

Great Falls Public Library
Board of Trustees Board Meeting
Tuesday, January 27, 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. Sam DeForest, Ms. Noelle Johnson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Jessica Crist, Ms. Whitney Olson

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

EX OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Joe Briggs – Cascade County Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT: Amy Dissmeyer, Aaron Kueffler, Sara Linder-Parkinson

GUESTS PRESENT: Bill Bronson – Legal Counsel for GFPL, Richard Irving – Resident of Great Falls, Brianne Laurin – GFPL Foundation Executive Director, Jenn Rowell – The Electric (via zoom), Bill Tacke – Resident of Great Falls

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

I. AGENDA APPROVAL

Ms. Johnson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the agenda as presented. Ms. DeForest 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.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls and library cardholder, addressed the Board. He stated concerns regarding an incident he observed at the library involving a patron with a dog, which he felt negatively impacted the library environment. He expressed criticism of library leadership and governance, asserted that staff should not be blamed for the situation, and conveyed his view that current policies and practices affect public perception of the library's role and accessibility. He thanked the Board for its attention.

V. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

Ms. Johnson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the minutes of the special November 14th meeting meeting as presented. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Richard Irving, a resident of Great Falls and library cardholder addressed the Board, noting concerns regarding prior board actions and meeting minutes. He expressed support for the library staff communication policy but alleged that the policy was inconsistently applied, allowing majority board members direct communication with staff while restricting minority members. He also raised concerns about the board's handling of the library remodeling plan, stating that a board member indicated the city commission would follow the board's direction without input from the new director. Mr. Irving noted these discussions were not reflected in the minutes and suggested they demonstrated the board and commission prioritizing their own interests over public input.

Ms. Bulger asked if there were any more comments; upon hearing none, she called for a vote. Motion passed by unanimous vote of members present.

Ms. DeForest moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees approve the minutes of the Regular November as presented. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Ms. Johnson added that most of Mr. Irving's comments were in regards to this meeting.

Ms. Bulger asked if there were any more comments; upon hearing none, she called for a vote. Motion passed by unanimous vote of members present.

VI. ACCEPTANCE OF THE FINANCIAL REPORTS

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

Ms. Johnson asked for clarification on the acronym "FFP." Mr. Kueffler explained that it stands for *Foundation Funded Projects*.

Ms. Bulger inquired about the cost of serving trespass notices. Ms. Linder-Parkinson explained that standard service typically costs \$75, with additional charges applied for multiple attempts or extended wait times, such as at the jail.

Ms. Johnson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees accept the financial reports as presented. Ms. DeForest 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.

VII. REPORTS

DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Dissmeyer presented her Director's Report. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve, noted that she is enjoying getting to know the staff and library operations, and reported that work is underway to move forward with improvements to the library's phone system.

GFPL FOUNDATION REPORT

Ms. Laurin presented the Foundation Report. She announced that February is Library Lovers Month and described a planned “Love Your Library” community campaign in collaboration with library staff. The campaign will place decorated collection boxes at approximately 25 participating local businesses, with additional locations pending, where community members may submit written messages expressing support for the library. Submissions will also be accepted online through the Foundation website. The campaign will run from February 1–10 and will be promoted through coordinated social media and press outreach.

Ms. Laurin noted that the collected messages will be used to highlight community support, assist with future campaign planning, and will culminate in a welcome event for Ms. Dissmeyer. She reported that work with Cushing Terrell is winding down, with a final presentation anticipated. She also noted that the Montana Library Association annual conference will be held in Great Falls in April, with renderings expected to be available for display during the conference welcome reception.

Ms. Laurin concluded by reporting successful year-end fundraising, including reaching the \$50,000 Book-a-thon goal, with additional contributions still expected.

CHAIR REPORT

Ms. Bulger reported Mr. Bronson will now be attending the board meetings.

Ms. Bulger gave an update on Ms. Crist and conveyed her apologies for not attending the meeting.

Ms. Bulger added that she has met with Ms. Dissmeyer and is aware that she is trying to meet with as many people as possible from both the City and County.

BOARD REPORT

No board reports given.

CUSHING TERRELL REPORT

Ms. Laurin stated that Cushing Terrell is nearing completion.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Nothing was discussed.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

No Old Business was discussed.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

LIBRARY BOARD 2026 TASK CALENDAR

Ms. Johnson raised three questions regarding the draft 2026 Library Board Task Calendar, including the timing of initiating the strategic plan, the requirement for board approval of the

calendar, and the proposed schedule for the Director's evaluation and compensation review. Discussion followed, with consensus that the January and April timelines were not realistic and should be adjusted, including moving the Director evaluation to a later date, likely after six months. It was noted that the July compensation discussion aligns with the City's COLA process.

Ms. Bulger stated she would consult with City Human Resources to confirm appropriate timelines consistent with other City employees and report back to the Board.

The Board discussed engaging Ms. Sloan to assist with facilitation of the strategic planning process and considered scheduling an initial meeting to establish a planning timeline. Ms. Dismeyer noted that Ms. Sloan was scheduled to meet with her and agreed to discuss availability and next steps.

At the conclusion of discussion, Ms. Johnson moved to table consideration of the 2026 Task Calendar to allow time for revisions and additional information. The matter was tabled by consensus.

PATRON APPEAL REGARDING PATRON BEHAVIOR POLICY

Ms. Bulger introduced the patron appeal regarding the Patron Behavior Policy and noted the patron was not present. Board members reviewed the patron's concerns and discussed current policy provisions and staff practices.

Ms. Bulger stated that the issues raised appeared to be addressed within existing policy and described current staff procedures for monitoring computer areas and responding to patron concerns. Board members discussed the role of headphones, public access to computers, and the balance between maintaining a welcoming public space and minimizing noise.

Board members discussed possible suggestions for patrons sensitive to noise, including the availability of earbuds for purchase. Ms. Johnson noted that noise standards are subjective and that staff work to balance competing patron needs. She also suggested the Board may wish to revisit computer gaming language in the future if it becomes a broader issue.

Staff feedback regarding prior interactions with the patron was summarized, noting that staff had offered multiple accommodations and interventions.

Following discussion, the Board expressed support for current staff practices and consensus that no policy changes were needed at this time.

Ms. Johnson moved that the Great Falls Public Library Board of Trustees uphold the management decision regarding the patron behavior policy. Ms. DeForest seconded the motion. Ms. Bulger opened for any board discussion or public comment.

Richard Irving, a Great Falls resident and library cardholder, addressed the Board regarding the patron appeal process. He expressed concern that there was no written evidence the patron

had waived her right to present, respond, or rebut during the appeal and suggested the Board consult legal counsel to ensure the process was lawful and consistent with Board policy.

Board members and legal counsel clarified that the patron had been notified of the time and place of the hearing, had submitted written materials for the record, and had indicated she might not attend. Legal counsel stated that this constituted a waiver of the right to attend and that the Board could proceed with its decision.

Ms. Bulger opened for any further board discussion or public comment. Upon hearing none, she called for a vote. Motion passed by unanimous vote of members present.

X. PROPOSALS/COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES

No proposals or comments were presented

XI. ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion passed by unanimous vote of members present.

Ms. Bulger adjourned the meeting at 5:13pm.