

Response to Brad Wright's formal complaint to the Montana State Library Commission
8 March, 2026

1. Violation of Open Meeting Laws and Transparency:

Jane Wheeler reported during the 26 February 2026 Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting that the library director Teri Dugan, Kalispell Mayor Ryan Hunter, herself, Sharon Furlong and Emily Crawford met on February 25, 2026. This was not an official meeting of the BOT or of the Facilities committee. There was no quorum of either the BOT or the Facilities committee and therefore it did not have to be noticed as an "official meeting" and did not violate the open meeting laws. Discussions, as reported to the BOT, involved potential funding, parking allocations and the mayor's support for the building of a new Kalispell branch library.

It is my duty as a library trustee to explore any and all legal funding options and advantageous partnerships that could help Flathead County get its new library. This meeting was an opportunity to do so.

Erica Wirtala was not present.

At the 12 February 2026 meeting of the Facilities committee, Teri Dugan stated that she would make notice of a meeting between city officials, SHOP, herself and the Facilities Committee if and when that meeting was scheduled to take place. No such meeting has been scheduled or taken place.

2. Bypassing Board Directives and Improper Collaboration:

The meeting with Mayor Hunter on February 25, 2026, including members of the Flathead Library Foundation, was informational only. There were no negotiations regarding purchase of the property or development of the library. Foundation Director Erica Wirtala was not in attendance.

3. Failure to Disclose Public Documents and Deceptive Land Proposal:

The Library Director and the Facilities committee have spent over 3 years investigating potential sites for a new library. SHOP Development approached us in 2024 with the possibility of purchasing property that they had acquired at the old Kalispell Center Mall. The BOT contracted with Cushing Terrel, Architects, to produce conceptual sketches of a potential library on the proposed property at the corner of 5th Ave. W and the Parkline trail. These drawings were to be used in a fundraising campaign by the Flathead Library Foundation. With the resignation of the Foundation executive director, the plans for a capital campaign were put on hold and the drawings were held for future use. These drawing were presented to the BOT at the meeting on 24 July 2025.

The BOT has not signed a Buy/Sell agreement with SHOP Development, although we have been in negotiations since 2025. The size of the property will be finalized when that happens, along with other important issues related to purchasing property. The LOI's and potential Buy/Sell agreements that we have worked on previously are part of the public record. The County Attorney has been consulted in all cases and will continue to be involved in any and all legal matters regarding purchase of property for the Kalispell Library

4. Potential Conflicts of Interest and Third-Party Influence:

Realtor Wendy Brown is the Flathead County Library's representative in the purchase of property for a new library. We have full confidence in her representation. She communicates as our agent with SHOP Development. Her knowledge of property within Kalispell has been invaluable in our search for a location. All expenditures that have been undertaken in the pursuit of a property on which to put a new library, as well as any expenditure related to conceptual drawings for potential fundraising campaigns have been authorized by the BOT.

Allegations that the BOT, our realtor, the Library Director or individual members of the Board of Trustees are defrauding or deceiving the public are baseless. Untold hours have been spent in the service of the goal of building a new library in Kalispell. To allege that all or any of the above mentioned are not honestly serving the public good is entirely unfounded.

Jane Wheeler