

PUBLIC NOTICE

North Valley Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting

208 Main Street, Stevensville, MT 59870

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 3pm

Meetings are open to the public.

MEETING IS ONLINE. You are welcome to join by computer or phone.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94132648029>

Meeting ID: 941 3264 8029

One tap mobile

+12532158782,,94132648029# US (Tacoma)

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Meeting ID: 941 3264 8029

Agenda

- Call to Order/Roll Call
- Guests
 - ❖ Bob Moore, Superintendent of Stevensville Public Schools will speak about the bond process the school went through.
 - ❖ NVPL Foundation members are joining the meeting.
- Ongoing & Unfinished Business
 - ❖ Building plans & discussion with Foundation members.
 - Fundraising, Recognition Art, Bond.
 - ❖ *Naming & Donor Recognition Art Policy* DRAFT of new policy for board to assess.
 - ❖ Covid
 - Discuss when to have in-person board meetings.
 - Other Covid discussion.
- Public Comment¹
- Approval of Minutes
- Finances
 - ❖ Statement of Revenue – Budget vs. Actual
 - ❖ Statement of Expenditure – Budget vs. Actual
 - ❖ Cash Report
- New Business
 - ❖ Bylaws
 - Election of officers
- Public Comment
- Board/Director Announcements & Comments
- Adjournment

¹ If you are a member of the public and are unable to attend the Board meetings, the Board would still like to hear from you. Please email the Director at denisea@northvalleylibrary.org or you can email board members directly. A link to Trustee contact information can be found on our website at northvalleylibrary.org/board—information.

North Valley Public Library
Minutes Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 3 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 pm

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Victoria Howell, Chair

Caitlin Dunn, Vice Chair

Leon Theroux

Kim Tiplady

Dianne Snedigar (was delayed arrived at 3:10 pm)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT None

STAFF PRESENT Denise Ard, Director and Melanie Carroll, Manager.

PUBLIC COMMENT No public was present, but letters were read into the public record.

GUESTS

Carla Sanders, Foundation Board President

Amy Horlacher, Foundation member

Annie Bernauer, potential Foundation member

Donna Bainbridge, Foundation member

Susan Peters, potential Foundation member

Bob Moore, Superintendent of Stevensville Public Schools will speak about the bond process the school went through.

Discussion on the Bond Process with Bob Moore

Victoria introduces Bob Moore, the Superintendent of the Stevensville Public School system who ran a 20 million bond process for the school system.

Bob introduced himself to the attendees and provided some background and qualifications. He also mentioned that he is always happy to come back and assist and also willing to answer any further questions.

He started the discussion by stating the school went through the process because they had aging facilities which needed to be replaced. In the beginning stages, he tried to take a hard look at the future and tried to determine the needs of the community 15 to 20 years down the line. He informed the attendees that they will have to have an idea of where they want the library to be 15 or 20 years down the line as this is integral information to relay to taxpayers. They will want to know how their tax dollars will be spent. He placed great emphasis on input from the community and the planning process. He also stressed that it is important to include the community and to try to get a really diverse population sample. He suggested that they include the critics in their public discussions as it will give great perspective to the project and help the library address their concerns. Once they can understand where the resistance will come from or in what form, they will be better prepared to defend their positions.

He warned that it may take two or three attempts to get the information out there and to not get discouraged. He said a new library facility is not on everyone's radar. It's an information process and you

have to engage the community with facts. People tend to be at an information deficit due to the overloaded nature of their own personal lives. A project like this goes from being nowhere on their radar to suddenly being in the forefront. Do not be afraid to fail because you most likely will the first time. It took four attempts to pass a bond for the Manhattan high school building and two attempts at the Stevensville bond. He said it was easy enough to display the need as the school was being held together by rods and bolts. It had asbestos, lack of space, lighting issues, safety hazards and aging buildings that needed attention, but the measures still initially failed due to lack of knowledge about the bond. Be sure to counter arguments that you know are wrong and have a plan. Part of that plan involved community surveys and community mailings. They spent a lot of time revising the presentation to the community, making changes as they received more feedback. They asked them what they wanted by surveys and by going out and asking people. They explained all the costs and needs then asked if they would support it. He said that they have to be strategic surveys, they cannot be opinion based. He also said to not run the same thing if the measure failed before; make sure to adapt and change it accordingly. The key to success is the ability to find the sweet spot in the survey usage. Look at what would be supported, what wouldn't, and what was on the edge. Then review the list and revise then refine the message. He also said to make sure there is some wiggle room financially as some costs are not predictable. Also, because the process is so long inflation will change prices during the course of the project.

Victoria thanked Bob and hopes that the board would be able to request some of the hard copies of information he may have, especially the survey and FAQ sheet to address people's concerns. She asked if he could tell them more about the parent group that helped in the passage of the bond. Bob stressed that the parent group formed because the teachers are unable to provide info. Legally, public employees are limited in the aid that they can provide to the process. That is why it is important that the parents formed a political action group to provide such information. Political action groups are not bound by rules like public employees and also they cannot use school district money. The funds had to be very separate. In regards to sharing, he would have to check with his consulting group for their permissions and would pass along what he was able to.

Donna asked what criteria or questions they had when they interviewed the different architectural firms. Bob responded that they had an open bid process and that any amount had to be vetted, but they did not have to go with the lowest bid; however, they had to have criteria for their selection. They had to do the same thing with finding a general contractor. Denise remarked that the library is also required to have an open bid process.

Bob remarked that targeting the audiences was a big change between the two separate bond attempts. They also got a lot of support from parents who were astounded when the first bond did not pass and wanted to know how they could help. Carla asked if it would be better to do a publicity campaign before they started. Bob replied that the hard part is getting people to digest the information. Bob said they had planning sessions with the biggest critics then sat them down to hear their concerns and address them. They found that their criticisms stemmed from not understanding some piece of information and after discussing it or changing a small part, their entire perspective changed. He offered that information will be your biggest asset as people do not know what modern libraries are capable of.

Victoria asked if the schools STARS foundation participated in the fundraising for the bond. Bob responded that they did not exist at the time. Victoria followed up asking if the group currently does any of the fundraising. He responded that they do and their focus is on capital projects. They are not really focused on raising funds for smaller projects.

Victoria asked if there were any more questions. Leon said not at this time, but he would like to take the time to thank Bob for his presentation. Bob said the library has his support and if he can help in any way to please let him know.

Bob Moore left the meeting at 4:11 pm

ONGOING & UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Building plans & discussion with Foundation members.

Victoria said she feels strongly that they need to move forward with a new building. She noted that it would take a commitment from all of the library board as well as the foundation board. It would also take a bond which is a big commitment as well as a capital campaign which would be a huge commitment from the Foundation members. Amy responded that her biggest fear is that the Board will make a decision and the bulk of the work will fall on the shoulders of the Foundation. She said that they would not mind taking part, but not the majority of the project. Victoria answered that was her concern too, and that the board would have to be committed to the process. She said that she could only speak for herself and wanted to know how the rest of the board felt. Leon said that his concerns are that the library doesn't have a whole lot of money to hire an architect or marketing firm or whoever else needs to be hired. He said we have some money, but not sure if they had enough or how they would pay for that. Victoria said the building reserve fund was created for this purpose and there also might be some money at the state level to fund some of the planning process, and she would relook into that. Amy said that she knew the Foundation has been saving money as this has been a large goal of theirs. Some of it could be put towards the consultant's fees.

Leon asked how the people of the community would feel about a bond and if they should address that at a later date. Kim asked if the plans from a long time ago for the library's current location could be used. Victoria said that was for gutting the current location and building in place which would not apply to a new location. Caitlin said she was not completely convinced that running a bond at this time is the thing to do. She also remarked that she is not 100% convinced that they needed a new location or building, and is still open to gutting and repairing the current location.

Carla asked if the library owns the current space. Denise said that they own one of the buildings but are still paying a mortgage on the two that have been renovated. Carla said that maybe they need to invest in an exploratory look at the whole process and see if it is a good time to run a bond or see what the community wants.

Victoria said that she would like to express the belief that the board needs to move forward in some fashion. It seems like they have been chasing their tails for several years. They might be able to hire an architect or planner and do a needs assessment to see if it's worth finding a new location or renovating the current location. Get a comparison of the two and make a decision from there as any plans we have had done are too old. Any estimates completed in the past are not reflective of cost changes and the current status of the building. Amy asked if they wanted to do a community assessment at the same time; the Board paying the architect and the Foundation doing the community assessment. Victoria felt that it is too soon for the community assessment. Donna believed that the two fit together as they would need to know what the community wants in order for the architect to draw up plans.

Kim suggested that it might be a good time for a bond as there are so many new people in the community that may not even realize there is a library. The tax base has grown like crazy in the last couple of years and with the new influx of people getting a bond passed might not seem as difficult as they believe. Victoria asked how everyone wanted to move forward. Caitlin said she was open to having an architectural firm draft something up to compare two locations, the one they currently have and a different potential location. Victoria agreed as she believed that it was critical in order to move forward. Kim suggested that the secondary plans not be drawn up with any specific location in mind, but rather something they could use at any location.

Caitlin made a motion for the board to hire an architectural firm to perform an assessment of the library's current location against a second potential location to see which would best fit the library's current and future needs. Kim seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Donna asked if they could get the questions that the school board asked so that they can narrow down who they hire. Victoria said they would have to put out a request for proposal and narrow it down from there.

Victoria asked if the Foundation's fundraising focus could be solely on raising money for the building project. Amy responded that she believed they needed to keep smaller things on their fundraising agenda, but they have been doing this already.

Susan asked as a member of the community, if the Board and Foundation are on the same page and if they both understand the timeline. She also asked if they had a cohesive vision to sell to the community. Victoria responded that they are not there yet and that there is not a vision or plan at this point. Susan asked about a timeline and how soon they would like to make something happen. Victoria responded that they have had this particular conversation many times over the years. She thinks that today they have just decided to take the first step forward to begin the process by getting an architectural assessment.

Victoria asked for other comments. No one responded with anything. She thanked everyone for a great discussion and was so glad that they were able to get together to discuss plans for a new building.

FUNDRAISING, RECOGNITION ART, BOND

Naming & Donor Recognition Art Policy DRAFT of new policy for board to assess.

Victoria asked if the Board and Foundation wanted to discuss the Naming Policy today or table it for next month. Leon and Caitlin both commented that they would like to push it to next month. Denise asked what the Foundation wanted to do or if they had any input to the policy since they will also be using it. As of the meeting, they did not have an opportunity to discuss the policy among themselves. Dianne asked if the Foundation would be interested in joining the board meeting next month to discuss the Naming policy. Carla said that at least one member of the Foundation would be there to discuss the policy.

Dianne made a motion to table the Naming Policy discussion until next month's meeting and Leon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board thanked the Foundation for attending the meeting and looks forward to meeting with them again in the future.

COVID

Discuss when to have in-person board meetings.

Leon said he was in favor of having in-person Board meetings again. Caitlin and Kim agreed. Dianne asked if it was easier to do in April in case the Foundation could not attend in-person next month. Kim said to start in person meetings in April and Caitlin agreed.

Victoria asked if the board needed to revisit the mask policy at this time since the Governor had recently lifted the mask mandate. No one felt the need to change the library's mask policy at this time.

Caitlin asked whether they should consider bringing back tables and chairs for patrons to sit and study again at the library. Denise responded that the library offers patrons to sit at the computer stations that are evenly spaced apart for social distancing and they can use that space as long as no one needs a computer. She commented that the longer a person sits in an enclosed space, the more likely they are to contract the virus. Caitlin asked if the board should consider adding an additional table in either the front of the library or in the Montana room. She also wondered if the library still needed to limit the number of people that could be in the library at one time. Victoria asked what Denise thought of it. Denise said that as of right now, she does not believe the library needs to make any changes in restrictions. The library is currently the only one in the area that has been much more relaxed with their COVID policies. While she noted that she wants patrons to be able to use the library as it's intended, she also has to consider staff safety and concerns. She said that this should be revisited as more people and staff are able to get vaccinated.

Kim had a prior engagement and left the meeting at 5:03 pm.

Leon said he was in favor of following the health department guidelines. Victoria mentioned that she was not sure what the Ravalli County Health Department was doing. She said to leave it as it currently is and revisit the topic next meeting. Caitlin was interested in the patron feedback the library has received in regards to the restrictions; specifically, the numbers. Denise said she had no hard statistics, but the general feeling that she could pass along was that 2/3's of patrons thank the library for the policy and about 1/3 do not like the policy.

PUBLIC COMMENT¹

Victoria read a letter to the Board from Jackie Heinert, 209 Cormoret Loop Florence, MT 59833, who resides outside of the North Valley Public Library District (appendix A). She also read a letter by Scott Morton, 4403 Grizzly Way Stevensville, MT 59870 (appendix B). Victoria then read her responses to be entered into public record (appendix c). No discussion on the comments took place at this meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Victoria asked if everyone had a chance to look through the minutes from the last meeting on January 20. Everyone responded with yes.

Leon made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 20, 2021 meeting. Caitlin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FINANCES

Victoria asked if anyone had any questions regarding the statement of Revenue, or if Denise had anything to point out. No one had need for a discussion. Victoria asked the same question regarding the Statement of Expenditure. Denise said that they had finally received the bill for the new copier, but that would be reflected in next month's finances. No one had any other questions. Victoria asked for questions on the Cash Report. The other members had no questions on the Cash Report.

Caitlin made a motion to accept the financial report with Dianne seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

¹ If you are a member of the public and are unable to attend the Board meetings, the Board would still like to hear from you. Please email the Director at denisea@northvalleylibrary.org or you can email board members directly. A link to Trustee contact information can be found on our website at northvalleylibrary.org/board—information.

NEW BUSINESS

BYLAWS

Election of officers

Victoria said they needed to approve the change in the Board Bylaws to reflect that Ravalli County now receives a copy of the agenda for their calendar and the meeting minutes. Dianne made a motion to approve the amended bylaws and Caitlin seconded the motion. Victoria called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously

BOARD/DIRECTOR ANNOUNCEMENTS & COMMENTS

Victoria asked if any Board members had anything else to discuss. Leon had a general question pertaining to the role of the Board in regards to the supervision of the Director. He said that it was his understanding that the board hires the Director of the library and they have no function over the staff of the library as that is the Director's responsibility, but he wondered if the Board was the supervisor over the director. Victoria answered that they are responsible for hiring the Director, and that as Board chair, she works as the liaison between the Board and the director. Leon said he understood that, but asked why the Board wasn't informed of Denise's schedule change and of her occasionally working from home as he felt that the Board should have been informed. Victoria replied that Denise had discussed it with her, and she took the liberty in saying that it was okay. Leon said that he felt that the chair should have notified the rest of the Board that this was happening as he felt out of the loop. Victoria said in the future she would try to do that and asked if there was any other comment. Leon asked if there was another item that the Board had to vote on. Victoria responded with no as they had tabled that item until next month.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

Minutes by Melanie Carroll

Appendix A

2/3/2021

Dear North Valley Public Library Board of Directors,

I have used rural libraries in Montana and Wyoming for 20+ years, and greatly enjoy my ability to check out books and other items. My children and I often borrow DVDs, books, and magazines directly from the library, and through Interlibrary Loan. We are a courteous family; we take care of the items and try to be considerate by returning them early, or on time.

We moved to Florence from Clancy, Montana 1 ½ years ago, and I was very sad to lose the gem of the Jefferson County libraries, but felt reassured when we found out nearby Stevensville had a library. Unfortunately, it was made clear from the beginning that since we are out of District, we are not able to enjoy the same free perks as in-District residents.

I enjoy the resources of NVPL, however, I notice that I feel alienated, due to not being an in-District resident. Staff frequently tell me that since my library card is through the Bitterroot library, I have to do things in Hamilton, or even go to Missoula for more free services or pick up. Upon entry to the library, I have observed that staff don't always greet patrons, and even when browsing, there is not a general feeling of offering help. There have been times when staff are talking quite audibly in a group and my children and I are able to hear personal conversations we would prefer not to know.

This winter I contracted COVID-19 from my son, and it spread to our whole household. There were several weeks where my husband and I were unable to leave our house (due to earlier quarantines and contact tracing), and we did not make it to the library to return our items. It was not even a flicker of thought in my mind--returning books to the library-- when we could barely get out of bed. My mother in Hamilton later told me that fines were waived during the pandemic, not knowing that NVPL did not adopt this same practice.

I was shocked when I last visited NVPL and saw a \$3 overdue fine. My family can afford this; however, I did not realize NVPL had not adopted the fine-free practice, and when I mentioned it to the staff member, she told me the Board had decided to not go fine free. She offered that since book drop-offs have always been available, and I could renew online, this should have made a difference in my ability to return my items. I explained my situation and she stated I could write to the Board.

When I returned home, I researched libraries across Montana and the US, and found many have gone fine-free, including Missoula and Hamilton. I read in the NVPL Board minutes the fine-free concept would be revisited, and I wonder if and when the library board will deliberate any findings.

I find it frustrating that I frequently feel like an outsider at the NVPL for my residential address, and now I am being fined for my inability to return the items. In this era of life being just a little more difficult, I wish for more kindness and empathy, and it surprises me when something that normally brings me so much joy causes me anguish, and I wanted to share my feelings with the board.

Sincerely,

Jackie Heinert
209 Cormoret Loop
Florence, MT 59833

Appendix B

From: **Scott Morton** <mort50uofm@hotmail.com>

Date: Thu, Feb 11, 2021 at 12:34 PM

Subject: efficiency

To: orkney09@juno.com <orkney09@juno.com>

M'am, since you are the head of the library board, I thought it would do our community good accountability if I relate a situation I was faced with at my public library in Stevi. About 2 weeks ago I entered the library and was immediately accosted for not wearing a mask. Ok, I put a mask on. These employees were seated next to two employees sitting in chairs, doing nothing. Ok, maybe they were having a safety meeting! Anyway, I noticed no one was sitting or reading in the library, and I asked why? COVID, I was told. But two men were sitting there banging away at the computers whom I recognized as being related to library personnel. If a taxpaying customer cannot read or research in his own public library do we really need 4 employees just to check out and shelve books? Point is, where is my tax money going and why is it being wasted on 4 people doing 2 people's jobs? Furthermore, only a "select" few are allowed to use the computers and read in the library. Is that why you took out all the furnishings? To insure I wasn't using resources that I'd paid tax dollars to support? The private sector lost a lot of jobs to COVID. Just no business. How is it my tax dollars are being wasted on "made up" work? The private sector is no gimme when it comes to jobs. Why is the public sector allowing these women to work at taxpayer's expense when you can't even read in a library? I will expect your response shortly.

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

Appendix C

February 4, 2021

Dear Ms. Heinert,

First, I would like to thank you for sharing with us your concerns regarding the North Valley Public Library. Secondly, I want you to know that **our board and staff are committed to making the NVPL experience the very best possible, for you and for every single patron.** Customer service is our number one priority. We do not take your concerns lightly.

I have shared your letter with our entire board as well as our library director. She assures me that any issues that can be addressed at the staff level will be addressed immediately.

A couple of the issues you raised are related to board policies, e.g. out-of-district library cards and fines. Your letter will be entered into the record as public comment at the February 17 board meeting. The board will then discuss the issues raised in your letter at the March 17 meeting (the February agenda had already been approved and publicized before your letter was received).

The North Valley Library District is taxpayer-funded, mainly through property taxes assessed to every property owner within the district. We work with a limited budget to provide as many services as we can. We offer a \$25 out-of-district library card in the hopes that non-resident users will contribute toward these services that are being made available to all. I encourage you to consider this option. We also realize that not everyone can or will choose to do this. We are nevertheless committed to providing *all* patrons with the best library experience possible.

Finally, I invite you to attend our library board meetings which are open to the public. We meet every third Wednesday at 3 p.m. Currently we are meeting virtually via Zoom and the meeting details can be found on the library website, www.northvalleylibrary.org. Furthermore, I invite you to contact me any time with your library concerns.

Best wishes,

Victoria

Victoria Howell, Chair (406-207-8793)
North Valley Library Board of Trustees

208 Main St., Stevensville, MT 59870, 406-777-5061

northvalleylibrary.org

Monday – Friday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

February 15, 2021

Dear Mr. Morton,

As chair of the North Valley Library Board of Trustees, I am responding to your email of February 11th.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been a difficult time for all of us. The North Valley Public Library has spent considerable effort in order to stay open and available to our patrons. In order to do this, the board and library director have implemented a number of COVID-19 protocols, including requiring masks and social distancing while in the library. This applies to EVERYONE, staff and patrons alike. That is why the furniture was removed; we encourage patrons to take care of their essential library business and then go home, where they can read at their leisure in the safest environment. On January 4 of this year we further revised our staff procedures to ensure that staff members sit more than six feet apart to do their desk work. The only time when four staff members would perhaps be closer than that would be during a shift change when they might be conveying essential information. Furthermore, it is not always possible to maintain six feet of social distancing when staff members are assisting library patrons, but every effort is made to interact in a conscientious manner.

You are incorrect in suggesting that patrons cannot do research in the library. We have maintained our regular hours throughout the pandemic, and we do allow computer use by our patrons.

I believe that you are also mistaken that relatives of library staff members were using the computers, although they do have the SAME opportunities as our other patrons. They are not given any special preference.

The entire nation has suffered economically during the pandemic. We feel extremely fortunate that the library has not had to lay off staff and that we have been able to remain open, precisely because we are taxpayer-funded. Although you may not see as many patrons on site at the library during this time, plenty of patrons are utilizing our services. They just aren't lingering at the library. Our staff stays busy, and when the library actually was closed last spring, library staff took that time to complete continuing education courses.

I apologize if your library experience did not meet your expectations. Customer service is our number one priority and our library director is constantly working with staff to address any complaints and make improvements where appropriate.

I ask that you be considerate of the pressures and constraints caused by the current pandemic and we will strive to be just as considerate of your needs.

Sincerely,

Victoria Howell, Chair

North Valley Library Board of Trustees

(406) 207-8793

208 Main St., Stevensville, MT 59870, 406-777-5061

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