

*Flathead County*  
***Board of Commissioners***

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February 4, 2022

Montana State Library  
Board of Commissioners  
1515 E 6th Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Montana State Library Commissioners,

The ImagineIf Library system in Flathead County is poised to hire a new director after a months-long nationwide search. Because of the unique credentials and experience that limit a candidate pool, a hiring firm was hired to conduct the search. Despite the extensive recruitment, the firm recruited 11 prospective candidates who either had a Masters of Library Science (MLS) or equivalent. During the interview process nearly all of the qualified candidates chose to withdraw. As a result, the ImagineIf Board of Trustees was pressed to look into alternate candidates (all of whom did not make the initial screen, including many who lacked the MLS degree) in order to build-out the interview pool and to continue moving forward.

After the interviews a candidate was selected for the director position based on a very strong and satisfactory discussion that impressed the ImagineIf Board of Trustees. While this candidate impressed the ImagineIf Board of Trustees with her ability to lead and manage a library on limited resources, she did not have the required credentials – namely a MLS.

Following the appointment by the ImagineIf Board of Trustees, State Librarian Jennie Stapp made the decision to withhold future state appropriated funds from Flathead County and to decertify our ImagineIf Library. In discussion with the Montana State Librarian, she explained that this was because the ImagineIf Library Board of Trustees chose to both advertise the new director position and to hire a new director without requiring a MLS.

Our view is that while the prospective director does not have a MLS, she does have seven years of experience serving as a library director in another state. Supporting the appointed director is an executive team that has a number of library credentials - including an MLS. In fact, the ImagineIf executive team has an employee with a Master's in Library and Information Science along with still another executive with a Master's in Communication. The education required for certification, as a body of dedicated library professionals, is more than present to effectively operate, frankly, a modest library system here in Flathead County.

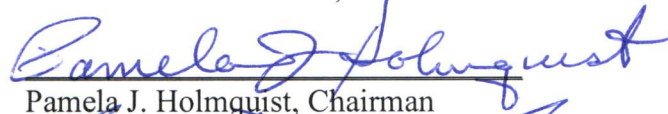
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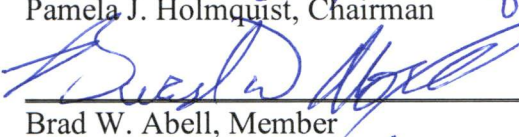
These ImagineIf executives work as a team, and not in silos, and we feel that the aggregate graduate degrees will complement the prospective director's experience. Therefore, the Flathead County Board of Commissioners request that the combination of education and experience be considered by the Commission under the 'or its equivalent' clause in ARM 10.102.1150E.

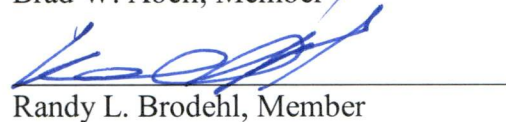
It is difficult for us to understand why State Librarian Stapp's decision would not be based on common sense and instead be viewed as punitive. Flathead County taxpayer monies were paid into the State general fund, and should be considered for disbursement.

Therefore, we are requesting that the Montana State Library Board reconsider Director Stapp's decision to decertify and withhold appropriated funds (totaling approximately \$35,000) from Flathead County's ImagineIf Library in the coming budget year, and this be considered at the next available State Library Commission meeting.

Sincerely,  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
FLATHEAD COUNTY, MONTANA

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela J. Holmquist, Chairman

  
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Brad W. Abell, Member

  
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Randy L. Brodehl, Member