

I reviewed the BOT meeting minutes for MVPL that are available to the public at <https://www.boarddocs.com/ny/mvpl/Board.nsf>. Minutes from January 2017 to present are available. I focused on the financial oversight provided by the BOT, which is one of their basic functions. I reviewed some of the meeting videos and special meeting documents as well, but my primary focus was on the documents offered to the public at Regular Meetings.

My goal was to get a picture of the financial oversight provided by the Library Trustees, particularly the finance committee. The finance committee has been Chaired by Cathlin Gleason since July 2016. Darren Morton, a current candidate for MV City Comptroller, was Chair from 2014 to 2016.

Cathlin Gleason is a current candidate for the MV City Council. My decision to take a close look at the finance committee of the MVPL was inspired by Ms. Gleason. I created a “Candidate Scorecard” to help me evaluate candidates for public office as we move toward the election of a new City Comptroller and 3 new City Council members. My initial assessment of Ms. Gleason’s “Relevant Financial Experience” on my Candidate Scorecard was “Neutral”. Ms. Gleason reached out to me (via a facebook message through the FB group called “Mount Vernon NY Citizen”) and asked how I came up with my score. She offered her experience as chair of the finance committee of the MVPL and her tenure on that committee for over 5 years as evidence of her financial experience, presumably because she thinks I undervalued her financial skills on my scorecard. In fairness to Ms. Gleason, I decided to look closely at her fiscal oversight of the Library.

Hope Marable, also a candidate for MV City Council, has been on the BOT of the Library since September 2020.

Pages 4-11 of this document contains a timeline of BOT meetings dating back to January 2017, along with text reports from the finance committee, comments I made as I reviewed them, and which trustees were present at each meeting.

Take Away

- From January 2017 to April 2021, there were 40 meetings where I expected to see a report from the finance committee. No report was given on 18 occasions, which is nearly half of the meetings (45%). Often, the actual reporting was assigned to Jose Alvelo (frequently written in the record simply as “Jose”). Mr. Alvelo was the “treasurer” for the library- not a board member, but an employee charged with accounting functions. However, there were very few narrative notes from Mr. Alvelo.
- On November 15, 2017 Trustee Gleason mentioned that “the auditors have been in”. The auditing firm appears to be O’Connor Davies, the same firm that audited the URA. As of April 2021, 3.5yrs later, the financial audit of the MVPL is still not completed.

This is highly unusual and suggests that, like the URA, the MVPL was not and perhaps still is not “audit ready”. For an operation with an annual taxpayer funded budget that exceeds \$4.5million dollars annually, this is concerning.

- On 3/20/19 the minutes say that a “financial consultant” was hired and that the consultant would “report findings back to the BOT”.

Given the circumstances, this report should be immediately released to the taxpaying citizens of Mount Vernon.

Also note that having to fund a financial consultant because the BOT does not have a handle on Public Library finances is an additional cost burden borne by taxpayers.

- In March 2020, Mount Vernon City Council President Marcus Griffith was hired by the MVPL Board of Trustees “provisionally” as a “Chief Accountant Clerk” at an annual salary of \$65,000. As a result, *Mr. Griffith draws a salary from taxpayers in 2 ways: when they are taxed to support budget appropriations for the City of Mount Vernon, and when they are taxed by the City of Mount Vernon Public Schools, which distributes tax dollars to the MVPL.*

It appears that the MVPL hired Mr. Griffith specifically to help get their finances in auditable condition. Recall that Mr. Griffith sat on the board of the URA during 2016. The outside auditing firm for both the URA and the MVPL appears to be O’Connor Davies.

Mr. Griffith should be required to report his findings regarding the fiscal oversight of the MVPL to the taxpaying citizens of Mount Vernon without delay.

Also, O’Connor Davies should at the very least provide a report of preliminary audit findings of the MVPL to the taxpaying citizens of Mount Vernon before the Democratic Primary in June 2021.

- In February 2021 it is noted by the financial consultant hired by the BOT that “there is still certain information that must be provided” [to the auditors].
- On March 17, 2021 Trustee Gleason reports that she “met with the auditors” and they are still trying to “reconcile the ledger”.

In my view:

- No library budget should be passed until the fiscal audit discussed by the MVPL Board of Trustees is released to the public. Contractual obligations to employees will continue to be met, but the current BOT should not be allowed to allocate any funding for new projects until we have the a final audit.
- Mount Vernon should be wary about BOT members attempting to pass the blame for their lack of fiscal oversight to current and former library employees. The responsibility for

fiduciary oversight of the Mount Vernon Public Library rests solely and exclusively with the Board of Trustees of the Public Library.

- The best possible outcome for the MVPL would be for the Mount Vernon City School District to take full control over the institution. In this scenario, the library BOT would be dissolved and oversight given to the Board of Trustees of the Mount Vernon City School District. Library finances would be managed by the district as a separate department.

Final Thought

It is important to separate the important social functions served by public institutions such as the Mount Vernon Public Library (MVPL), from the *oversight* of these institutions.

I *wholeheartedly* support the social function of the MVPL and, for that matter, the Urban Renewal Agency as well.

I am equally disheartened by what appears to be failure of proper fiduciary oversight from the Board of Trustees (BOT) dating back years, such that professional auditors are incapable or unwilling to render an opinion in a timely manner.

The BOT is proposing a taxpayer funded MVPL budget for fiscal 2021 (beginning July 1, 2021) of \$4.77 million dollars, as they did last year.

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BOT Meeting Date	Text from the Finance Committee Reports from BoardDocs. Mentions of the audit are <u>highlighted</u> . <u>MY Notes: appear in bold and are underlined</u>	Trustees Present at the meeting: current candidates for elected office are <u>highlighted</u>
1/18/2017	Trustee Morton (Chair) and Trustee Gleason discussed budget calendar. Trustee Morton went over dates and specifically directed the elections committee to double check the dates given for review and make sure they establish community outreach forums ahead of time. Update on Treasurer interviews. Identified 2 candidates but had 2 additional interviews to conduct.	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> <u>Darren Morton,</u> Na'im Tyson.
2/15/2017	Darren Morton and Cathlin Gleason Reported they have 2 possible candidates for the Treasurer position and the Board will come to a collective agreement. All documents have been submitted to the Board, they are close to the final numbers for the budget and staff for each department.	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton,</u> and Na'im Tyson.
3/15/2017	Morton/Gleason. Morton wants dept codes developed for expenses to hold people accountable	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> <u>Darren Morton,</u> and Na'im Tyson.
4/19/2017	Morton/Gleason. Trustee Cathlin Gleason- Trustee Gleason reported, Jose and finance will be completing a departmental account break down which will allocate funds for each group.	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton,</u> and Na'im Tyson.
5/17/2017	Trustee Gleason reports that no finance committee meeting held in May 2017	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton.</u>
6/21/2017	Gleason report - reviewing policies	<u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton.</u>

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9/20/2017	Finance Committee- Trustee Gleason reported: the decision was finalized for the position treasurer. Finance will followed up on the 990 tax form, Jose (treasurer) found mistakes and will have the forms corrected. The treasurer has started the budget project and Jose may be needed to attend the elections meetings as well as the director and Cathy.	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton.</u>
10/18/2017	Trustee Gleason reported the committee is working on the 990 tax form to be completed and submitted.	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton,</u> Tanya Southerland
11/15/2017	Trustee Gleason reported; the 990 tax form has been completed and e-filed. The <u>auditors</u> have been in, additional help needed for the accounting department, no success with free intern help. <u>MY NOTE: First mention of "auditors". As of April 2021 no Financial Audit has been released to the public.</u>	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton,</u> Tanya Southerland
12/20/2017	Trustee Gleason reported: the major thing is the budget, find out the actual finance needs for each department. Jose is searching for a part time person, may have to add funds to the budget. <u>Auditors</u> have cut back to 2 days a week. Cash disbursement process and procedure is in place, including budget for every program.	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton,</u> Tanya Southerland
1/17/2018	A special meeting will be held on Wednesday January 24, 2018 at which time the Finance Committee will give their report.	Oscar Davis, <u>Darren Morton</u>
1/24/2018	<u>MY NOTE: No Finance Committee Report available through BoardDocs despite the announcement one week prior that a report would be given.</u>	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton,</u> Tanya Southerland
2/21/2018	No committee report, Jose will cover finance information during his BOT report under the finance category. <u>MY NOTE: budget deficit on spreadsheet uploaded to boarddocs grows to \$775k through Jan 2018. However, I suspect this is an error because the spreadsheet uploaded to boarddocs on 4/18/18 shows an operating surplus of \$324k. But there is no discussion of either document so it is not entirely clear.</u>	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason,</u> Tanya Southerland

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4/18/2018	Jose' BOT report will serve as the Finance committee report. Committee did not meet <u>MY Note: I believe this is the last spreadsheet showing budget vs actual financial data posted on Boarddocs.</u>	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason</u> , Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton</u>
5/16/2018	No Finance Committee Report	Oscar Davis, <u>Caithlin Gleason</u> , Brian Johnson, <u>Darren Morton</u> , Tanya Southerland
7/18/2018	The committee's have been restructured and will give a report at the next regular meeting of September 19, 2018.	Malcolm Clark, Oscar Davis, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
9/19/2018	Gleason report: New intern from Berkley College started; Contacted Firm, having issues with the auditors due to a breakdown in a change of their staff; Issue with photo copier resolved; Jose made changes with the bank; Looking for new cellular phone service; Admin. has been set up on clock.	Malcolm Clark, Oscar Davis, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
10/1/2018	Finance Committee meeting. <u>MY Note: Only agenda items (not details) available through BoardDocs. Agenda Item A is "O'Connor Davies Audit" .</u>	not listed
10/17/2018	No Finance Committee Report	Malcolm Clark, Oscar Davis, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
11/20/2018	No Finance Committee Report	Malcolm Clark, Oscar Davis, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u>

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12/19/2018	No Finance Committee Report	Malcolm Clark, Oscar Davis, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
1/16/2019	Gleason reported: The finance committee did not meet due to scheduling issues, Jose will report on the <u>audit</u> update and all communications with <u>auditors</u> should include Trustee Gleason and Trustee Davis. The library switched insurance brokers, which increased coverage for less money. Jose will meet with the director in regard to budget and the needs of each department. <u>MY Note: no detail regarding any report given by Jose.</u>	Malcolm Clark, Oscar Davis, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
2/20/2019	Gleason Reported: still going through an <u>audit</u> ; reviewing the issue of the building ownership and the title; the lawyer (G. Grant) will be assisting with the title research; The budget # must be in by the next finance meeting.	Malcolm Clark, Oscar Davis, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u>
3/20/2019	Report will be given at the April 17, 2019 regular meeting. <u>MY Note: A resolution was accepted to hire a "financial consultant "in order to review and oversee the financial processes and procedures of the Accounting Department and report findings back to the Board of Trustees."</u>	Malcolm Clark, Oscar Davis, Jr., <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
4/17/2019	no report given	Oscar Davis, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
5/9/2019	<u>MY NOTE: Mount Vernon voters approve a \$4.77 million dollar library budget.</u>	
6/19/2019	Gleason reported: Jose is working on the ownership project; working on purchase order procedure.	Oscar Davis, Jr., <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
7/17/2019	No Finance Committee Report	Oscar Davis, Malcolm Clark, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.

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9/18/2019	No Finance Committee Report	Oscar Davis, Malcolm Clark, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, Tanya Southerland.
11/20/2019	Gleason reported: Went over the contract with the union; reviewing the 990 and if we are still required to file, depending if we are still considered 501c; spoke with Schofield, confirmed we shouldn't have received 501c, but if e have it do not get rid of it; auditors have issued a unofficial report , trying to find out which building title is correct; ADP education training; we are whole with the school district, and now focusing on retro checks. MY NOTE: last mention of audit was 10 months earlier on 2/20/2019. No further details given on the contents of this "unofficial" audit report.	Malcolm Clark, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
12/18/2019	Jose Alvelo will give regular finance report (<u>My Note: no report available on BoardDocs</u>)	Oscar Davis, Malcolm Clark, Jr., Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland.
1/15/2020	No report chairperson absent.	Oscar Davis, Malcolm Clark, Jr., Tanya Southerland.
2/19/2020	Gleason Reported: working on the budget; looking for a chief accountant clerk.	Oscar Davis, Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u>
3/23/2020	<u>My Note: special meeting held; Marcus Griffith provisionally appointed as "Chief Accountant Clerk" effective March 16, 2020, with a salary of \$65,000.</u>	Oscar Davis, Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Tanya Southerland
4/17/2020	Trustee Gleason Reported: anticipating and reviewing the city allowing an extension of the tax money to be paid, not expecting a delay in getting the money from the city; Marcus Griffith mentioned the school district is looking into collecting their own taxes; Trustee Davis stated, the library tax will get paid, the school district has the responsibility to make us whole.	Oscar Davis, Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u>

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5/20/2020	Gleason reported; worked on budget calendar; ACH deposit; board discussed a zero dollar budget increase due to the pandemic. The budget report was received today, there has not been enough time for everyone to review. Trustee Davis shared his concerns that the report does not include funding for an assistant director as requested, Jose is to work with the director and Mr. Terry to make sure the funds are reflected in the budget.	Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Jamie Pessin, Tanya Southerland, Oscar Davis Jr.
6/17/2020	Gleason Reported: ADP- has been setup to offer retiree's direct deposit; changes were made to the pay classes; <u>audit has been put on pause due to COVID-19</u> ; 0% Budget [increase] <u>MY NOTE: recall that the auditor's issued an "unofficial" audit report 7 months earlier. The audit was first noted in the meeting minutes in Oct 2018. COVID-19 is not a legitimate rationale for putting this audit "on hold". In the 21st century, an entire audit can be conducted without ever meeting face to face with an auditor because documentation can be shared electronically.</u>	Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Jamie Pessin, Tanya Southerland, Oscar Davis Jr.
9/16/2020	Gleason reported: actively working on bank statements and accounts to provide <u>auditors</u> the required information to complete <u>audits</u> . Marcus [Griffith] is continuing reconciliation of accounts on all vendors <u>My NOTE: It is now nearly 3 years from the time the audit is first mentioned in November 2017.</u>	Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Oscar Davis Jr., <u>Hope Marable</u>
10/21/2020	"Trustee Gleason Reported" <u>My Note: that is literally all that it says.</u>	Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Oscar Davis Jr., <u>Hope Marable</u>
11/18/2020	Marcus Griffith Reported: snap shot of the finance ledger has been submitted to the Board; Ledger not complete yet; established relations with many vendors; streamlining payables, process takes time to research and requires ledgers to be reconcile; implementing pay codes to reflect New York code standards; benefits are caught up and are being processed by ACH or EFT <u>My Note: So, as with the URA, there are serious issues with financial controls and a near complete lack of fiscal transparency with respect to actual spending of a tax payer funded operation in excess of \$4.7 million dollars per year.</u>	Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Oscar Davis Jr., <u>Hope Marable</u>
12/16/2020	Trustee Gleason Reported: finance practices review; reviewed step increases	Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , <u>Hope Marable</u>

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1/20/2021	no report	Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Oscar Davis Jr., <u>Hope Marable</u>
2/17/2021	Trustee Gleason requested that Mr. Terry speaks in regards to the <u>audit</u> . Mr. Tom Terry reported that there is still certain information that must be provided. <u>MY NOTE: I believe Mr. Terry is the "financial consultant" mentioned on 3/20/19.</u>	Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Oscar Davis Jr., <u>Hope Marable</u>
3/17/2021	Trustee Gleason reported: continuing to reconcile the ledger, <u>met with the auditor</u> ; Marcus [Griffith] continues to put the financials in order. <u>MY NOTE: A comprehensive report of audit status should be given to the public immediately preferably from the lead audit accountant. At this point, it is 3yrs and 4 months from the time the audit is mentioned in the meeting minutes (see meeting from 11/15/17).</u>	Judy Williams-Davis, <u>Cathlin Gleason</u> , Oscar Davis Jr., <u>Hope Marable</u> , Brian Johnson