

Cabell County Public Library

Emergency Board Meeting

August 2, 2023

The meeting was called to order by the President, Wendy Thomas, in Meeting Rooms 1 and 2 at the Main Library at 4:00 p.m. Board members in attendance were Charles Bagley, David Amsbary, Wendy Thomas, Marsha Moses, and Allysa Bond (via remote link). Friends of the Library President, Jim Casto, was also present. Staff members present were Director Breana Bowen (via remote link), Amanda Ross, David Owens, April Morrison, Katie Sanders, Robert Davis, Angela Arthur, Pam Roach, Katie Curry, Kista Black, Carl Hamlin, and Elizabeth Nilles. Dennis Taylor, library attorney, also attended. Attending from the Greater Huntington Parks & Recreation District were Marie Shannon, Kathy McKenna, and Josh Heck. Community members were also present.

Wendy Thomas noted that all board members and library attorney were present. She then called for a discussion and/or public comments on the topic of the Cabell County Board of Education's decision concerning the excess levy. The Cabell County School Board's decision was to reduce funding for the Cabell County Library from the 2026-2030 excess levy from \$1,784,346 to \$195,089 as well as the elimination all excess levy funds for the Greater Huntington Parks and Recreation District (\$551,872).

David Amsbary opened the discussion by saying the August 1 meeting at the Board of Education had clearly answered questions about the direction in which the Board of Education was going with regards the excess levy funding. He noted that the Board of the Cabell County Library had only been informed of this decision a few weeks ago; that the outcome would be devastating to the Library, and he thanked everyone who came out to the Board of Education meeting.

Question from the audience: How and when did the Cabell County Library hear about the proposed action from the School Board? Wendy Thomas deferred her answer to Director Breana Bowen. Breana stated that she read about the Board of Education's special excess levy meeting in the Huntington Herald Dispatch and attended the first available School Board meeting on July 20.

Marie Shannon (GHPRD) expressed her concerns that, as a literacy advocate, the reduction in funding would be devastating to the culture of the community. She expressed an interest in further discussion rather than litigation.

Kista Black (Guyandotte PL) stated she also attended the Board of Education meeting.

Comment from the audience: "Many agencies have contacted me stating how upset they are with the Board of Education."

Question from the audience for Ms. Bond: Why was this not brought up to the Library Board earlier, given that she is a member of that Board as well? She stated that the Cabell County School Board had fulfilled all their legal obligations for announcing a meeting.

An audience member asked what could they do as a concerned citizen to show support for the agencies hurt by the Board of Education's decision. Wendy Thomas stated she was impressed with the turnout for the Board of Education's meeting, and was especially impressed with the children who spoke up on behalf of the libraries and parks. Kista Black (Guyandotte) informed Wendy one of the children was a Guyandotte Public Library patron. Kathy McKenna (GHPRD) stated she was at the meeting on behalf of the Greater Huntington Parks and Recreation District to show support for the library and parks. Pam Roach (CCPL) wanted to state on record how much she appreciated the Library Board and staff's efforts in this matter. Wendy Thomas thanked her for the comment and stated she hopes the Library Board can help.

Alyssa Bond read a statement outlining her views on the issue. She mentioned that the situation was challenging and in no way came from a sense of malice, but of one of needs which the Cabell County School Board has. She stated that the School Board's fiscal needs made a continuance of funding at current levels for the library very difficult as it would impinge on services offered to the schoolchildren of Cabell County. Ms. Bond prefaced these comments by stating they were her own. An audience member asked Ms. Bond what she believed her role to be on the Library Board, to which Ms. Bond replied she was on the Cabell County Library Board as a representative of the Cabell County Schools Board. Breana Bowen asked the attendees to email any questions they may have her role on both boards directly to Ms. Bond.

Further audience comments included Ms. Bond's lack of transparency to the Library Board: the share of federal funds in providing school meals for children as part of the Cabell Schools Summer Lunch Program; and Marsha Moses wanted to include that Cabell County Libraries help this program by serving as distribution locations. Josh Keck (GHPRD) asked Ms. Bond if the School Board had a Plan B in the event that the excess levy did not receive enough support to pass. An attendee asked what questions Ms. Bond could and could not be asked. Ms. Bond asked that if anyone had further questions she would be glad to receive them via e-mail. Director Breana Bowen thanked the public and staff for attending the School Board excess levy meeting. She also stated that she appreciated the work Drew Rottgen, Treasurer and Chief School Business Official with the Cabell County Schools, had done under difficult logistical conditions at the School Board's excess levy meeting.

A motion was made by Charles Bagley that the Cabell County Library Board move to executive session. This was seconded by Marsha Moses. Dennis Taylor, library attorney, Judy Rule, Kathy McKenna (GHPRD), and Betty Barrett were invited to stay for the executive session.

Wendy Thomas invited the attendees back into the meeting room, as Marsha Moses moved and Charlie Bagley seconded that the Cabell County Library Board move out of executive session, noting no action was taken. Wendy thanked everyone for their patience. David Amsbary announced that, following a robust discussion, the Cabell County Board wished to introduce three motions.

1. David Amsbary made a motion that the Cabell County Library Board and Director Breana Bowen explore all legal remedies for the current funding issue occasioned by the reduction of funding from the Cabell County Schools excess levy. This was seconded by Charles Bagley. The Board voted 4-1 in favor, with Allysa Bond voting no.
2. David Amsbary made a motion that the Cabell County Library Board and Director Breana Bowen explore all legislative remedies for the current funding issue occasioned by the reduction of funding from the Cabell County Schools excess levy. This was seconded by Charles Bagley. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
3. David Amsbary made a motion that the Cabell County Library Board and Director Breana Bowen explore all alternative funding avenues to help resolve the current funding issue occasioned by the reduction of funding from the Cabell County Schools excess levy. This was seconded by Marsha Moses. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

In the final public comment section upon the passage of these motions Josh Keck (GHPRD) stated that exploring all avenues was a good idea. He clarified the importance of understanding this would all apply to the 2026-2030 excess levy call, but stated that the obligation of funding on the current levy was not being met.

Charlie Bagley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:18, David Amsbary seconded and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

by David Owens, Acting Secretary.

Wendy Thomas, President