bigfork Library facility and how they are feeling currently about ownership of the project. Adams said the Commission had a good listening ear and his impression is that things are going well. Adams feels the Board and stakeholders have every reason to feel optimistic about the future project. The Commission did request some additional information which is currently being gathered. This includes the cost of operations, upkeep and maintenance on a future facility.

Housel is working to gather the critical information requested by the Commissioners. Housel is also working on transfer documents for the property to be ready when they are needed.

3. Hiring Staff Update from Interim Director

Furman would like to post the 28 hours a week Library Advisor position vacated by Becca Johnson due to a promotion on December 6th.

Roedel asked if 28 hours was enough Advisor hours and if more were needed such as 35?

Anderson said the budget for the salary line was approved for this year but it certainly be analyzed for additional hours next fiscal year.

Roedel said to be sure to use the extra hours that are available in the salary line if needed to help coverage for staff.

Moved by C. Leistiko "to post the vacant 28/hour per week Library Advisor position at the current pay grade."

Seconded by M. Sultz

Discussion: The board discussed staffing levels and the possible need for extra library advisor hours.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously

4. Policy Committee- Progress update review process

Furman reported that Staff are currently working on the library policy schedule, reviewing the schedule and making edits. The new Director will assemble and work through the schedule edits and bring it to the board for approval.

F. Reports

1. Financial Report

Moved by C. Leistiko "to accept the October 2021 Financial Report as presented."

Seconded by D. Ingram

VOTE: Motion passes unanimously

2. Interim Director and Staff Reports

Furman said the state library statistics have been submitted to the Montana State Library. Furman thanked the team for the hard work in gathering the stats.

Anderson and Furman are working on documentation of current projects so the new Director can understand the landscape and hit the ground running.

Furman took questions on the written Director's report.

Sultz commented the new website is very user friendly. Sultz is proud of the hard work staff has put into projects and programs to fulfill the library's mission.

3. Foundation Report

Housel has distributed the annual appeal request. The Foundation has been focusing on empowering citizens as library users to advocate for the library.

The Foundation has welcomed two new board members.

\$800,000 has been raised for the Bigfork Library. Housel is planning an appeal for the Bigfork project. The appeal letter will include updates on the library and the campaign as well as a projected timeline for the completion of the project.

The Foundation is working on a preliminary property agreement. The foundation board has a concern about past decisions from the Library board. These decisions have involved strategic plans, staffing, budget and library needs. Housel said the board gets bogged down in political trends. Housel's main concern is for donors and volunteers and the damaging view these decisions may have on the library's ability to provide free and equal access.

Housel appreciated and thanked the board for talking with the County Commission. Housel thanked the many donors that have given thousands of hours of work and remain committed although no clear path forward has formulated yet.

G. Closed Session- Personnel Matter

Furman chose to waive the right to a closed session.

Roedel said the personnel committee has brought forth a letter for the board's consideration regarding the matter.

Leistiko reminded the board that standing committees are advisory only.

Sultz said the policy committee's letter was a response to a complainant's letter received. The complainant stated in the letter that the Interim Director violated had library policy. Sultz said the policy committee was not in the position to address the other points in the letter. Sultz stated that it was the finding of the policy committee that no policy had been violated by the Interim Director.

Adams asked if there were issues or thoughts about the response letter that could be made before sending it to the complainant.

Roedel said it was a board issue and the board must decide what to do.

Moved by D. Adams "to adopt the response letter written by the policy committee and send it to the complainant."

Seconded by M. Sultz

Discussion: Housel asked if the illegal meeting have anything to do with the resignation of the Interim Director. Housel said the confusion lies in the fact that at the table have read the response letter.

Sultz said the bottom line was that no policy violation was found by the committee.

Housel suggested going back and following proper procedure. Handle the complaint in the proper manner by noticing the committee meeting.

Leistiko said standing committees are under the Montana open meeting laws. Leistiko said complaints about staff are actually a personnel committee matter and not a policy committee matter.

**Sultz rescinded the Second.
Motion dies for lack of a second.**

Moved by C. Leistiko "to have the personnel committee meet with the Interim Director and report back to the board with a recommendation."
Seconded by D. Adams

Discussion: The Interim Director will have the option for an open or closed meeting. The meeting will be publicly noticed. The county HR will not be involved.

Furman said she prefers an open meeting and the public needs to know the background. Transparency is best.

Anderson expressed concern about a previous meeting that happened between the HR Director, Board Chair and Interim Director.

Leistiko said the Library Board is a statutory board and abides by Montana code law. The Montana State Code supersedes county policies. The Montana State Library is the resource the library board should be using. The State Library employs experts on Montana Library law and are there to help library boards.

VOTE: Motion passed unanimously

H. Housekeeping

Next Library Board Meeting, January 27, 2022, 9am, Kalispell.

I. Adjourn: 12:43pm

