

Statement from Tim Plass
CLN Trustee
8/10/24

The new CLN budget is not making extreme cuts. We are taking a 1% increase, which is increasing the budget by \$50k. Growth from increased tax base due to new or increased valued properties this year is adding about \$85k. The most we could add, by ID law, is 3% which increase the budget by another \$100k. Even increasing by that maximum amount would not balance the budget without any cut backs.

CLN is not currently overspending. The last report for the first of July showed CLN has spent 62% of its budget even though 75% of the FY has elapsed.

In my opinion, the salary/benefit line item would have increased too much if we provided the recommended salary increases. CLN simply has too large of a payroll and benefits to accommodate the recommended salary increases with the maximum amount of tax increase allowed. A number of new positions were added by the previous board, funded with excess collected tax funds back then, and they were set up with a too low of a salary. Sr. staff made a recommendation to reduce payroll by reducing part-time positions and adding some full-time positions to replace them. That decreases the number on the payroll but gives more staff a 40 hr work week with benefits. In order to accommodate those changes, a reduction in library hours was recommended. They looked at attendance statistics and picked on the least used times at various libraries to reduce hours. This reduced the payroll budget item as needed while still providing the recommended raises.

Please understand that the reduced hours were proposed by Sr. staff as a way to meet the budget and were not initiated by the board. The budget does not list hours of operation or required number of staff. It lists the funding for the salaries. The new library director will arrive in Sept. He will be the one to determine the best way to keep libraries open with the salary budget. He is the manager of the operation and he may well come up with an alternate solution, including returning to part-time positions and keeping Sunday hours.

We also eliminated the bookmobile and some outreach staff, as those vehicles are getting expensive to maintain. CLN can use the Sprinter van to bring materials to set up a booth inside a school instead of having patrons come out to the bus in the parking lot.

Our insurance carrier, ICRMP, reduced the CLN liability coverage last Oct 1st from \$3.0M to \$0.5M but did not reduce the CLN premium. This was not fair to CLN but we did not have time to find an alternative way to get back to \$3.0M coverage even though the board requested multiple quotes. Some of us are bracing in anticipation that ICRMP will simply drop their coverage of CLN after a huge \$1M+ claim for pipes breaking and water damage this year. The board has to plan for getting alternate commercial insurance, and we want multiple quotes to

get the best deal. We need the cooperation of Sr. staff to accomplish this. It will undoubtedly cost more this year. I hope you can understand this is a difficult problem.

As for legal counsel charges, we really do not have any choice. Legal counsel needs to attend board meetings when the board is making decisions so he can advise us to not make legal mistakes. It was the library director who requested the attendance of legal counsel at all our meetings. In the past, the board rarely had legal counsel present at meetings, but that was probably ill advised when they worked on policies. The policies we had to work on this year were highly contentious matters that were not faced in the past, and we had no choice but to use legal counsel more. Changes in Idaho laws required the board to make those policy changes; we had no choice and it was completely necessary. Now that those material policies are completed, we should need legal counsel less.

One other consideration on materials budget reduction is to understand that CLN has over \$650k of insurance payment funds to use for the completion of reconstruction, furnishing and for the replacement of water damaged materials. A large portion of the damaged materials are out of print or not replaceable, so alternates will be acquired. There will be a great deal of new material added this year even with the small materials budget reduction that was made.

As for the new director salary and the increase from what he is being paid in his current position, we have the previous CLN board to thank for that. They raised the salary and bar way up when they brought on the previous director a year ago. Any new candidate will simply not accept less than what was agreed to last year, which is public information. The current board's hands have been tied by the previous board on this issue. Please keep in mind that our new director was a finalist (second choice last year) in a nation-wide search a year ago. Because the search and interviews were only 12 months before his interview this year, and he was already determined to be fully qualified and vetted by the previous board, it can be considered that the first choice turned down the offer and we are now making the offer to the second choice. However, it is clear that the current board would have considered our new director our first choice.