

**Commission Meeting  
Minutes for September 3, 2002 Teleconference Call  
Helena, MT**

**Attendees:**

**Commissioners**

**(Via phone):** Rosemary Garvey, Ralph Atchley, David Johnson, Linda McCulloch, Bruce Morton and Gail Staffanson

**Commissioner**

**Absent:** Al Randall

**Staff:** Karen Strege, Kris Schmitz, Jim Hill, Darlene Staffeldt, Sarah McHugh, Lena Zeeck and Barbara Duke

**Guests:** Deborah Schlesinger

**Introductions**

Rosemary Garvey called the meeting to order at 3:15. The staff and guests in the conference room introduced themselves.

**Proposed Budget Cuts**

Karen Strege summarized the budget cuts proposed. The Library is facing a \$22,000 deficit in personnel services. Strege and Kris Schmitz met with Director Swysgood from the Governor's Budget Office, but he was unable to assure them that there would be money available from the contingency fund to cover the shortfall. Therefore, Strege is proposing a reduction in force to eliminate the deficit. The position recommended for the reduction is the clerical services assistant position held by Lena Zeeck. This position was chosen because the duties and responsibilities are the ones that are least needed at this time since there are fewer materials to catalog and the duties can be most easily shifted to other staff members. This reduction will save approximately \$18,000 and it is hoped the rest of the deficit will be made up with the usual variations in personnel costs. Strege and program managers will keep track of personnel budgets and report on their status at the December commission meeting.

The other proposed reductions are necessitated by the 1% cut in general funds, the 25% cut in the Coal Severance Tax, the 25% cut in the supplies budget and the hiring freeze imposed. Cuts were apportioned throughout the agency as much as possible, but the Library and Information Services Department was hit hardest. The total cuts to the Library including the RIF equal about \$179,000 and are likely to be much worse in January after the regular session of the Legislature.

Garvey asked if the rest of the staff would be able to handle Zeeck's duties. Strege said that services will definitely be slower and there may be other impacts that haven't been foreseen. She will update the Commission in December about how services are being affected.

Garvey asked if the cuts to the travel budget include Commission travel. Strege answered that most of the cuts were to her travel budget.

Bruce Morton questioned what the implications of the online budget cuts were. Darlene Staffeldt said that the cuts were to content and electronic materials, not to the infrastructure, so Gale and OCLC were kept.

David Johnson asked whether the Library would be able to restore the clerical services assistant position if the overall budget situation didn't worsen in January and some contingency funds were approved. Strege said that we wouldn't know until the end of the fiscal year next June if contingency funds would be available, but restoring the position is a possibility if funding is found. Morton said it is very unlikely the budget situation will improve; more likely is the possibility of further personnel cuts.

Strege said that the news she has gotten from other state libraries is that they are also facing big cuts, some upwards of 35%.

Garvey expressed regret that the Commission had to make the difficult choice to reduce personnel. She thanked Zeeck for her work at the Library. Zeeck was told about some of the benefits she is entitled to including 6 months of paid health insurance, inclusion in the RIF pool for other state jobs and education and training opportunities.

#### **Action Items**

Morton moved to accept the RIF plan as proposed by Strege. Johnson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Morton moved to accept the budget reduction plan as proposed by Strege. Staffanson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Strege thanked the Commission for their diligence in making these hard decisions and told Zeeck she hoped there would be a job for her at the Library in the future.

Johnson added his thanks to the Library staff for their difficult work in making the necessary cuts and said he feared there were dark days ahead.

#### **Announcements**

Strege announced that former commission member Dorothy Laird is in the hospital for gall bladder surgery and Bonnie Williamson's father passed away yesterday.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30.