

January 15, 2025  
MVPL Board of Trustees Meeting

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

I am troubled to say that this board is off to a very rocky start to the New Year. Your January 7<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting was illegal because it was improperly noticed, and there was no quorum present in the Trustee Room. The Board President participated remotely without showing her face by a Zoom link that the public did not have access to, and she asked for add-ons to the agenda, all of which is in violation of Open Meetings Law (OML). The Board President also voted remotely, in clear violation of the Board's bylaws and OML. I sincerely hope that no vote was taken during the Executive Session held at the meeting, because no votes were reported when the meeting resumed.

I continue to be deeply concerned that this library's leadership is failing in its fiduciary responsibility to conserve taxpayer dollars and spend them wisely, with the notable exception of Trustee Thomas who clearly understands what's happening with the library's finances. At the December 11<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee meeting, upon questioning, the Treasurer acknowledged that the library is facing a projected shortfall of \$265K by the end of this fiscal year. At the January 8<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee meeting, Treasurer Vosler acknowledged that the library is anticipating a budget shortfall of \$600K next year, unless the library is able to get a substantial budget increase approved by the public this May. A \$600K shortfall is huge; what's your plan for plugging this gaping hole? Despite his assertion last month that he's been "raising the alarm" about serious budget problems, the Treasurer included no mention of them in either of his written reports last month. Why not?

To add insult to injury, the resolution to put a bond resolution for the purchase of 101 Summit Avenue is on tonight's agenda, after having been illegally voted on and passed at the January 7<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting. Why? At present, this library doesn't even have the money to keep from laying-off staff in the foreseeable future; how can you even consider taking on debt to buy property the library doesn't need? Putting a bond proposal on the ballot in May will almost certainly assure the public's "no" vote on a budget increase for the library.

In response to my Freedom of Information Law request, invoices related to the DMX event were posted on tonight's agenda. I've reviewed the documents, and I'm incensed anew at the \$22,750 that was spent on this program. \$5,000 to Ray Copeland? For what? \$5,000 to Born Ryders for a two hour panel discussion? \$2,350 for light refreshments for 250 people? You could have gotten a lot more food for a lot less money from a local vendor. The Director only signed-off on two of the invoices, there was an unsigned Artist Engagement Agreement included, which is not an invoice, and the \$2,000 invoice from Ron Sweeney and Company doesn't even specify what services were rendered. Disgraceful!

Last, but certainly not least, once again the Period of Public Expression was edited out of the Facebook Live video of your regular meeting last month. Why? The public has a right to review your entire proceedings, not just the parts that you want people to see.

I strongly suggest that the newest members of this Board familiarize yourselves thoroughly with your bylaws and Open Meetings Law, do your homework, and think independently before you vote, especially if you plan to run for your seat in May. As the Library Trustee Handbook states in bold under Trustee Duties and Responsibilities, it's about the library, not about you.

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.