

**Staffeldt, Darlene**

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**From:** Gloria Langstaff [glolang@montana.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 31, 2002 1:01 PM  
**To:** Bob Cooper; Darlene Staffeldt  
**Subject:** Mill levies and the Big Bill

Dear Bob and Darlene,

I'm not sure who is best to contact with this concern or who is most available during the holidays, so am writing to both of you.

As the first multijurisdictional library in the state, an interlocal agreement was written between the county and the city establishing the library. Before the district library was formed, the county had a county-wide library tax which gave the Hamilton City library approximately \$4000, the Darby library (when someone asked for it) \$1000 and the Stevensville library \$1000. After the library district was formed the county has continued levying a county-wide tax and has given \$14,000 to the Bitterroot Public Library, and lesser amounts to Darby and Stevensville. Since the North Valley library District and the Darby library districts have been formed, all of Ravalli County is now covered by three library districts (excluding a part of the Florence school district at the north border), each with their own mill levies.

Fiscal year 2000/01 the county redistributed the amount given to libraries based on population served. The Bitterroot Public Library then received \$10,663 and the other two slightly more. This current fiscal year, without any discussion with any of the libraries, the county cut all library funds by approximately 80%, leaving the Bitterroot Public Library with \$2,900. I was informed by one county commissioner that libraries may not be given any money next year and will be dumped in with the non-profits to apply for grants for any remaining county funds. Betty Lund said she gets complaints about double taxation. I reminded her that we are a tax-based government agency, not a non-profit, but it didn't seem to register.

In looking over our interlocal agreement, there is some wording which I need help with. "The estimated costs of services will be \$51,000 annually. This will be obtained by a district wide levy in excess of the county wide levy; the sum of the district levy and county levy will not exceed 5 mills."

Question: How has the Big Bill, which basically did away with mill levies, affected such a statement? Has there been any opinion on this somewhere, sometime? Has the North Valley Library dealt with this during their challenging times?

City Finance Officer, Dale Huhtanen, said that it's not double taxation, but that the county is levying and ADDITIONAL tax for libraries.

Other wording states: "The Agreement may be terminated by mutual consent accomplished by Notice of Termination in writing delivered between the parties and effective after a ninety day period." The city is not interested in abandoning the agreement. In fact, Huhtanen is disappointed that the county is giving us less and less while the city is taking on more hidden costs such as an SID.

The parties signing the agreement are only the city and the county. We want to approach the county commissioners soon regarding their obligations in the interlocal agreement and to ask for some money for the library for the next fiscal year. We need to know how the Big Bill has affected the max of 5 mills. Any other advice would be greatly appreciated. Please let me know if you need me to fax you the entire agreement. Thank you.--  
Gloria

*Gloria Langstaff, Library Director  
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