

Great Falls Public Library
Board of Trustees Board Meeting
Tuesday, June 25, 2024
Great Falls Public Library – Cordingley Room (Basement 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. Jessica Crist, Ms. Sam DeForest, Ms. Noelle Johnson, Ms. Whitney Olson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Anne Bulger

EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Shannon Wilson – City of Great Falls Commissioner

EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Rae Grulkowski – Cascade County Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT: Ms. Sarah Cawley, Ms. Treva Higgins, Aaron Kueffler, Ms. Susie McIntyre, Mr. Lukas Meier, Ms. Sara Linder-Parkinson, Mr. John Roberts, Ms. Payten Zenahlik

GUESTS PRESENT: John Beckman – Resident of Great Falls, Keith Duncan – Resident of Great Falls, Richard Irving – Resident of Great Falls, Brianne Laurin – GFPL Foundation Executive Director, Sandy Rice – GFPL Foundation Liaison, Melissa Smith – Resident of Great Falls, Bill Tacke – Resident of Great Falls, Sue Warren – Resident of Great Falls

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

I. AGENDA APPROVAL

Ms. Olson asked for an agenda approval.

Ms. Crist moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the agenda items as presented. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Olson opened for any board discussion or public comment. Upon hearing none, Ms. Olson called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

II. STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Lukas Meier and Mr. John Roberts introduced themselves and talked about their positions at the Library and how they came to be at the Library. After questions from the board, they left the meeting.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Melissa Smith, a resident of Great Falls addressed the board. She thanked the Library for the event in the Library Park that had author Jamie Ford. She also thanked the Library for their support of Juneteenth.

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. He stated that the Juneteenth event was nice, but the Library continues to present a fictional account of what Juneteenth was about.

He stated that he continues to be concerned with the Library financial reports, and the spending of money to rent the Mansfield Theater for an event no one showed up for. He is also concerned that the Library gave out a fictional amount that taxpayers were going to have to pay on the levy. The Library did not reduce the amount or apologize to the taxpayers.

He continues to voice his concerns with plans to move kids into the basement.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

Ms. Crist provided Mr. Kueffler with an email with grammatical corrections.

Ms. Johnson stated that on page two, a period was missing at the end of the first paragraph.

Ms. Johnson made a motion that the Great Falls Board of Trustees accepts the minutes with the proofreading changes that were submitted. Ms. Crist seconded the motion. Ms. Olson opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. He voiced his concerns that the Library does not provide a written packet, or display the packet on the screen during the meeting.

Ms. Olson asked if there were any additional comments, upon hearing none she called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

V. ACCEPTANCE OF THE FINANCIAL REPORTS

Ms. Olson asked if anyone had questions regarding the Financial reports.

Ms. McIntyre informed us that the packet contains two year-to-date reports. One is in the format that has previously been in the packets. The other is a report generated within the new city software. She asked that the board instruct her on what they would like to see going forward.

Ms. DeForest had a question on page 7, line item 311220 and line items 421900 & 423100. The percentages seem lower than expected. Ms. McIntyre stated that 311220 taxes are collected on a different schedule, they should show up on the next board packet. For 421900 & 423100, the budget number listed was the original budget, not the revised budget we enacted during the cash flow issues.

Ms. Johnson stated that using the report generated by the new software was preferred, especially if it saved on time having to rekey all the info into the old format. All board members agreed and instructed Ms. McIntyre to use the report from NewWorld.

Ms. McIntyre wished to clarify the Mansfield Theater concern mentioned in Public Comment. She explained it was for the Gathering of Families event. It was a community event that the Library was asked to participate. The plan was to end the weeklong event at the Mansfield Theater. The library secured the location. The planning was challenging and not as many people participated as was desired. She added that Foundation funding was used.

Ms. Crist added that there are many challenges of working in partnerships. It was appropriate for the library not to take lead on that event and remain just a partner.

Ms. DeForest asked if we would have to pay for using the Mansfield Theater for Shakespeare in the Parks. Ms. McIntyre explained that the Mansfield is just a backup location. We do not need to put a payment down if no one else wants the venue that same evening. If they do, then we will need to put a deposit down. If no one else needs it that evening, and the Library doesn't need to use it, we will not have that expense.

Ms. Olson asked Ms. Laurin what the funds can be used for. Ms. Laurin stated that the funds are restricted to Adult Programming and Cultural Programming.

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

Ms. Johnson asked if a Monthly Fund Balance could be provided at the bottom of the Income Statement. Ms. McIntyre stated that it would be easy to add going forward.

Ms. Olson asked if there were any more questions, upon hearing none she called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. REPORTS

Management Team Report

Ms. Cawley gave her Community Engagement report.

Ms. Olson stated she was impressed with all the activities Ms. Cawley has facilitated in the last nine months.

Ms. Crist likes that Ms. Cawley is working on a plan to make better use of the Library volunteers.

Director Report

Ms. McIntyre presented her director's report.

Ms. Johnson indicated that the new website has been displaying 404 errors when searched from google. Ms. McIntyre stated that we are aware and we are working on the search engine optimization (SEO).

Ms. Johnson asked where the Cushing Terrell invoices will show in the financial reports. Ms. McIntyre stated they would appear on the Vendor Summary report.

Statistical Report

No one had questions or comments concerning the Statistical Report.

Personnel Report

No one had questions or comments concerning the Personnel Report.

GFPL Foundation Report

Ms. Rice informed us that the Foundation has four new board members. Their terms begin on July 1st.

Ms. Rice is continuing to hold a raffle during the Music in the Library Park events

Chair Report

Ms. Olson had nothing to report at this time.

Board Reports

Ms. Crist stated that the Juneteenth celebration continues to grow each year.

Ms. Olson asked Ms. Crist if she has heard anything regarding the band shell removal. Ms. Crist stated that a neighbor informed her that incidents in the park have gotten a lot better.

Ms. DeForest gave a recap of the Pathfinder meeting she attended.

City/Library Management Agreement Committee Report

Ms. Olson stated that the negotiation was still in process, and there was nothing new to report.

Ms. Johnson asked if sub-committees could provide a written report. Ms. Olson stated that it could be done but some committees meet multiple times and may not have a full report ready. Ms. McIntyre added that most committees will give a verbal update month to month, then provide a written report when they officially present to the board. Ms. Crist added for the long term record it should be written down.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS: LIBRARY STANDARDS ROADMAP REVIEW – ACCESS TO LIBRARY SERVICES

Ms. McIntyre presented. She recapped the information that was presented in the board packet.

It was discussed that the board would like to finish up the roadmap review within the next two months.

PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS POLICY REVIEW: CITY OF GREAT FALLS PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL

Ms. McIntyre presented. She recapped the information that was presented in the board packet.

Ms. Johnson asked if a motion was needed since this is a city policy that we cannot change. Ms. Crist suggested we change to motion to say “acknowledging the receipt of”. It was decided that the minutes would reflect that it was reviewed and discussed and no motion was made.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

LIBRARY DIRECTOR ANNUAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Ms. Olson cited MCA 2-3-203 (3). She asked if Ms. McIntyre would like to waive her right to privacy. Ms. McIntyre stated that she would not.

Ms. Johnson asked if there was a form for her performance review. Ms. Olson stated she would go over that when they enter the executive session.

Ms. Olson moved that the board enter into an executive session. Ms. DeForest seconded. Ms. Olson called for a vote. Motion passed 3-1 (voting yes: Ms. Olson, Ms. DeForest, Ms. Crist. Voting no: Ms. Johnson)

EXECUTIVE SESSION BEGAN AT 5:44 PM

Present: Whitney Olson, Jessica Crist, Samantha DeForest, Noelle Johnson, Shannon Wilson, Susie McIntyre

Location: Downstairs small meeting room, the group moved to Susie's office when the group holding the 6pm reservation to the small meeting room arrived. Executive session began at 5:45 pm.

Ms. McIntyre gave an explanation of Mr. Irving's comments about his arrival and special request for seating prior to tonight's board meeting. Discussion about his behavior was had by the group.

The group engaged in a conversation regarding Ms. McIntyre's performance. Each of the three goals in the strategic plan were addressed individually.

GOAL #1: CREATE A SAFE, ACCESSIBLE LIBRARY THAT WILL SERVE THE COMMUNITY FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS

Board comments: Susie is a good communicator and handles the public well. We love that Susie has a vision for the library and she's out in the public leading. She does so with grace. She is able to both implement and interpret well. Susie has also done well with preparing the budget.

Susie's comments: Susie identified difficulty with the City in regard to the City's expectations and the implementation of the levy. She discussed the Library management team's stress levels regarding all the change. She reports that she was first focused on the "what" of the levy. She now must focus on the "how."

The board and Susie had a discussion about Library employee's new job duties. The remodel project was also discussed. The board noted that the work of the director is much more open than with previous directors. The board also encouraged Susie to take on less now that the levy has passed.

GOAL #2: DEVELOP ADEQUATE, SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR A THRIVING LIBRARY

Board comments: The board recognizes that the Library needs a leader to bring the ideas to the board. It is important that the Assistant Director position is filled. A discussion was had about the number of hours Susie was working prior to and during

the levy (60 hours per week) and the amount of time now (50 hours per week). Susie also gave up 100 hours of vacation prior to the levy.

Susie's comments: Susie discussed balance between work and outside of work. She discussed staff concerns. She feels the library is here to serve the entire community. She discussed being attacked by members of the public and the recent situation with the swastika in the book drop.

GOAL #3: DEVELOP LIBRARY SERVICES AND STAFFING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

Board comments: The board commended Susie on the number of people that have been hired since the passing of the levy. Many good hires have been made along with all the provisions to get them up and running.

Susie's comments: Susie discussed issues with City HR.

The board continued the discussion stating that they would like to see more press releases related to library services such as the notary, free room rentals, printing, etc. It is important that the Library provides top notch service as it is integral in attracting businesses and new people to Great Falls.

The board commended Susie on her Montana Library Director of the Year award. The comment that this is the "shining star of the evaluation" was made. Susie does a good job networking and collaborating with the other libraries in the state and the board is proud of her recognition.

The board asked Susie what she needed from the board. Susie said that she is currently getting what she needs. She appreciates the board's support and is learning that she does not need to be perfect in this role.

Susie was excused from the meeting.

The board discussed the format of the evaluation and it was agreed that a different process can be used next year if desired. Shannon Wilson reported that she believes the cost of living increase to be somewhere around 3.5% for this year. Greg Doyon is responsible for deciding the cost of living increase and the merit based increase for the Library Director. Ms. Wilson has agreed to seek more information regarding the salary increases of the other City department heads.

Discussion regarding Susie's raise was had with the consensus that her performance merits both the cost of living increase and a merit based increase.

The executive session was adjourned at 7:15 and all members returned to the Cordingly Room to finish the board meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION ENDED AT 7:19 PM

Ms. Olson gave a brief overview of what was discussed during the executive session. She stated that it was an open conversation between the board members, the ex-officio and Ms. McIntyre. Ms. McIntyre's review was based upon her accomplishments in regard to the Library's strategic plan.

For goal 1, create a safe, accessible library that will serve the community for the next 50 years, Ms. Olson stated that Ms. McIntyre has the vision for this organization. She sees the big picture and knows how to take the library forward. She is leading with grace and has done well both with the vision and the budget.

The remodel project was discussed. The board has offered assistance in whatever small groups that need to get together for the remodel project.

Ms. Olson stated that Ms. McIntyre has taken on a lot, and that the board is pleased to see that there is staff, and that programming has shifted to other staff in the building.

For goal 2, develop adequate, sustainable funding for a thriving library, Ms. Olson stated that the discussion revolved around the Mill Levy and its passing and what needed to be done to meet the promises to the voters. Work-life balance was discussed and what the assistant director position will bring to the library. The library is a space that serves everyone in the community and the board needs to make sure they show Ms. McIntyre their support.

Goal 3, develop library services and staffing to meet the needs of the community, Ms. Olson stated that a discussion was had on the staff that has been hired and what has been done. The board would like to see more effort put into making the community aware of the library services that are currently being offered. Examples include the notary service the library offers, copy service, and being able to reserve meeting space without a fee.

Ms. McIntyre's recent Librarian of the Year award from the Montana Library Association was discussed. It is an award that peers weigh in on and Ms. McIntyre has good networking and collaboration with other library directors across the state.

Ms. Olson added, that after Ms. McIntyre exited the room, the board discussed recommendations on pay increases. Ms. Olson stated that Ms. Wilson, in the executive session, explained the recent city manager pay increase, and that the cost of living increase is somewhere near the 3.5% range. Ms. Olson asked Ms. Wilson for confirmation on that amount and feedback on what other department heads are

receiving. Ms. Olson asked Ms. McIntyre if everyone receives their merit based increase at the same time. Ms. McIntyre stated that in the past, those increase are given a little late, but would be retro paid to July 1. Ms. McIntyre informed everyone that she has not yet had her review with the city manager. She went on to explain how she handles merit based pay for her non-union staff. Ms. Crist added that for the library director to turn down increases is not a good idea for many reasons. She added that keeping the salary low will make it difficult when the time comes to hire someone else.

Ms. Olson stated that she has tasked Ms. Wilson with some questions to be answered before the next meeting. Ms. Olson stated until those answers arrive the board is not at a point where they can vote on a particular pay increase at this time.

Ms. Olson asked the board and ex-officio for input.

Ms. Wilson stated that she is thankful for a dedicated library director who sees the library through all the changes, for bringing the right people on board to expand the services, and make the library so much better.

Ms. Crist stated she already had her say regarding turning down raises.

Ms. Johnson had no comments to add.

Ms. DeForest thanked Ms. McIntyre for all that she does, and is excited to see where the library is going.

Ms. Olson asked for a motion to approve the performance review without the pay increase. A motion for the pay increase can be made at next month's meeting.

Ms. Crist moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the annual performance review of the Library Director. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Olson opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls, addressed the board. He is heartened that the Ex-Officio member participated in the review and he recommends that the board change their policy so the Ex-Officio can participate but not vote. He is also heartened to see that the board is asking more questions than they use to. He stated that it is his opinion that the answers the board receives for the director are seldom facts. He suggests that the board place Ms. McIntyre on a very specific plan of correction with specific goals and consequences.

Ms. Olson asked if the board had anything to add.

Ms. Johnson stated that she appreciated Ms. McIntyre's feedback, comments, and positive references to what staff is doing but she felt the conversation in the executive

session was more of an evaluation of the strategic goals and not of an evaluation of the library director. Ms. Olson asked if Ms. Johnson would be voting against the motion. Ms. Johnson stated that she would be because she did not feel this was a performance review of the director, but a review of the strategic plan.

Ms. Olson asked if Ms. Johnson had comments about Ms. McIntyre's performance. Ms. Johnson reiterated that she appreciated Ms. McIntyre's comments but still does not feel it was a performance review.

Ms. Olson informed Ms. Johnson that this was her opportunity to review Ms. McIntyre's performance. Ms. Johnson stated that she felt the opportunity to do so was during the executive session, but guidance was not provided.

Ms. Olson asked Ms. Johnson to state in this meeting whether or not she was provided an opportunity to review Ms. McIntyre's performance. Ms. Johnson stated that she believed that the executive session was reviewing strategic goals in a conversation with Ms. McIntyre.

Ms. DeForest stated for the record that she asked Ms. Johnson, during the executive session, if she brought any comments or anything to talk about. This was an opportunity to talk about anything. Ms. Johnson stated that prior to the executive session she asked if there was a form for review. She included that a review should include something being sent out to the board or public ahead of time. She stated that direction was lacking for what was being done. Ms. DeForest stated that Ms. Johnson did not need a form to ask questions. Ms. Johnson stated that the questions should have been developed by someone other than her. Ms. Johnson stated that she had reached out to Ms. Crist asking if there was a form or a review that had already been done. Ms. Olson asked Ms. Johnson why she addressed a question to Ms. Crist and not the board chair. Ms. Crist replied that she and Ms. Johnson tend to have similar changes to the meeting minutes so she emailed her directly. Ms. Crist added that due to meeting laws, the board cannot send messages as a group so she sent her changes directly to Ms. Johnson. Ms. Johnson added that in a previous committee meeting, Ms. Crist offered to answer board questions as they came up. Ms. Olson stated that since the board president sets the agenda, any changes to the agenda need to go to her. If any board member feels there is something missing in the agenda, they need to discuss it with the people that set the agenda. Ms. Johnson added that she was not indicating that she wanted to change the agenda; she had questions and was confused about the process. Ms. Olson stated that in the future, Ms. Johnson should reach out before the meeting to address those questions. Ms. Johnson added that board meeting should be where transparency takes place. Ms. Olson encouraged Ms. Johnson to be transparent now, and inform the board what concerns she has about Ms. McIntyre's performance that would prevent her from voting yes. Ms. Johnson stated that the reason she is voting to not approve is because she does not feel the board conducted a performance review of the Director which is what the motion is for. Ms. Olson questioned Ms. Johnson on her not wanting

to give a review of Ms. McIntyre at this time. Ms. Johnson stated that she will not be giving any more comment as she feels she has already answered the question.

Ms. Olson asked Ms. Wilson to comment on how Ms. McIntyre's review process compared to the city managers review process.

Ms. Wilson stated that this process mirrored the city manager's process. She stated that they went around the room and pointed out areas that were strengths through the year as well as areas where there were problems. Each commissioner had an opportunity to interact with the city manager just like what was done in the executive session this evening. When the city manager left the room, the commissioners discussed the evaluation.

Ms. Olson asked if there was any more board discussion, upon hearing none she called for a vote. Motion passed 3-1 (voting yes: Ms. Olson, Ms. DeForest, Ms. Crist. Voting no: Ms. Johnson)

IX. PROPOSALS/COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES

Ms. Johnson stated that every individual board member has the right to vote how they want. She stated that the pressure exhibited tonight with asking the same question over and over again was very inappropriate. Even voting no, the outcome is the same. Pressure for voting is inappropriate. Ms. Olson added that she was not pressuring Ms. Johnson's vote; she stated that it is not always understood why she votes for and against some things. Ms. Olson added that if Ms. Johnson wants transparency she needs to be transparent to the board. The board would like to know how she feels about things instead of not addressing the situation. Ms. Johnson said she is glad this is being transparent. She stated that she specifically said she does not feel the board conducted a performance review of Ms. McIntyre. The change she proposes is that next year the board needs to come to this review with a better explanation of what they are going to do. Ms. Johnson said that she did ask a question and followed up with what change she believes needs to happen. She added that she is not voting against Ms. McIntyre, she is voting against the way the review was handled.

Ms. Olson thanked Ms. Johnson for going on the record with her thoughts.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Olson asked if there were any other questions or comments, upon hearing none, she asked for a motion.

Ms. DeForest moved that the Great Falls Library Board of Trustees adjourn the meeting. Ms. Crist seconded the motion. Ms. Olson called for a vote.

Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Olson adjourned the meeting at 7:40 pm.