

December 18, 2024
MVPL Board of Trustees Meeting

Good evening Trustees, staff and fellow citizens, my name is Tamara Stewart.

I have three major concerns to bring to your attention this evening, so I will address them in the order of their importance:

1. **The 12/21 DMX Program** – At last month's meeting, I noted that the DMX contract resolution #082-24 contained errors and it did not include a budget or budget code. I asked how much the program was going to cost, and I stated that the public has a right to know how our money is being spent. Despite these significant shortcomings, the deficient resolution passed. As I learned at last week's Finance Committee meeting, the budget for the upcoming DMX program is a whopping \$20 thousand! How many people from our community are expected to attend this extremely expensive program? While the flyer states that it is an "educational program", no detailed information has been provided about a program that is scheduled to take place in just a few days. Will it be appropriate for children and/or teens, or only adults? What makes it educational vs. just entertaining? Is it really worth the library spending \$20 thousand of taxpayer funds?
2. **Financial Projection** – I also learned at last week's Finance Committee meeting that the Treasurer is projecting an alarming \$265 thousand budget shortfall by the end of the library's fiscal year in June! Why is the library spending \$20 thousand on a one-day program when an anticipated quarter-of-a-million dollar shortfall is only six months away? Why hasn't the Treasurer been sounding the alarm about this financial emergency? How does the administration plan to make up this huge shortfall without laying-off staff?
3. **Trustee Code of Conduct** – Resolution #078-23 was passed at the board's September 20, 2023 meeting, and the resolution included passage of a Code of Conduct for the Board of Trustees. Trustees have duties of care, loyalty, and obedience to the organization, and the duty of loyalty is the duty to avoid conflicts of interest. Trustees are supposed to declare those conflicts before the board, and refrain from voting in matters in which there is a conflict. Two members of this board have close ties to Ray Copeland, who is getting paid to put together the \$20 thousand DMX program, yet only one trustee voted "no" on this financially irresponsible program. Why didn't the other trustee fulfill her duty of loyalty, disclose her conflict of interest, and abstain from voting on the DMX resolution?

While there are other concerns, like the 2025-2026 budget, that I would like to ask about, I'll leave it at the three important issues that I have identified. The fact that both the City and School District are experiencing financial distress should serve as a warning to the library to be extra-vigilant about how this institution is spending money. The new union contract and recent grievance settlements are going to further strain the library's stagnant budget, and it's going to be a heavy lift to get residents to approve a budget increase for the library after the city forces yet another major increase down taxpayers' throats.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I respectfully request that the written version of these remarks be included in the board's record of today's Public Expression in BoardDocs.