



Comments

December 6, 2017:

Comments and/or Suggestions:

Let us know what you think? 12/6/17

Have handicap accessible doors
put in on west side of building so folks
don't have to drive scooters or wheelchairs
all the way around to the east doors and have
to contend with cars coming in driveway.

- Anonymous -

ll

December 9, 2017 via email:

Hi Linda,

I went to one of the mtgs regarding the future of the library. I want to share with you that I was underwhelmed. I don't mean to be mean. I just want you to know what I saw.

1. The meeting that I attended drew a few people who recently moved to the area, someone who wandered in, Dorothy Cherry, me and a couple of others. Not a cross section.

2. The meeting leaders asked us what we want to see how we wanted to see happen in our town. After gnawing on that for over a half an hour, I could see no direction to the conversation and I moved on.

I don't know how seriously the library Board will take this project. Sad to report I do not see much value. As I reread this note, I'm worried that this sounds more harsh than I intended. Still it is accurate. I hope my thoughts will prove useful.

Best wishes, Jinx Wingard

December 11, 2017 – From Dorothy Cherry, see attachment at end of this document.

Publicity

October 5, 2017, Sturgis Journal, page 1:

BRONSON

Library construction loan paid off early

By Rosalie Currier
rcurrier@sturgisjournal.com

The Friends of the Bronson Library are now debt free.

In 2013, the group accepted responsibility for an \$88,327 loan on the library media center.

It all started in 2009 when the Branch District Library, Bronson Branch, built a barrier-free back-

entrance on the 1912 Carnegie Library.

Next a media center was added to accommodate current demand for computers. With both additions, architects were able to keep the historical society rating of the century-old building.

But the second phase required a loan for completion, so in 2013, the group was given an

\$88,327 loan through Century Bank and Trust. It was the balance of the project after applying a \$100,000 grant from the Lucille E. Dearth Trust, said Lynnell Eash, librarian.

Because the friends group doesn't own the building, it created an unusual situation, said Gayle Clover, long-time friends member. It was a

loan some others banks were not willing to consider.

"Century Bank took a risk on us," Clover said. "We really appreciated it."

The friends proved trustworthy and on Sept. 28, paid off the five-year loan early. It was not due until May 2018.

Eash, whose vision for preserving the historic

building while meeting current community needs, gives credit to Friends of the Library, led by President Fran Fletcher.

Since being elected into office in 2014, Fletcher's leadership, persistence and hard work focused on eliminating the debt.

Backed by supportive long-time members in-

See LOAN, 5

LOAN

From page 1

group of students to a Wellness summit at Ford Field which was an amazing opportunity for our students," she said.

It has been an "invaluable resource for our elementary physical education department," Kubel said. "It has provided us with much needed equipment. From hula hoops and bean bags, scooter boards, playground balls and bowling equipment, to our rock climbing wall at Ryan, all purchased with funds provided by Fuel Up to Play 60."

During public comment portion of Mon-

day's meeting, school board members heard from parents voicing concerns about the high school football program. Concerns centered around the coaching staff and morale. During public comment, board members do not respond to comments.

Under action items, the board approved:

- a request from Lisa Franks, jr./sr. high science teacher, for an overnight field trip to Ohio State Stone Lab at Lake Erie, in May;

- a request from Jonathan Carrothers for a band lock-in this fall.

The board also approved covering transportation costs for the bowling team, as well as the coach's stipend. Initially the bowling team

was a board-approved, self-funded sport.

However with increased interest among schools in the Big 8, it may become a conference sport in the near future, said Jean LaClair, athletic director.

Gauging student interest, LaClair expects to have two varsity teams — a boys' and a girls' team — and a co-ed JV team.

Under discussion items, the board looked over the results of the spring, M-Step testing and discussed the purchase of a new bus.

The next meeting is at 6:30 p.m. Nov. 6, at the high school media center.

November 18, 2017, Coldwater Daily Reporter, page C7:



2 POSITIONS AVAILABLE:

Teen Services Clerk

This position will assist the Teen Services Librarian at the Coldwater Branch.

For more information about the position, and to submit an application, go to <http://www.branchdistrictlibrary.org/employment> **AND send resume with cover letter to:** Gina Horn, Administrative Assistant, at HornG@BranchDistrictLibrary.org.

Public Services Clerk

Public Services Clerks have a broad range of duties and responsibilities.

Their primary responsibility is to provide service to the public at the Public Services Desk at the Coldwater Branch. For more information about the position, and to submit an application, go to <http://www.branchdistrictlibrary.org/employment>

AND send resume with cover letter to: Gina Horn, Administrative Assistant, at HornG@BranchDistrictLibrary.org.

November 20, 2017, Coldwater Daily Reporter, page A10:



Youngsters learn about birds in the area and ways they can provide food for them during cold months. COURTESY PHOTO

Youngsters learn ways to help the birds this winter

By Christy Hart-Harris
charris@hedailyreporter.com

COLDWATER—Michigan has several species of birds that are considered non-migratory. Many Branch County residents have seen a robin, cardinal, red-bellied woodpecker or downy woodpecker land on the shrub in front of their bay window or perch on a tree branch in their backyard. There are also many familiar species seen around the area that migrate to this location from further north.

Earlier this month, over 30 local youth filled the Coldwater Library Kids' Place with the sounds of hammering as they, along with their families, built peanut butter/suet feeders.

Gene Wasserman of the Michigan Bluebird Society was on hand to discuss the various birds seen in Michigan and how kids can help them survive the cold winter.

Black oil sunflower seed and white millet are the best sources of feed for birds, because although they may be in dire need of food, they will not visit a feeder that contains cheap filler feed as it is not satisfying to the bird. Even if they do find themselves in a pinch, they may eat the feed, but will most likely leave a mess on the ground of the uneaten filler. It's best to purchase bird feed that is free of chemicals and other toxins that could be potentially harmful to the birds.

The kids were able to take the feeders home as a way to provide food for the birds all year.

December 2, 2017, Coldwater Daily Reporter, page A8:

Library reading winners announced



Winners are, Level A: Eli Snider, Level C: Terry Orange and Level D: Nicholas Snider. COURTESY PHOTO



Winners are, Level B: Charlie Jones and Level E: Brandon Jones. COURTESY PHOTO



Family winners are Janet and Eric Rucker. COURTESY PHOTO

For The Daily Reporter

COLDWATER — Kids' Place of the Coldwater branch of the Branch District Library recently announced the reading winners for the October "Tales from the Crypt" Reading Incentive.

Children ages 2-12-years-old signed up throughout the month of October and set reading goals for each level with McDonald's "Be Our Guest cards and a Happy Meal

certificate for all who turned in their logs and met goals.

The top readers for each level received a \$25 Amazon gift certificate and the top family of readers received \$50 in Amazon gift certificates. A total of 94 children enrolled with over 50 of them returning their logs.

Another reading incentive will be held in March 2018.

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December 7, 2017, Coldwater Daily Reporter, page A1:



Stone mason Chris Devries of Grand River Builders replaces stone on the Quincy Library steps during his months of work. DON REID PHOTO

LIBRARY

From Page A1

continues to cover the cost of restoring the historic building.

Grand River Builders, a historic preservation company, did the work, which was delayed because of weather and illness of the craftsman doing the restoration.

He took apart the old steps and numbered the rocks so they could be rebuilt back as close as possible to as it first stood.

Now it is structurally sound, after more than 100 years of use and exposure to the Michigan winters.

Quincy Township Treasurer Constance Karney said the township wants to make sure the building is in the best shape possible to preserve it for the future, rather than just making minor repairs. In that effort, the community so far has raised \$94,194.50 and transferred \$90,401 for the work.

A committee made up of Karney, Bob Stewart, Bonnie Frick, Candace Newkirk, Jodie Willard and Teddy Sinclair has sought contributions from the community, with many businesses holding fundraisers.

There is still more to be done. The process began several years ago when the slate roof was repaired. It is now in good shape.

Karney said work on the eaves must still be done sometime in 2018,

at an estimated cost of \$40,000. Also, the township has put just over \$10,000 in the 2018 budget to repair the entrance to the township offices and install hand rails.

Karney said there might need to be some painting done.

Quincy Village constructed two new handicapped parking spots off Main Street at a cost of \$8,448, which the village covered. Consumers Energy charged \$4,300 to move a power pole six feet to allow access to the two spaces.

The rotting frames around two doors were replaced, while a third — blocked by the elevator — was closed off permanently.

Karney said the township has not yet totaled all the money invested.

“We want to make sure it is here for the future,” she said.

The county district library operates the Quincy branch, but the township is responsible for the structure.

The Quincy Library is on the national historic register. According to the state, C.W. Bennett, a Quincy resident, donated his entire estate for the founding of the Quincy Library.

The library, which was dedicated in memory of Bennett’s son, was built in 1910, about the same time as many of the Carnegie libraries like the one built in Bronson with an \$8,500 grant. It used similar architecture.

Steps now restored on the historic Quincy Library

By Don Reid
dwreid@aol.com

QUINCY TOWNSHIP — Work is finally complete on the stone steps leading into the Quincy Library, which also houses the Quincy Township offices in its basement.

The \$47,000 bill will be paid by the township as the public fundraising

See LIBRARY, page A4

December 14, 2017, Coldwater Daily Reporter, page A2:

Lewis and Clark Expedition presented at library

For The Daily Reporter

COLDWATER — The Coldwater branch of the Branch District Library recently held a program on “The Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Michigan Connection.” It was presented by Richard and Sandy Hennings of Charlotte.

The Michigan connection was a man named George Drouillard, born near Monroe. With Native American and French heritage, George was the perfect choice for the Expedition because of his hunting and sign language skills.



Richard and Sandy Henna's COURTESY PHOTO

Commissioned by Thomas Jefferson, the expedition traveled from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean and back from autumn 1804 to their return in 1806.

George Drouillard was integral to the success of this expedition with his hunting, trapping, and tracking skills.

Several items collected by the Hennings were also on display representing George Drouillard's adventurous life.

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Memorials Crafted 



Branch District
Library

www.BranchDistrictLibrary.org

December 11, 2017

COLDWATER BRANCH
10 E. Chicago St.
Coldwater MI 49036
(517) 278-2341
Fax (517) 278-2342

Robert Shedd, Trustee
Larsen Unitrust
c/o Century Bank and Trust
100 West Chicago Street
Coldwater, MI 49036

ALGANSEE BRANCH
580-B S. Ray-Quincy Rd.
Quincy MI 49082
(517) 639-9830

Dear Mr. Shedd,

Thank you so much for the generous donation of \$5,000 from the Larsen Unitrust. As we move into 2018, we are in the final process of creating a new Strategic Plan; this plan will guide us in providing quality library services. This donation will be put to good use as we carry out the wishes of the citizens of Branch County.

BRONSON BRANCH
207 N. Matteson St.
Bronson MI 49028
(517) 369-3785

Sincerely,

QUINCY BRANCH
11 N. Main St.
Quincy MI 49082
(517) 639-4001

Linda Lyshol
Library Director

SHERWOOD BRANCH
118 Sherman St.
Sherwood MI 49089
(517) 741-7976

**LUCILLE E. DEARTH
UNION TWP. BRANCH**
195 N. Broadway St.
Union City MI 49094
(517) 741-5061

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Coldwater, MI 49036

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December 11, 2017

Branch District Library Board
10 East Chicago St.
Coldwater, MI 49036

Re: 2017 Strategic Planning and 2018 proposed budget – Public Comment

Dear BDL Board Members:

At the November 14th morning “community conversation” session, Coldwater Township Hall, David Votta of MCLS told me that issues involving “buildings” were not a part of the strategic plan his firm would be helping the BDL board to develop. At the same meeting, Bronson board member Margaret Clemens proclaimed that she “did not care” about the past history of the Branch District Library and was looking “only to the future.” At the November 20th meeting of the BDL Board, Benjamin Jewell and Martha Watson both told me that review or amending the BDL Plan of Service was not part of the Strategic Planning process and would be considered after completion of the Strategic Plan.

I am concerned, almost alarmed, by those three (3) statements and suggest that the BDL Board and its hired planners take the time before continuing the strategic planning process to read or re-read the following documents, most available on the BDL website:

- The 1991 Agreement between Branch County and the City of Coldwater creating BDL;
- The legal contracts for library services and/or leases between BDL and the municipalities that own the buildings in Coldwater, Bronson, Quincy, Union City, Algansee, and Sherwood, noting particularly the role of the Coldwater Library Advisory Board;
- The BDL Plan of Service with particular attention to the roles of the Branch Managers, Branch Advisory Boards, and the municipalities themselves in the absence of an advisory board; and
- The District Library Establishment Act, 1989 PA 24, MCL 397.171-397.196, with particular attention to MCL 397.182 enumerating the powers of the BDL Board and its duties in expending BDL funds, available at <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-24-of-1989.pdf>

I am a person with a long-standing interest in the Branch District Library who promoted its creation in 1991 by going door-to-door in Coldwater and Coldwater Township to support the .75 mills ballot question that barely passed. That millage in perpetuity, now reduced by Headlee, funded BDL’s creation and still funds it. I represented the “county-at-large” on the BDL Board for 14 years (1999-2013) that included employment of 7 Library Directors - 4 formal hires and 3 interim directors.

Upon leaving the BDL Board, I immediately worked for 8 months with a small volunteer group of about 15 people to promote the BDL 2014 ballot proposal for .5 additional mills for 8 years that passed with 70% electoral support. In promoting the 2014 BDL millage, I personally spoke at

public meetings to the Branch County Commissioners, the Coldwater City Council, the Township Supervisors, the Quincy Village Council, 9 of Branch County's 16 Township Boards, and many community service clubs. 3 other volunteers spoke to the remaining 7 Township Boards and many more community service clubs. Library Friends and volunteers combed the communities, neighbor by neighbor, sounding the alarm that public library services in Branch County were in jeopardy without the additional .5 mills.

That 2014 millage campaign generated not only the money BDL needs to operate but tremendous voter support for public library services in Branch County. Throughout the campaign, I assured questioning elected officials and voters repeatedly that all Library Board expenditures of tax dollars and penal fines guaranteed by the 1963 Michigan Constitution were open to view at the BDL website and that the BDL Library Board was obligated by law and its contracts with each branch participating municipality to distribute all BDL money equitably among all branches.

I also assured people, hundreds of people, that the additional .5 mills sought – per ballot language – was for operating expenses only and not for capital improvements to the Coldwater Building or any other building. I directed elected officials to online BDL annual budgets and to the BDL Plan of Service – adopted in 1991, revised completely in 2002, subsequently amended and current to 2013 - at https://www.branchdistrictlibrary.org/governing_documents – for specific information on how the BDL spent its public funds to provide library services throughout Branch County. The current 2017 BDL link to the Plan of Service says the same thing:

The Plan of Service is a document that describes how the Branch District Library implements the terms of its contracts with the municipalities in the library district.

The opening paragraph of the 2002 Plan of Service itself states:

This Plan of Service is devised to spell out the intentions of all parties involved in the (BDLS) Branch District Library System branch service. The original contract with each municipality is in effect and controls. This plan of service confirms the current policy of the Branch District Library Board, after consultation with each municipality, to implement the terms of the contract. [Emphasis supplied]

Thus, the Plan of Service is the detailed statement of BDL Board policy on budgeting and spending of BDL funds. Such a policy is needed to comply with the BDL board's legal duties listed in the District Library Establishment Act and to fulfill BDL's legal, contractual obligations to each participating branch municipality. The specific statement that the Plan was adopted after consultation with each municipality and similar language in each BDL/municipal contract is not mere filler language but recital of a BDL Board legal duty under the municipal contracts. That prior consultation in fact happened before and during 2002. I was on the BDL Board's Plan of Service Committee that met with each participating municipality, sometimes twice, for over the year before the Board adopted the 2002 Plan of Service. The 2002 Plan replaced the original Plan of Service adopted by the BDL Board in 1993, also after consultation with each participating municipality between passage of the 1991 millage and 1993 Board adoption of the Plan.

The succeeding BDL Boards on which I served all adhered to an unwritten policy that BDL could increase library services offered to the branches beyond what was specified in the Plan of Service without prior consultation with each branch municipality but could not decrease services offered without prior consultation. The most recent amendments to the Plan of Service were made in fact at the suggestion of the branches when penal fines plummeted and BDL was without funds to maintain the hours each branch was open to the public. The branches wanted access to their capital set-asides to stay open or acquire materials, and the BDL Board granted

that on an annual basis with a written proposal from the particular branch and approval by the BDL Board during budgeting.

Since the November “community conversations” at Coldwater Township Hall and the November 2017 BDL board meeting, I have reviewed the MCLS proposal to provide BDL with Strategic Planning Services and the terms of the \$24,000 BDL/MCLS contract - a document for some reason not available on the BDL website. I asked for a copy of that contract at the November board meeting and understood that someone with the Library would email it to me. When it had not arrived in 9 business days, I submitted a FOIA request that unfortunately disrupted John Rucker’s day, but showed (as you all will be pleased to know) how well BDL actually serves the public. John’s turn-around time on my initial FOIA request was 58 minutes – start to finish - and he followed up promptly the same day on my subsequent, non-FOIA request, to see the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the contract, though he did not find the RFP. Why? I think an RFP less than a year old and a major BDL contract should be as open-to-view under the Michigan Open Meetings Act, 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.261-15.275, as are the board packets and minutes.

Task 3 of the BDL/MCLS contract does indicate that MCLS will “identify community needs,” and the cost breakdown for that task calls for 10 “community conversations” at a cost of \$8,500 which includes preparation of a summary report. This public comment is directed specifically to that item in the strategic planning process.

As I told Mr. Votta at the first Coldwater Township Hall meeting, I believe BDL’s continued use of the Coldwater Clarke building as BDL headquarters and the Coldwater BDL branch the most crucial issue in any strategic plan. The 25-year lease for the Clarke Building between BDL and the City of Coldwater expired in 2016, and the new lease for 5 years will expire in 4 years, with any notice by BDL of non-renewal required in 3 years. BDL’s lessee obligation to repair and maintain the Clarke building has been a source of friction between Coldwater and the branch municipalities for the entire 26-year existence of the district library. Simply put, county residents do not want their fair share of BDL tax dollars consumed by Coldwater building needs when they all pay additional property tax dollars separately to their municipalities to maintain the branch buildings where they receive their BDL library services - primarily in Bronson, Quincy, and Union City.

The Coldwater Library Advisory Board, according to the City of Coldwater website, “reviews and recommends long term goals, policies, and procedures in order to provide quality library services for all residents.” The City of Coldwater owns not only the Coldwater Branch building, but the Holbrook Heritage collection, and the art on the walls plus some fixtures in the Coldwater building. The Coldwater Library Advisory Board is an essential party to any BDL planning or action involving the Coldwater building, the Heritage collection, and the art, which has been appraised and has value.

I think any Strategic Plan BDL develops with its planners must address its most consistent source of strife in the delivery of library services throughout the district – the different and often conflicting views of the City of Coldwater and remainder of the county regarding how to pay the cost of maintaining the Clarke Coldwater building as both BDL headquarters and Coldwater branch.

Since the 2014 ballot question - .5 mills for BDL operating expenses only - expires in 2022, a year after the latest BDL/City of Coldwater lease, BDL obviously also needs to plan how it will handle its future financial needs:

- Whether it needs .5 mills or a lesser or greater amount for operating expenses,

- Whether to change the ballot language to remove “operating expenses only” restriction (a dangerous, perhaps fatal, move from my point of view)
- Whether changing circumstances since 2014 warrant other changes in ballot language, and
- What the BDL Board can do in current spending of the additional .5 mills to assure that voters will support renewal (with or without modification) of that millage ballot question come 2022.

The District Library is in fact providing library services in 3 historic buildings – Coldwater, Bronson, Quincy - where public libraries have operated under varying Michigan statutes for more than 100 years. The Bronson and Quincy communities have both raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for substantial improvements to their branch library buildings in the last 10 years, while the BDL Board uses BDL money on the Coldwater building, generally without contribution from the City of Coldwater or its residents.

The new library building in Union City - on Union City village land leased by Union Township which owns the building - was built with about \$500,000 raised by the Union Friends of the Library group and furnished as a library by BDL, which bought and owns all library materials, computers, fixtures and furnishings. That Union City - a town of only 1,500 people – built a new library in the middle of a local and nationwide financial crisis highlights the importance of library services to the people of Union City and establishes their unequivocal stake in continued BDL public library services in the main street structure they built. The BDL board and particularly Union representative Marilyn Johnson consulted for years with Union Township, Union City Village, the EPA, DEQ, and Union Friends throughout the planning, construction, and furnishing of the new Union building. John Rucker for BDL coordinated with all interested parties throughout construction to assure BDL-purchased library equipment and materials would fulfill BDL’s statutory and contractual duties to the branch and meet Union City community needs.

This long recitation omits the distinctive needs of the two smaller branches – Algansee and Sherwood – but my point is simple. The Branch District Library does not serve one community, but many communities with different and often conflicting needs. Any strategic plan for the Branch District Library must assess the community needs of all the communities involved and suggest alternatives for the BDL board to consider in balancing its statutory and contractual obligations to the City of Coldwater with its statutory and contractual obligations to the branches.

Under the Plan of Service – the only comprehensive document specifying how BDL implements its contracts - I think that means the BDL Board and MCLS Strategic Planners should consult at least with the Coldwater, Bronson, and Quincy Library Advisory Boards, Union and Algansee Township Boards, and the Village of Sherwood Council to determine community needs. You may also wish to consult with the Union Friends group that, for practical purposes, functioned as a Library Advisory Board throughout construction of the Union Township library and remains active today.

Carole Bolton, Rev. James Troust, and Ralph Stevens on the Coldwater Advisory Board are invaluable sources of Coldwater community information. Former BDL Board member Bonnie Frick is still active with the Quincy Advisory Board and can direct the planners to others there. Bronson Branch Manager Lynnell Eash and Bronson Board member Margaret Clemens can supply Bronson contacts. BDL Board member Marilyn Johnson can supply Union City contacts, and former BDL Board member Erica Ewers knows Algansee Township and is on the strategic planning committee. Jeanne Berg - a founding BDL Board member, BDL bookkeeper for more than 10 years, and currently organizer for the Coldwater Friends – is another good source of community information. There are many people with many views on community needs who will provide the hired experts with better and more specific information than I saw gathered at the two Coldwater Township “community conversations” I attended.

MCLS Planner David Votta told me at a Coldwater Township Hall session that there were many District Libraries in Michigan structured and organized like the Branch District Library. If that is so, I suggest that the BDL Board ask MCLS to deliver that information to the BDL Board to see if it affords any guidance from other districts on how best to deal with the Clarke Coldwater building. When I served on the BDL Board, the Library of Michigan Head Librarian and 2 different lawyers for the Library of Michigan told me there were no other district libraries in Michigan organized like BDL - which owns no real estate and contracts with 6 different municipalities with different terms for use of their buildings as branches of the district library. The second Library of Michigan lawyer with whom I spoke in 2007 or 2008 said he actually checked all the district library agreements on file with the State before making that statement.

I do not see how any strategic plan developed without input from the City of Coldwater Advisory Board and all community stakeholders clearly identified in the BDL Plan of Service can be of any use to BDL in planning its future. Also, I am very much surprised that BDL has not consulted with all the Library Advisory Boards and municipalities without advisory boards regarding amendments to the Plan of Service in order to specify exactly how the additional .5 mills for operating expenses will be apportioned among all branches. I applaud the expansion of hours, and I will also applaud all investments in keeping BDL's technology up to date. It seems, however, that BDL Board has been budgeting and spending over a half million new BDL dollars a year since 2015 without consulting the municipalities served? I hope that observation is incorrect.

I realize that the BDL Board discharged one director and hired another since the 2014 millage passed and that all Board members are essentially volunteers with other jobs and other responsibilities. I've been there. I know that there are weeks when BDL board duties and problems can consume 40 hours of time before you know it. I remember well the day a river ran through the northeast stairwell of the Coldwater Building. I called the City, and they immediately sent the Fire Department with a ladder truck. I also remember the day - during costly repairs for that water problem - that the Kalamazoo TV station decided to run a feature on the under layer of lead paint discovered during repairs, suggesting that anyone using the Coldwater Building might be exposed to lead. BDL went to the airwaves. That lead paint is still on 3/4th of the 1880s portion of the Coldwater Building and must be addressed by the City per federal law in future BDL consultations with the City. The City of Coldwater representatives on the BDL Board should be working on this issue. John Rucker and BDL Technology staff need a better work space than their current closet, and John Rucker is the BDL person who knows the Coldwater building better than any other person. I also remember when Branch County submitted to an impoverished BDL Board a bill for \$25,000 to \$30,000 for parking lot resurfacing. BDL paid, with great difficulty. The BDL Board must work with the Branch County Commissioners on parking problems in Coldwater.

There will always be day-to-day problems in providing a county-wide public service. Those problems, however, and all the ones to come do not abrogate the BDL Board's statutory duties under the District Library Establishment Act or under its own board policy - the Plan of Service - to apportion equitably among the branches all public funds it receives.

So far as I can tell from reviewing documents on the BDL website, the 2002 Plan of Service for Branches, last updated September 16, 2013, remains BDL Board policy.

I see no strategy in and no use for a Strategic Plan that excludes from its scope the multiple practical and legal issues involved in BDL's continued use of the Clarke Coldwater building and also excludes from its scope the perhaps outdated, but not amended BDL Plan of Service. Exactly what will BDL get for its \$24,000 expenditure of public funds? A nicer "mission" statement with "vision, values, and key success factors"? A recommendation from "key library

staff" to identify services "to continue, develop, drop, or improve"? Well, that's what the July 21, 2017 BDL/MCLS contract says. And exactly what standards will "key library staff" be using to identify the services to continue or drop? I would prefer a plan that proposes solutions or alternatives to the very real problems confronting the BDL Board in continuing to provide library services throughout Branch County, after consultation with the contracting, participating municipalities.

I object to part of the proposed 2018 BDL Budget for many of the same reasons stated above on strategic planning. The 2018 Capital Funds breakdown shows an estimated \$59,085.00 remaining in the Coldwater capital account at the end of 2017. If I understand the answer given to my question about that at the November board meeting, money remained in the Coldwater capital account, while the BDL board spent over \$120,000 in 2016 on "Building & Grounds Maintenance Services" and "Building & Grounds Maintenance Materials. So far in 2017, the BDL Board has spent only \$43,000 in those same categories, expects to spend another \$4,000 before year end, and is budgeting \$54,000 for those categories in 2018.

I was told these Building and Grounds categories include snow removal in Union City as well as Coldwater building expenses. I think a knowledgeable person reading a BDL budget should be able to see how much money the BDL Board spends in one year and expects to spend in the next year on the Clarke Coldwater building since - except for Union City snow removal and library cleaning costs - the Coldwater building is the only building in the BDL system for which BDL is liable by lease agreement with the City of Coldwater for building repairs and maintenance. Burying Coldwater's building expenses in a more general category, with a few other incidental branch expenses, while allowing funds to accumulate in Coldwater's capital account, strikes me as essentially deceptive budgeting. I suggest the 2018 budget be amended to add a category for only Coldwater Building expenses or to break the two categories now specified into 4 categories: Coldwater Building and Grounds Maintenance Services, Branch Building and Maintenance Services, Coldwater Building and Grounds Maintenance Materials and Branch Building and Maintenance Materials. The first suggestion is simpler.

While reading BDL materials to find the information on Strategic Planning, I noticed the following entries in the May 15, 2017 approved Board Minutes:

Motion by Clemens, supported by Gordon, to amend the Purchasing Policy as submitted to permit the Director to spend up to \$2,000 for purchases and contracts using Capital Funds without seeking Board approval. Motion Carried.

The Board wishes it known that this policy does not preclude the Director from spending larger amounts when they are pre-approved as part of the budgeting process.

Motion by Johnson, supported by Clemens, to table the question of who signs the library's checks until after legal counsel has been consulted. Motion failed.

Motion by Watson, supported by Smith, to change the authorized signer of BDL checks to be the Director, or in the absence of the Director any one of the Officers of the BDL Board of Trustees. Motion carried.

[Emphasis in original]

MCL 397.182(3), part of the District Library Establishment Act, for which I provided the link on page 1 of this letter, provides in part as follows:

(3) Money for the district library shall be paid to the board and deposited in a fund known as the district library fund. The board shall exclusively control the expenditure of money deposited in the district library fund. [Emphasis supplied]

Under the Michigan Legislature's drafting guidelines and the standards used by the courts in judicial review, that "shall exclusively control" language in the law is used to designate a legal duty that cannot be delegated. The BDL Board may wish to think again on these subjects and reconsider the actions it took on May 15, 2017 to delegate to the Director actions the BDL Board's authorizing legislation reserves to the exclusive control of the Board. That delegation of Board authority in May 2017 on spending capital funds also violates the BDL board policy provisions in its Plan of Service.

Since the "community conversations" in the Coldwater Township Hall where David Votta asked about "aspirations," through review of the BDL/MCLA contract and the MCLS bid which states it will use "the aspirations model of the Harwood Institute of Public Innovation" in gathering "public knowledge" for BDL, I have been thinking about my "aspirations" for BDL. During the 2014 BDL millage campaign, I wrote a letter to the Editor of the Coldwater Daily Reporter that actually states some "aspirations" for the Branch District Library. It is attached to this public comment for 2 reasons: to answer the MCLS "aspirations" question and to show the current BDL Board and its hired planners the statistics for library services provided by 4 full time and 31 part-time BDL library employees in 2013 – not so very long ago. I ask all strategic planners – BDL Board members and its hired consultants - to compare the 2013 statistics to 2017 statistics as one measure of how effectively the BDL Board is spending the money voters granted the Board in 2014 for district library "operating expenses."

I support the Branch District Library, and I support all efforts to develop a strategic plan for its future. I think the BDL Board should look at the bright side. You actually have enough money to provide public library services in Branch County – something prior BDL boards never had in the 26-year history of the Branch District Library. You've hired a firm with expertise in strategic planning. Consider my public comment a bit of "public knowledge" in the words of the BDL/MCLS contract, or part of their task to "identify community needs." Then, let your planners "gather data" from all stakeholders in all the BDL communities, "gather data" on performance of comparable libraries, and let the experts help you develop strategies to address the specific "challenges" facing the Branch District Library. There are a few.

I won the \$25 gas card drawing at the Coldwater Township morning "community conversation." I may have been the only person among 6 attendees to complete the drawing slip. Thank you for the \$25. And thank you in advance for consideration of my public comment on strategic planning and the 2018 budget.

Yours very truly,



Dorothy Cherry
Attorney at Law

Sent to:

