


Minutes of the Regular Meeting Lewistown Public Library 	
Lewistown Public Library Board of Trustees	Thursday 5/18/2023 1:00 pm – 4:00 p.m. Library Meeting Room

Lewistown Public Library’s Mission Statement:

“The Lewistown Public Library provides free and equal access to quality materials and services, which fulfill the educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the entire community.”

In lieu of a regular monthly Board meeting, the Board completed training with the Montana s Training Session in lieu of regular monthly Board Meeting

Recorder of Minutes: Brittney Uecker

Members present: Jean Collins, Arlene Mari, Gayle Doney, Andrea Payne, Mary Callahan-Baumstark (virtually). Director: Alissa Wolenetz. Library Staff: Brittney Uecker. MSL Staff: Tracy Cook, Pam Henley, Amelea Kim.

Part I: Local Government & Library Law – Tracy Cook, Lead Consulting Librarian at the Montana State Library

- The Board collected their thoughts on the nature of government, the establishment of public libraries in the Montana Code Annotated, why Montana’s libraries are wrapped into government services, and the history of libraries across the country and globe.
 - Government allows people to pool resources (i.e., taxes) to provide services efficiently (i.e., with consistency by people who have specialized skills). This helps local governments provide services, including public safety, public utilities, and structured safety nets, that would be cost-prohibitive for the public sector to operate. It also gives individuals a voice in public decisions, including determining rights and responsibilities and creating laws and regulations.
 - Libraries in Montana are part of local government so that they can pool resources effectively, especially for rural communities; provide equal access for all; rely on stable funding; provide support for literacy; foster a well-informed citizenry that has access to archives, legal records and materials, and information about local government; take a proactive approach to public safety; and provide resources for research and fact-checking.
- The Board discussed the implications of the charter form of government for the City of Lewistown and Fergus County.
 - Charters are voted in by a community. Although charter forms are usually wrapped around more traditional forms of government, not all of Montana’s statues apply. In some places,

including Billings and Great Falls, charters change the nature of the Library Board's powers and duties. This is, however, not the case in Lewistown.

- Lewistown's charter includes a City Manager. Tracy provided a brief overview of the respective roles and responsibilities of the City Commission, the City Manager, and the Library Board. While the City Commission appoints Board members, it cannot remove Board members unless the Board requests it. This relative autonomy of the Library Board buffers the institution from politics to some extent.
- The Board learned about the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government and how these are paralleled in the Library.

Branch	Duty	In the Library	In the City
Legislative	Sets the laws	Board	City Commission
Executive	Enacts the laws	Director	City Manager
Judicial	Interprets/enforces the laws	Staff	Courts

- Tracy highlighted the duties and responsibilities of the Board (as set in MCA 22-1-309), including the authority to hire and supervise the Director; set policy; develop budgets and monitor funds; and adopt contracts. The Board's MOU with the City means that some of the Board's duties are performed in conjunction with the City, including setting the Director's salary. Staff wages and working conditions are set through union negotiations.
- The Board discussed the reasons for the autonomy granted to library boards in the MCA, including providing stability and continuity. Tracy noted that tension between libraries and local governments is expected and normal: it arises whenever systems of checks and balances exist, and was intentionally built into Montana's libraries and local governments when they were first brought into being through the MCA.

Roles of entities:		
<i>Duty</i>	<i>Board</i>	<i>City</i>
Hire director, set director wages	-follows hiring process -decides on qualifications -reviews applications -selects director -evaluates director	-creates hiring process -helps with hiring process -creates and assists with evaluation and disciplinary process
Budget	-creates and monitors	<i>As per current MOU</i> -provides insurance -pays personnel costs -handles accounting
Building/facilities	-decides what to do with the building -finds funding/negotiates with City	-pays for insurance -holds deed -negotiates with Board

- The Board and Tracy also discussed the responsibilities and challenges of typical local government offices, including city managers, clerks, finance officers, HR representatives, city commissions, and county commissions.

Part II: Library Budgets – Pam Henley, Consulting Librarian at the Montana State Library

- Pam presented an overview of the Local Government Budgeting Act. This contains information about how budgets are developed, timelines, and the process for amendments. Pam noted that local governments cannot spend more than they take in and that they maintain a reserve to cover periods in between tax incomes.
- She gave a brief overview of the BARS (Budgeting and Reporting System) in Montana, which standardizes accounting between different local government entities. This system separates out three major types of funds: fiduciary, proprietary (fee-based, self-supporting), and governmental (where the Library is categorized).
- The Board reviewed the Library's three funds: the City-County Library Fund (2220); the Dowler Trust (2706); and the Depreciation Fund (4001). They also discussed the Library's diversified budget, which includes City, County, State, and Library Federation funds; donations from the Friends of the Library; donations from the public; and endowments at the Central Montana Foundation, which fully cover all of the Library's materials purchases.
- The Board discussed Montana's caps on local government property taxes, which set increases well below the rate of inflation, and the challenges this system can cause.
- Pam discussed the process for amending budgets, when amendments are necessary, and using reserves to spend more than annual revenues. Amendments are generally recommended when more than 10% of a category is moved.
- The Board discussed the budgeting process in general, which includes analyzing costs from the previous fiscal year; considering strategic plan goals; and modifying budgets to account for differences in annual revenues. This process has been simplified over the years, as the City now pays all personnel costs and the County provides a fixed dollar amount with regular increases for their share. This has streamlined the budget process immensely.
- When budgeting for grants, best practice is to allocate grant expenses across different BARS codes alongside regular spending to maintain purchase categorizations.

NEXT REGULAR BOARD MEETING: Thursday, June 15, 2023 at 1:30PM at the Library. Respectfully Submitted: Brittney Uecker, Librarian, and Alissa Wolenetz, Library Director.