

**LINCOLN COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MEETING MINUTES  
LIBBY BRANCH & ZOOM  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2022**

**Trustees Present:** Annie Gassmann, Barb Hvizdak, Kerri Teisberg (Zoom), Michele Bianco (Zoom)

**Others Present:** Alyssa Ramirez (Director LCL), Tracy Cook (Montana State Library), Kerry Finley (Zoom)

**Call to Order:** Hvizdak called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

**Public Comment:** "I'm here every month and enjoy attending," - Kerry Finley

**Special Presentation:** Mill Levy Training by Tracy Cook, MSL

See outline and explanations from the Montana State Library on their [website](#).

- **Introduction:** The conversation about a mill levy started four or five months ago after a commissioner meeting. Lincoln County Libraries have 4 mills dedicated to the library. They also receive an additional 6 mills granted by the county commission out of the general county fund, for a total of 10 mills for the Libraries to be open and function, yearly. The County has made it clear the library should pursue other funding and not depend on the 6 mills coming from the county fund.
- **Funding:** (*handout*)
  - Dedicated Mill Levy – a source of funding where a majority of voters have agreed to pay higher property taxes in order to receive a service.
    - A mill is 1/1000 of the total property certified taxable valuation of a taxing jurisdiction.
    - In the year 2020/21: 1 mill = \$37,000
    - Libraries have the option to pursue a dedicated mill
  - What are dedicated mills? More stable and dependable source of funding. Great to cover operational costs. Will the Levy mills cover the 6 mills from the general fund? Or is our ask on top of the 6 mills?
- **Mill Levy Process:**
  1. **How much do you need?**
    - a. List everything!!
  2. **What will the community contribute?**
    - a. There is probably a difference between these two numbers (need vs community contribution). Talk it through and come to a compromise to benefit the library.
  3. **How much do you REALLY need?**
    - a. This is a dollar amount. Do research, figure all costs for operation, growth in positions, wages, and materials.
  4. **Find out how much a MILL is worth in Lincoln County.**
    - a. Once we know how much a mill is worth, then we know how many mills to ask for.

- b. There is an option to ask for the exact dollar amount or the number of mills. Decide if we want mills or a dollar amount. Tracy recommends the MILLS!
  - c. Work with the Treasurer, find out how much we will be asking from property owners. This will be needed for the ballot language.
- 5. **Decide durational or permanent MILLS.**
  - a. What can the community bear? There are ways to find out if the community would support a permanent mill levy. Might want to work with “Every Library” to survey each community (Troy, Libby, Eureka). Very useful!
- 6. **Go to County Commissioners for ballot resolution.**
  - a. Ask them to put it on the ballot. But they may want us to go through the petition process. Need 5% of resident taxpayers for signatures. If the signatures are there, commissioners must put it on the ballot. (Not necessarily a bad thing to petition, because our message is getting out there ahead of time.)
- **Think through your messaging and strategy**
  - Library Needs:
    - Need 1 FTE for tech/IT support
    - Include programming to support literacy
    - Branches – each need 1 FTE
    - If library chooses to grow collections budget – might need additional FTE to manage and process
    - Do more outreach – might need more FTE to cover
    - Libby branch librarian/assistant
    - Increase open hours at branches
    - If bigger building (TLOC) then more costs
    - Library vehicle
    - 24-hour library kiosk
  - Messages – possible
    - How libraries help improve literacy – focus on Montana’s statistics
    - How to frame the message to say we need another employee
    - Covering the bones of the 6 mills general fund
    - Preventative work – library not the solution, but help with social effects
    - Growing services with growing staff
- Running an Election Campaign:
  - Campaign Process:
    - Decide if want to use “Every Library” - can help us determine what the community can bear.
    - Identify supporters and opponents
      - Families, homeschoolers, tourists
      - Older people on fixed income, social issues (want money of library when they can’t heat their home)
      - Form campaign committee (library staff cannot help!), probably 3-5 people. People who are strong supporters to help with one time

task. Who is the champion? A campaign committee covers us legally. Manage campaign and reporting

- Decide on messages – will have a variety of talking points
- Work on getting the word out!
- Decide on what election time period... figure out with budgets and waiting for moneys
- Role of Board, Director, Staff–
  - Director – Alyssa can educate and share information about the library’s mill levy (5-10% of her time), pays attention to commissioners, deadlines, and paperwork of the campaign, also the liaison between campaign committee, board, county and community
  - Board – final decision makers on how much to ask for and setting the budget, allowed to advocate for the Library (Please vote YES), advocates for this process, check on director and staff during the process
  - Staff – not really any duties in the process, but they are the face of the library
- Next steps, wrap-up, and conclusion:
  - Next Action Steps:
    - Consider going through our Strategic Plan
      - Use the public/community in the Strategic Planning process. Can do a community survey, then a retreat to talk through the library results. Can break it up and do focus groups (one in each community), or even pay to have this study run and analyzed.
    - Ask staff for a survey to check in on these ideas
    - Talk through future library needs and how much it will cost
    - Figure out our Library history, how the money has changed over the years
    - Libraries recently granted Mill Levees (Glendive, Bitterroot, Dillon) – check in with these libraries and ask about their process.

### **Housekeeping:**

- Next regular meeting:
  - November 17, 2022
  - January 19, 2023
  - February 16, 2023
  - March 16, 2023
- Library Calendar:
  - November 24, Thanksgiving Day
  - December 26, Christmas Day
  - January 2, 2023 – New Year’s Day
  - January 16, 2023 – MLK Jr. Day

### **Adjourn:**

Hvizdak adjourned the meeting at 11:55am.

# Dedicated Mill Levies for Libraries

## What is a dedicated mill levy?

It is a source of funding where a majority of voters have agreed to pay higher property taxes in order to receive a service. A mill is one thousandth of the total property certified taxable valuation of a taxing jurisdiction. Thus, if the total taxable valuation of a city is \$2,000,000, a one mill levy would yield \$2,000 in property tax revenue ( $\$2,000,000/1,000$ ). Source: *Montana Municipal Officials Handbook*

## Where in the law does it say public libraries can ask for a dedicated mill levy? How does it work?

MCA 22-1-304 is the piece of code that allows libraries to ask the voters for more funding. It spells out the process for going for more mills. Either a city council or a county commission can pass a resolution to put the issue on the ballot or they can ask library supporters to go through a petition process to gather signatures from 5% of the resident taxpayers to place the issue on the ballot. If library supporters gather enough signatures, the local government body will pass a resolution placing it on the ballot. Supporters will then campaign for a "yes" vote. If a majority of voters say yes, the library will receive additional mills. There is a delay in receipt of funding. The additional mills need to be added to property tax bills and paid by taxpayers before it is given to the library.

A separate group is usually created to run the campaign. It often includes members of library support groups as well as other community members who are passionate about the library.

## What is the role of the library board in this process?

The library board as the body responsible for monitoring the library's finances needs to vote on whether to pursue additional mill levy funding. Members will continue to play a role in advocating for the additional funding and answering questions from the public and local government officials.

## What is the role of the library director?

The library director is usually the liaison between local government officials and the library board. They cannot advocate for additional funding while on work time. It is acceptable for them to attend meetings and give factual presentations about the mill levy. The director is often the liaison between the support groups who will help with the campaign and the library board and staff by helping to answer questions about the benefit of the additional mills and keeping everyone apprised of the progress of the campaign.

## What is the role of library staff?

Library staff CANNOT advocate for the library on work time. Staff can answer questions about the mill levy campaign. They cannot ask people to vote yes. It's best for staff to have a one-page handout they can give to the public. Staff are ambassadors for the library. People tend to vote yes for the library because of the library staff and the wonderful customer service they receive.