

February 19, 2025
MVPL Board of Trustees Meeting

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

Last month, I pointed out that your January 7th improperly noticed Special Meeting did not have a quorum present in the Trustee Room, so all votes taken at that meeting were not valid. However, according to the minutes of your January 15th Regular Meeting, Resolution #099-24, a bond proposal to buy 101 Summit Ave., passed at the January 7th Special Meeting, and will be included on the ballot in May. This is despite Resolution #099-24 failing at the January 15th meeting when there was a proper quorum. Why is this board still going forward with this ill-advised proposal?

If the library is seriously considering adding a second location, you should be having public meetings to present your expansion ideas, discuss where in the city the need for service is greatest, and describe what additional services you seek to provide. You'd listen to what the public has to say, and try to get public support for expansion. You'd present a plan that shows how much a second location will cost, and how the library plans to staff and pay for it. Instead, you're planning to take on debt to buy a private house totally unsuited to being a second library location while the library is staring at a \$265,000 budget shortfall. What are you doing?

Tonight's agenda includes a \$15,000 transfer from the Reader's Digest account to help pay for the \$22,750 DMX event. This is on top of \$70,000 from the Reader's Digest account to pay for Teen Room furniture. The Reader's Digest account serves as an emergency fund for the library, and it should not be raided to pay for overpriced events or furniture, lest the library find itself in serious distress when an actual emergency occurs.

This month's Director's Report states that the library's 2023 State Report was finally accepted by the NYS Education Dept., which is great. Is MVPL on track to submit the 2024 State Report on time so the library can resume receiving County and State funds?

The Mount Vernon Public Library is heading into the crucial budget and election season in desperate need of a budget increase. By putting a ballot proposal to buy unnecessary property alongside a request for a budget increase, you will almost certainly guarantee that both will fail.

If you are not in favor of the reckless spending that's happening at this library, you need to speak up, like Trustee Thomas. Each of you has a duty to exercise independent judgment and act in the best interest of this institution. The library's current financial problems are happening on your watch, and all of you have a responsibility to solve these problems, not ignore them. Have the courage to use your vote to do the right thing, otherwise, be prepared for this community to hold you accountable for your dereliction of duty.

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.