

I M Bison & We R Rustlers

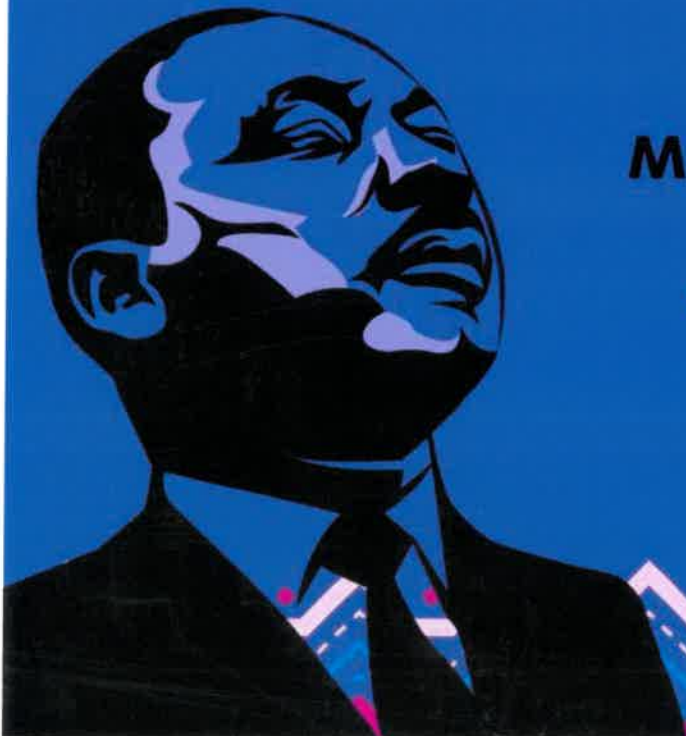
**Live the
Dream**

Wednesday, February 21st

5:30-7:00 pm

**GREAT FALLS HIGH SCHOOL HUB & AUDITORIUM
1900 SECOND AVE S, GREAT FALLS, MT 59405**

**SPEAKERS, FOOD,
MUSIC, AND A POPUP
MUSEUM TO
CELEBRATE BLACK
HISTORY MONTH**



Tuesday, February 6, 2024

Mayor, Commissioners,

My name is Whitney Olson, I live in Cascade County and I am the Chair of the Great Falls Public Library Board.

I am addressing you today so that my comments are part of the public record.

I understand during the Commission meeting on January 16, the following was said: "I have not personally heard from the Library board, but I've heard scuttlebutt rumors that they would like to also separate from the City of Great Falls and I'd like to know if there's some truth to that."

As the Board Chair of the Great Falls Public Library, I would like to address this rumor. The Library Board is NOT seeking to separate from the City of Great Falls.

The Great Falls Public Library is deeply embedded in the history and fabric of our community. Paris Gibson and wife Valeria helped establish the Great Falls Public Library at the same time that they were establishing Great Falls as a City. As a matter of fact, the first Library was actually named *The Valeria* in recognition of Valeria Gibson's work.

In 2022, when the Library was planning for the Library Levy there was a discussion of different Library funding models. The creation of an independent Library District separate from the City of Great Falls was discussed and rejected as an option. Both the Library Board and the City Commission agreed that we would continue as a City Library.

With Commissioner Tryon's suggestion that the Commission consider the termination of the Library management agreement, there has been more discussion of the Library's relationship with the City. On January 9th, Library Director McIntyre and I met with City Manager Doyon, City Finance Director Kinzler and Deputy City Manager Anderson to discuss Library tax revenue. During that meeting, my impression from City Manager Doyon was that he felt that the Commissioners were not interested in negotiating the terms of the management agreement, but rather simply terminating it.

In response, Ms. McIntyre and I sought clarification about the non-monetary aspects of the Management Agreement. "Would the Library employees continue to be represented by the union?" and "What would become of the City owned building?" for example.

If anything, we brought to light the many issues that would need to be negotiated if the management agreement were terminated. The governance of the Library is dictated by the Montana Code Annotated, City Ordinances, Library Board by-laws and the City-Library management agreement. Any changes to the management agreement will need to align with the other governing documents—including State Laws and local ordinances.

If that discussion was somehow related to the Commissioners and Mayor as the "Library board would like to separate from the City of Great Falls," I believe your City Manager has done both the Commission and the Library a disservice.

I hope that the Library Board and the Commission can work together to serve Great Falls. I believe that we need better communication—not innuendos and rumors. If you have questions or concerns, I urge you to reach out to members of the Library Board or the Library Director so that we can all be clear. Just as Paris and Valeria felt in 1890, I believe that a successful Public Library is essential for a healthy functioning community, I hope that we can work together to make that happen.

Thank you,



Whitney Olson
Great Falls Public Library Board Chair

February 6, 2024

Mayor Cory Reeves
Great Falls City Commissioners
P. O. Box 5021
Great Falls, MT 59403

RE: Petitions and Communications, City Commission Meeting, February 6, 2024

Dear City Commission:

I write in support of Great Falls Public Library Director Susie McIntyre. Ms. McIntyre is doing a wonderful job with the Library, but there is a vocal minority in Great Falls who disagree, and she has been the target of unprecedented vitriol and personal attacks

The Great Falls Public Library is a member of both the Montana Public Library Association and the American Library Association. As members, Ms. McIntyre and her entire staff work diligently to ensure that the ethics and missions of all three entities are upheld.

To quote the American Library Association Code of Ethics:

“In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.”

The Great Falls Public Library Guiding Principles include respect, open access, customer focus, growth and innovation, and excellent stewardship. Ms. McIntyre exemplifies these Principles every day. She works 50 to 60 hour weeks: her commitment to the Library is unsurpassed.

I worked for Mrs. Alma Smith Jacobs at the Library in the 1960's, both as a part time student book shelver and, after graduating from high school, as a full-time assistant in the Children's Department. Mrs. Jacobs would be appalled at the treatment her successor has been subject to over the past year.

Please ensure that Ms. McIntyre is protected from unwarranted criticism. She has and will make mistakes, we all do. But Ms. McIntyre acknowledges errors, corrects them, and strives to do the best for her staff, her community, and the Library. To ask for her resignation or for her to be fired is not in the best interests of any of those three. Ms. McIntyre is a tireless worker for the betterment of all who live in Cascade County.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sandra Rice
909 3rd Avenue North, #4
Great Falls, MT 59401

Member: Great Falls Public Library Foundation Board of Trustees
Friends of the Library
Neighborhood Council #7 (which includes the Library within its boundaries)

From: [Lisa C. Kunz](#)
To: [Cory Reeves](#); [Joe Mckenney](#); [Rick Tryon](#); [Shannon Wilson](#)
Cc: [Krista Artis](#)
Subject: FW: Shyla Patera If you don't accept this due to time constraints I'll understand
Date: Tuesday, February 6, 2024 1:52:15 PM

See Shyla's comments in favor of Agenda Item 16.

Lisa

-----Original Message-----

From: Lisa C. Kunz
Sent: Tuesday, February 6, 2024 1:51 PM
To: 'Shyla Patera' <shycpat@icloud.com>
Cc: Darcy Dea <ddea@greatfallsmt.net>
Subject: RE: Shyla Patera If you don't accept this due to time constraints I'll understand

Hi Shyla - thank you for your comments. Your comments will be shared with the Commission for consideration of Item 16 this evening.

Thank you.

Lisa Kunz
City Clerk/Records Manager
Civic Center Room 204
406.455.8451

-----Original Message-----

From: Shyla Patera <shycpat@icloud.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 6, 2024 12:19 PM
To: commission <commission@greatfallsmt.net>; Lisa C. Kunz <lkunz@greatfallsmt.net>; Darcy Dea <ddea@greatfallsmt.net>
Subject: Shyla Patera If you don't accept this due to time constraints I'll understand

My name is Shyla Patera. I am an Independent Living Specialist employed by and representing North Central Independent Living Services, Inc. in Black Eagle Montana I am also a city resident and a fellow Neighborhood Council Chair- NC2

I am representing myself. I send my support in favor of item number 16 the lower North side Street Reconstruction project. This area of Great Falls is a vital hub to our downtown and particularly around the Civic Center and Park Dr., North ADA improvements have been recommended by city residents with disabilities The Lower Northside Street Reconstruction Project will enhance neighborhood and communities access around many landmarks downtown especially our library and other neighborhood and community treasures. Shyla Patera

Sent from my iPhone