

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 3, 2025 – 4:00 PM

Special Meeting

Vancouver Community Library

901 C Street, Vancouver 98660

Columbia Room

Hybrid/In-Person

Kristy Morgan, *Chair*, Clark County At-Large
Marie Coffey, *Secretary*, Clark County At-Large
Megan Dugan, *Vice Chair*, City of Vancouver
Mary Ann Duncan-Cole, Skamania County
Olga Hodges, Klickitat County
Irina Kakorina, Clark County At-Large
Mary Williams, City of Vancouver

Present Board: Kristy Morgan, Marie Coffey, Megan Dugan, Mary Ann Duncan-Cole (remote), Mary Williams

Absent: Irina Kakorina, Olga Hodges

Present Staff: Jennifer Giltrop, Executive Director; Catrina Galicz, Finance Director; Andrea Scherer, Human Resources Director; Miranda Holtmann, Executive Assistant; Julian Mendez, Communications and Marketing Director; Justin Keeler, Outreach and Community Partnership Director/Public Records Officer; Lucien Kress, IT Director; Dave Josephson, Facilities and Fleet Director;

Remote Access: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87566671288> • Meeting ID: 875 6667 1288 • Passcode: 844432 • Phone Access 971-247-1195

Fort Vancouver Regional Library Special Meeting Minutes

AGENDA:

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** - Chair Morgan called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.
- 2. AGENDA APPROVAL** – At 4:01 p.m. Mary Williams made a motion to approve the agenda. Megan Dugan seconded. Motion approved with 5 out of 5 votes.
- 3. CHAIR ANNOUNCEMENTS** – There were no chair announcements.
- 4. PUBLIC COMMENTS** – At 4:02 p.m. public comments began with the following speakers.
 - Rachel Ernst of Vancouver made a public comment about the levy lid lift options.
 - Jake Ausmus of Vancouver made a public comment about the levy lid lift options.
 - Nerissa Eckerson of Vancouver made a public comment about the levy lid lift options.
 - Monica Garcia of Vancouver made a public comment about levy lid lift options.At 4:10 p.m. the chair closed public comments.

5. LEVY LID LIFT

- 5.1 Staff Report 2025-06 Levy Lid Lift Service Plan Options** – At 4:10 p.m. the chair gave the floor to Jennifer Giltrop to present the Staff Report 2025-06 Levy Lid Lift Service Plan Options. Giltrop provided a reminder of the levy timeline and emphasizing key milestones. The board has engaged in ongoing discussions from the September 2024 board retreat through the January 2025 meeting when the board approved a resolution to place a levy lid lift to restore the levy rate to the \$.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value on the August 5, 2025 ballot. Giltrop noted that the last levy lid lift occurred 15 years ago and passed narrowly. Revenue has grown 2–3% annually in recent years while expenditures have increased 4–5%, creating a \$4.7 million gap in 2025, covered by reserves. This gap is projected to reach \$7.6 million in 2026 without new revenue and is not sustainable.

Giltrop noted the many considerations when making decisions regarding potential cuts or investments. These include community needs and expectations, fiscal sustainability and responsibility, impact on service levels and quality, infrastructure and facility maintenance,

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strategic growth, and innovation. The organization must also follow collective bargaining agreements with its two labor unions, noting that both union and non-union positions may be affected. FVRL adheres to a 60–90 day fund balance policy to ensure timely payments to staff and vendors. This policy will guide potential budget cuts if the levy is unsuccessful. Maintaining system integrity remains a priority which is what the board will see throughout the presentation through the breakout of how revenues are allocated.

Giltrop shared the financial projections for Option 1 (Levy Passes) which would continue the same level of service and would also include completion of the Washougal Community library in 2027 but would include no other additions or buildings. This option is estimated to last through 2040. With this service plan, financial modeling shows that FVRL would not need to start pulling from the reserves for the same level of service until 2035. Giltrop shared a pie chart illustrating the breakdown of the 2026-2030 budget under this option with 69% of the budget toward personnel, the industry standard and best practice of 12% devoted to library books and materials, 14% for other services and charges, and 5% for supplies, small equipment and technology.

Giltrop shared the financial projection chart for Option 2 (Levy Passes) which includes district-wide investment in additional services and increases open hours by 13%. In this model the Washougal Community Library is built, plus the potential of one other facility in the district (to be determined by the study and Master Facilities Plan) and a bookmobile for Clark County. This model is five years shorter than Option 1 (Levy Passes) with the need to go back to the voters in 2035. The breakdown of the budget in the case of Option 2 is predominantly the same as in Option 1 (Levy Passes) except that 70% goes toward personnel.

Giltrop shared the financial projection chart for Option 1 (Levy Fails). This scenario includes a significant 30% budget reduction in 2026 to align expenses with projected flat revenue growth. The District would not pursue construction of the Washougal Community Library or any other facilities, nor add a bookmobile. Closure of the Vancouver Mall Library is proposed when its lease ends in 2028, due to high lease costs and the presence of other nearby libraries that have since been established or expanded. Although the District will continue to receive property tax revenue—even at a reduced levy rate—growth will be limited to 1% annually. Without additional funding, expenses will increasingly outpace revenue. A second 30% budget reduction is projected for 2029 if no new levy is approved by that time.

Giltrop shared the financial projection chart for Option 2 (Levy Fails). This option focuses on making targeted cuts to keep services as intact as possible while aligning expenses with revenues. Reserves would still be used, though the District would maintain the 60–90 day fund balance target to ensure timely financial operations. Under this scenario, branch and Bookmobile hours would be reduced by 15% in 2026, with further reductions totaling 31% between 2027 and 2030. No new buildings or bookmobiles would be added, but existing facilities would be maintained with the exception of Vancouver Mall, still proposed to close at the end of the lease.

Giltrop closed with a comparative overview of all options. A table provided a side-by-side comparison including differences in branch hours, capital projects, and operating allocations. A side-by-side comparison of the budget break down pie charts for each option was presented. Giltrop closed her presentation with the reminder that the board will have to make a decision on

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what service option will be in the case of the levy passing or the levy failing and encouraged questions and discussion.

Chair Morgan asked with Option 1 (Levy Passes) if no new services are added how will the District serve equitably amid the rapid growth in the district. Giltrop responded by agreeing that growth in the district presents a challenge for service gaps. Giltrop cited for an example the different operating hours for different libraries that could be a point of confusion for patrons outside their home library. She emphasized the broader economic pressures across all government sectors and the need to restore funding to sustain current services. Giltrop noted that it could be a potential challenge to justify to the individual tax payer an increase without expanded services. Strategic and facilities planning is underway to address long-term equity and access, regardless of future budget outcomes.

Mary Williams asked about how potential risks and uncertainties related to both levy pass and fail scenarios. Questions were raised about inflation, economic volatility, and how financial projections could adapt to unforeseen changes. Giltrop confirmed that forecasts are based on current data and are revisited regularly, with flexibility to adjust as conditions evolve.

Marie Coffey asked about Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and if leadership is able to predict or adapt to more tax zones coming into effect in relation to these option and the levy lid lift. Giltrop explained the impact of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) on library funding. Currently, there are three active TIF areas in the district with a fourth TIF area just forming. The current TIF areas are an estimated \$11 million less in revenue over 25 years to FVRL. TIFs allow cities, counties, and ports—not libraries—to create special taxing zones without voter approval. These areas capture all property tax revenue growth, including the library's 1% annual increase and any new construction value. As a result, while service demand increases in growing areas, the library does not receive the associated tax revenue despite public perception that taxes are fully supporting library services.

Williams asked about the emotional and human impact of potential staff reductions if the levy fails, expressing concern about morale, mental health, and job security. Giltrop acknowledged the difficulty of planning during uncertain times and emphasized efforts to maintain transparent communication with employees, including holding workshops and sharing all available information. Emotional and professional support resources, such as the Employee Assistance Program, remain available, and ongoing staff development and training will continue regardless of the levy outcome. Staff resilience was highlighted, along with a continued belief in community support for the library and its mission.

Williams noted that in the case that the levy fails, the District would have to try again and asked for a reminder of the costs associated with repeated ballot measures. Giltrop responded that each election could cost between \$280,000 and \$500,000, depending on how many issues appear on the ballot across the four counties the district serves. In addition to direct costs, Giltrop emphasized the significant opportunity cost, noting that hundreds of staff hours have already been dedicated to levy planning and information outreach. Should the levy fail, additional time and resources would need to be redirected toward planning future measures and updating financial projections, further diverting efforts from other library priorities.

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Mary Ann Duncan Cole inquired about exploring alternative funding models for new library buildings, potentially placing more financial responsibility on communities directly benefiting from them. Giltrop confirmed that community contributions, including land donations and fundraising, have historically supported projects. However, the scale of funding needed typically exceeds what local fundraising can cover. Issuing district debt or forming Library Capital Facility Areas (LCFAs), require local voter approval to fund new buildings through bonds. Examples include Three Creeks and Vancouver libraries, which were funded in part through CFAs. Bonds for the Vancouver Library Capital Facilities Area are expected to be paid off in 2028. Giltrop noted that the District has a mix of owned and leased facilities, which factor into long-term planning.

In response to further questions, Giltrop explained that under RCW 27.12, the District is funded primarily through property taxes, with no authority to explore other tax revenue mechanisms. While library types across Washington vary (municipal, county, district), many face similar constraints and rely on levy lid lifts to maintain service levels. Ongoing legislative discussions may affect the 1% growth cap, but regardless of any changes, a levy lid lift is still necessary for sustainability.

The board emphasized the need for transparency with the public, especially regarding the outcomes of a pass or fail. There was consensus that all options are difficult but necessary to prepare.

The meeting closed with a reminder that the Board will vote on April 21 to finalize which service scenarios move forward depending on the levy outcome. Trustees were encouraged to provide any final suggestions well in advance of that meeting so that materials could be prepared accordingly.

5.2 Information & Engagement Strategy— At 5:14p.m. Julian Mendez presented the Information and Engagement Strategy for the Levy Lid Lift. The campaign's core focus is on providing clear, neutral, and accessible information to the public while maintaining legal compliance with Washington state law. The effort is strictly informational and does not involve advocacy.

Objectives of the campaign are to educate residents about what the levy is and how library funding works, to explain potential impacts depending on whether the levy passes or fails and to ensure materials are accessible across languages, communities and communication preferences.

The strategy aims to reach both current library users and non-users across a large and diverse district. It emphasizes shared community values such as access, trust, equity, and inclusion. Mendez shared datapoints highlighting the FVRL's community engagement which demonstrate the library's reach and relevance in residents' daily lives.

The campaign messaging will center on three key questions; 1. What happens if the levy passes or fails. 2. What does \$16.67 a month (based on the 2024 district average home value of \$400,000) represent in terms of service value. 3. How does this connect to the library's history and future? Comparisons were provided to contextualize the monthly cost, equating it to services like tutoring, streaming, or exercise classes—resources all offered through the library.

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The campaign will align with the library's 75th anniversary and ongoing strategic and facilities planning efforts, inviting the public to reflect on the role of the library in the community. Outreach efforts will be grounded in three principals 1) accessibility—making the information widely available, 2) consistency – keeping the message clear and accurate, and 3) neutrality—staying fact-based and informational.

Materials will include translated flyers, fact sheets, posters with QR codes, and content integrated into existing library publications. These resources will be distributed at branches, bookmobiles, outreach events, and through community partners, ensuring broad, passive access without pressure, in alignment with the principles of a neutral information campaign. Only designated leadership staff will respond to levy-related questions to ensure message consistency and legal adherence. Frontline staff will not initiate conversations, but materials will be made readily available.

The presentation concluded by reaffirming the campaign's commitment to empowering residents through access to reliable, factual information, supporting informed decision-making ahead of the August 5, 2025 vote.

After Mendez's presentation Giltrop encouraged the board, the staff, and the community to share with the district feedback, ideas, or anything that would help the district connect and provide information.

6.3 Resolution 2025-05 Levy Lid Lift Pro & Con Committees – At 5:33 p.m. the Chair introduced the Resolution 2025-05 Levy Lid Lift Pro & Con Committee. Giltrop provided the background on how the committees were determined. A press release went out as well as social media and people responded with their interest in serving either the pro or con committee. There is only one pro and one con committee needed for the whole district and each committee can have up to three people. The resolution would be to appoint those people to the respective committee. The executive committee of the board met to review all of the names and move forward this resolution.

In response to a question Giltrop also clarified that once the board approves the resolution, the District will turn it into the county who may try to fill out the con committee, as that only has one person who volunteered and confirmed interest.

At 5:35 p.m. Dugan made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-05: Levy Lid Lift Pro & Con Committees. Coffey seconded. Motion approved unanimously with 5 out of 5 votes.

6. BOARD COMMENT - at 5:36 p.m. the Chair opened the floor for board comments.

- Dugan commented about the levy lid lift service plan option. As a former FVRL staff and WPEA member, Dugan stressed how important the staff are to the library and that she supports minimal cuts if the levy fails.
- Williams, as board liaison to the Foundation, acknowledged new foundation Director, Jenny Wilkerson and her excitement for how the foundation is mobilizing their fundraising efforts.
- Chair Morgan thanked everyone who attended the meeting and thanked the staff for their comments.

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7. **Setting for next Regular meeting; Monday, April 21, 6:00 p.m. at Washougal Community Library – Washougal Community Center.**
8. **ADJOURNMENT – At 5:38 p.m. Williams made a motion to adjourn. Dugan seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:39 p.m.**