

Baker County Library District

Board of Directors

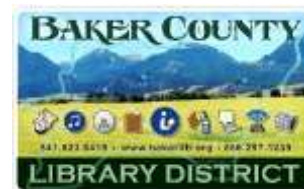
Regular Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, Nov 14, 2023, 12:00 – 1:00 pm

Meeting simulcast via [Zoom](#)

Phone: +1 253 215 8782 US Meeting ID: 860 7254 8647 Passcode: 119399

Kyra Rohner, President



- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| I. CALL TO ORDER | Rohner |
| II. Consent agenda (ACTION) | Rohner |
| a. Additions/deletions from the agenda | |
| b. Minutes of previous regular and Budget Committee meetings | |
| III. Conflicts or potential conflicts of interest | Rohner |
| IV. Open forum for general public, comments & communications | Rohner |
| In the interests of time and to allow as many members of the public an opportunity to speak, the board asks guests to limit remarks to five (5) minutes if speaking on behalf of an individual, or ten (10) minutes if speaking on behalf of a group or organization. | |
| V. OLD BUSINESS | |
| a. NDNW Needle Disposal Proposal (ACTION) | Stokes |
| VI. NEW BUSINESS | |
| a. Resolution adopting Audit Division Plan of Action (ACTION) | Hawes |
| b. Revised Wage Scale (TABLED) | Stokes |
| c. Special Reports | |
| i. Budget Revenue Projection - Shortfall | Stokes |
| ii. 2022-23 Statistics Report | Stokes |
| iii. Ingram iCurate inClusive Collection Diversity Audit | Stokes |
| VII. REPORTS | |
| a. Director | Stokes |
| b. Finance | Hawes |
| VIII. Agenda items for next regular meeting: Dec 12, 2023 | President-elect |
| IX. ADJOURNMENT | President-elect |

The times of all agenda items except open forum are approximate and are subject to change. Other matters may be discussed as deemed appropriate by the Board. If necessary, Executive Session may be held in accordance with the following. Topics marked with an asterisk* are scheduled for the current meeting's executive session.

ORS 192.660 (2) (d) Labor Negotiations

ORS 192.660 (2) (h) Legal Rights

ORS 192.660 (2) (e, j) Property

ORS 192.660 (2) (a, b, i) Personnel

Library Board Meeting – Annotated Agenda

Monday, Nov 14, 2023, 12:00 pm

Notes prepared by Library Director Perry Stokes

Annotated Agenda

I. CALL TO ORDER Rohner

II. Consent agenda (**ACTION**) Rohner

a. Additions/deletions from the agenda

b. Minutes of previous meeting(s)

Attachments:

- II.b.i. Board meeting minutes, Oct 10 2023

III. Conflicts or potential conflicts of interest Rohner

IV. Open forum for general public, comments & communications Rohner

V. OLD BUSINESS

a. NDNW Needle Disposal Proposal (**ACTION**) Stokes

At the October library board meeting, New Directions NW representative Bob Forsythe proposed placement of a sharps disposal container on library grounds for safe collection of medical needles. Used syringes have occasionally been found discarded on library and city park property, but none have been reported after significant pruning of foliage to improve visibility and safety. Other public libraries have reported attempted disposal by flushing down toilets, which can create plumbing blockage and damage.

Forsythe's presentation featured information and data from such a program implemented in Malheur County which showed success at reducing littering of syringes.

This is an opportunity for the board to discuss the proposal and approve a partnership with NDNW for offering sharps disposal receptacles.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Resolution adopting Audit Division Plan of Action (**ACTION**) Hawes

Attachments:

- VI.a.i Resolution 2023-24 R.05

This Resolution is for a Plan of Action to address the deficiency noted in the management letter presented to the board at the January 2023 meeting along with the 2021-2022 financial statements. Rob reminded us in January that this deficiency is not something we can do anything about. However, the State Audit Division wants us to submit a plan of action to address it. We were required to do the same thing two years ago for the fiscal year 2020-2021 financial statements. Apparently, this will be an annual requirement since we can't fix the deficiency.

b. Revised Wage Scale (**TABLED**) Stokes

Due to a projected revenue shortfall, I am temporarily withdrawing the comprehensive revision I had prepared to propose. It will entail an investment the district will not have funds for this year to reclass several employees now at the top of their step tier. The revision can be revisited at a later date as funding is available.

Library Board Meeting – Annotated Agenda

Monday, Nov 14, 2023, 12:00 pm

Notes prepared by Library Director Perry Stokes

Note that after the series of \$0.50 minimum wage increases in Oregon, minimum wage will now annually be automatically increased by the inflation rate. The current minimum wage is \$13.20 (5.6% above the prior year \$12.50 rate).

c. Special Reports

i. Budget Revenue Projection - Shortfall

Stokes

Attachments:

- FY23-24 Tax Revenue Projection
- Chart – BCLD revenue growth history

Per the FY23-24 report released in October from the Baker County Assessor, the growth rate of Total Valuation of county property dropped to less than 1%. The Assessor says the drop is primarily due to \$43 million decrease in “centrally assessed” lands value, which includes utility corporation (Idaho Power) and tech company (CenturyLink) properties. As a result, BCLD revenue will be down about \$43k. I have alerted staff that discretionary expense categories will be somewhat reduced and am working on a Supplemental Budget to propose at a future meeting.

ii. 2022-23 Statistics Report

Stokes

Attachments:

- FY22-23 Baker County Public Library Statistical Report Packet
- Chart packet - BCLD annual statistics historical trends

The annual statistics report was submitted to the State Library of Oregon in October. Compared to prior years, data shows moderate recovery of library usage from pandemic lows, led by the number of visits, programs, program attendance, computer use, and circulation of youth materials.

iii. Ingram iCurate inClusive Collection Diversity Audit

Stokes

Attachments:

- BCLD iCurate inClusive Presentation (pdf)

In mid-October, Ingram (primary book vendor for BCLD) completed its analysis of the number and percentage of “diverse” items in the district’s collections – adult, young adult, and children’s. This work was made possible by a grant from the Roundhouse Foundation. Overall, the share of “inclusive” items in BCLD collections is at or above the average for public libraries. The report also provides suggested purchasing lists for specific categories in which BCLD can make improvements. At the meeting, I will share highlights from the report.

REPORTS

a. Director

Stokes

ADMINISTRATION

- **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** – This program partnership is underway. A new intern will begin training this week, working up to 25 hrs/week .

Library Board Meeting – Annotated Agenda

Monday, Nov 14, 2023, 12:00 pm

Notes prepared by Library Director Perry Stokes

FACILITIES

- **Handrails installed at Baker branch walkways** – Ed worked with a contractor to craft and install handrails for the inclined sidewalk approaches at the northwest corner of the Baker branch. Several years ago there was a trip and fall accident reported in that area by a patron.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- **Clue Game Murder Mystery Activity** – Staff member Heather Spry invented an interactive mystery activity that engaged staff and the public for the month of October. Several staff participated by role-playing characters. Character mugshot photos and backstories with possible motives were revealed every few days. The program culminated at the end of the month with a clue/treasure hunt in the library. Participants who successfully solved the mystery were entered in a drawing for prizes. Feedback was very positive.
- **LearningExpress cancellation** - No longer provided by State Library of Oregon, this is a terrific resource I would like to continue offering independently, but am unable to commit to at the moment due to the revenue shortfall.
- **New resource - LOTE4Kids** (LOTE = Languages Other Than English) online storytime in world languages and sign languages.
- **Kajeet Hotspots - discontinued**. Units will be recalled from branches and placed in storage. Company appears to not need them returned.
- **Record Courier bound volumes** - being moved to Reference Room - for preservation. Available for public access by request.

PERSONNEL

- **IT Manager regular schedule resumed** – The district’s IT Manager has resumed his regular schedule of 32 hours/week.
- **De-escalation training series** – From Ryan Dowd courtesy of State Library, assigned to all public services staff with completion date of Nov 17.

b. Finance

Hawes

Reports to be delivered at the meeting.

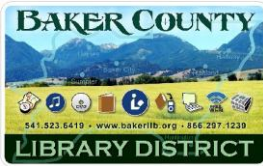
VII. Agenda items for next regular meeting: **Nov 14, 2023**

Rohner

- Collection Development Policy & Materials Reconsideration Process
- Financial Management Policy

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

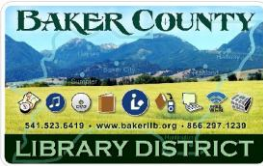
Rohner



Baker County Library District
Library Board
Regular Meeting Minutes

Oct 10, 2023

<p>Call to Order</p>	<p>The meeting was held in the Riverside Meeting Room at Baker County Public Library, 2400 Resort Street, Baker City, Oregon, the administrative building for the District.</p> <p>Directors attending the meeting in person include Beth Bigelow, and Ashley McClay. Also attending in person were Perry Stokes, Director and Christine Hawes, Business Manager. Guest from New Directions, Bob Forsythe, attended. The meeting was broadcast online via Zoom; no one attended on that platform.</p> <p>Meeting called to order at 12:11 pm by Bigelow.</p> <p>Stokes acknowledged that with only two board members present, there was no quorum so action items would be tabled. The meeting proceeded in order to hear the guest speaker and other reports.</p>
<p>Consent Agenda</p>	<p>Bigelow asked if there were any additions or deletions to the consent agenda or minutes from the previous meeting. No changes were given.</p> <p>The consent agenda was verbally approved but a vote could not be taken.</p>
<p>Conflicts of Interest</p>	<p>Bigelow asked if there were any conflicts or potential conflicts of interest to be declared. There were none stated.</p>
<p>Public Comment</p>	<p>Bigelow moved to public comments. No public present. Stokes shared an email from a patron on the topic of banned books week. The tone was somewhat vague and may have been sarcasm. He will reply on behalf of the board.</p>
<p>OLD BUSINESS: New Directions Northwest Needle Disposal Proposal</p>	<p>Bigelow invited guest Bob Forsythe from New Directions Northwest (NDNW) to present his proposal. Forsythe thanked the group for the opportunity and began a slide presentation. He is involved with a NDNW initiative of installing Needle Disposal containers at select sites in the community, and the library was identified as a potential location. The initiative is also known as a Safe Syringe Programs (SSP). He described reports of needles and sharps found unsafely disposed of in town and</p>



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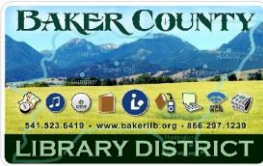
the risk this presents to the community. NDNW is able to use grants focused around harm reduction and mental health programs through Peer Support Specialists to assist and build a relationship with folks in town who need help with addition counseling. He said counties that have implemented these programs have cut the spread of HIV, bloodborne and infectious disease by half.

In 2013, Baker City was rated as a mid-range risk for vulnerability to overdose. Dispatch reports that needles and syringes are most frequently found in the public parks, gas stations, and along the freeway. He said that even folks who are dependent on diabetes medication don't know where to dispose of the needles. He gets calls about this often. McClay said the Sheriff's department gets a lot of calls asking about this same thing.

Forsythe continued, these items are usually disposed of in the trash which goes to the landfill which is the wrong place for needles. Benefits of the drop sites is that it supports public safety and gives all people a place to properly dispose of needles. In Malheur County, drop boxes placed in Ontario, Nyssa and Vale in 2021 collected about 15,000 needles and syringes; 2022 was about 25,000; syringe litter decreased by an estimated 87% in locations where these are available.

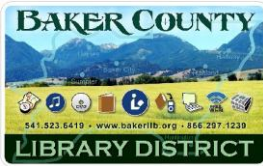
Forsythe reviewed a list of Frequently Asked Questions. He has also presented this information to the City Council. One suggestion was to place one at the Churchill School building to cover that side of town; the owners agreed and that installation is in place. There was apprehension to place these drop boxes at the two city parks. Another entity suggested the library.

Bigelow asked if there was a difference from the numbers of calls for needles found at the park versus around the library. Forsythe said he didn't know, as those statistics aren't tracked. McClay talked about the difficulty in tracking these types of calls. There was continued discussion on locations and safety issues. Forsythe said New Directions intends to advertise the locations once they get them installed. Bigelow asked if other libraries have these drop sites. Stokes said he didn't know for sure, but said he has heard stories from libraries that have to walk the property every morning to pick up needles and other illicit drug use items. Stokes said behind the Dollar Store is another area for unlawful



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	<p>activity; Forsythe agreed they are aware of that. Forsythe said they are attempting to get about 4 or 5 drop sites spread around town to cover bases. Stokes asked about consideration of City property across from the park at the continuation of the Leo Adler Pathway on the south side of Madison Street.</p> <p>Discussion on safety and overdose (Narcan) prevention. New Directions provides Narcan to organizations for free; it is safe and easy to use and doesn't have anything that will harm a person if administered in error. There are no drugs in it, it is a blocker. Further discussion on the topic of Narcan. Forsythe said that it is sad that we are here, but it is a reality that we need to address. These drop sites also offer a safety factor for children as well as offering a medical disposal site. Stokes asked about maintenance and emptying of the boxes. Forsythe said NDNW staff will check the boxes weekly. There is no cost to the host organization. They have a contract with a company to take care of the incineration of collections. They have money through the grant to pay for the drop sites. Stokes spoke with the Department of Health. Sharps can be taken to them for incineration.</p> <p>Bigelow thanked Forsythe for coming.</p> <p>Bigelow asked if we should skip the action items since we don't have a quorum. It was agreed.</p>
<p>NEW BUSINESS: Resolution adopting Audit Division Plan of Action</p>	<p>Item tabled.</p>
<p>Revised Wage Scale</p>	<p>Item tabled</p>
<p>REPORTS: Director</p>	<p>Administration</p> <p>BCLD Debt Free - We received confirmation of the final payment on the LID debt with the City of Baker City for the Resort Street Improvement Project. The district is now completely debt free.</p> <p>Collection Diversity Audit - a diversity analysis of the BCLD collection by</p>



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Ingram is underway. The results report is expected in late October.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) - Heather and I met with regional representatives of the program which was formerly operated by WorkSource Oregon. We have the opportunity to have the program fund a senior intern employee for up to 25 hours a week. This may be available at the branch libraries as well. This would be a big help in the branches and may allow for a second person to be on site rather than a person working by themselves. He is proceeding with the paperwork to resume this program partnership.

Facilities

Huntington door replacement - A contractor repaired the door frame and replaced the door. The side emergency exit door served as the entrance for a few days while Ed was waiting for the new lock parts to arrive.

Huntington pest issues follow-up - the wasp issues appear to be resolved. After an alert from the local school, training on bed bug inspection and emergency response kit materials were provided to Huntington branch staff. To date there have been no signs of infestation of the facilities or materials.

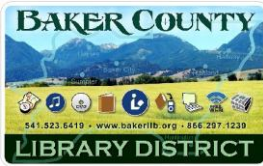
Baker window seal replacement - Contractor Marv's Glass Shop replaced all window wall seals. The old seals were aged, dried and allowed leakage. They may have been the wrong product to begin with, according to the contractor.

Surplus shelving was shared with Baker Literacy organization - Spare shelving that was held in storage, which was previously in the children's collection area, has been shared with the Baker Community Literacy Coalition. Ed is assisting with the installation. Bigelow asked where the shelving went. North Baker School is where the program is located.

Programs & Services

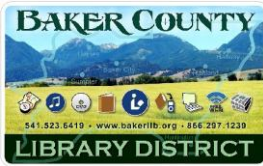
Voter Registration Day - Baker County Clerk, Stefanie Kirby was available for questions and voter registration assistance for about half the day on September 19. She was very pleased with the event.

IRS Community Assistance visit - about seven IRS personnel were on hand for 3 days from Sep 26-28 to assist local residents with tax issues.



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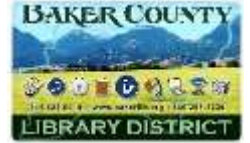
	<p>The group helped an average of 10 persons a day. They reported that attendance was higher than other events. They commended BCLD for our facilities and our help with advertising the event.</p> <p>Let Freedom Read Week - Nationally known as “Banned Books Week”, BCLD has promoted the initiative with social media, displays, and posters in the library. Books on display have been reference books with lists and descriptions of books suppressed in history. Public feedback has been positive.</p> <p>Personnel IT Manager temporary schedule revision - for personal reasons, our IT Manager is working half of his regular hours until further notice. Bigelow asked what the impact has been to the library. Stokes said we are able to work around issues and postpone some projects. At this time, it has been manageable.</p> <p>Safety and Security Wireless Charge Pads replaced with desktop outlets - due to continued theft of the equipment, all wireless pads were removed from the public lounge tables and workstations. They have been replaced with new clamp-on electrical outlet extensions with USB ports. Charging cables can be checked out at the front desk.</p>
<p>Finance Report</p>	<p>Hawes reported on the financial reports. Copies of the reports have been handed out and electronic copies are available.</p> <p>The General Fund received tax turnovers on October 3rd totaling \$1,696.13. We received a reimbursement from the E-Rate program of \$1,886.34 for the first quarter Internet support.</p> <p>As for General fund expenditures, Personnel Services is on target with the budget with the exception of the PERS line being low. The October PERS has been posted to the website and will be paid on the next cycle, October 27. In Materials & Services, a large check was written today to Marv’s Glass Shop of \$10,176.00 to seal the windows at the Baker library (\$7,500) and to replace the door at the Huntington library (\$2,676). Another large check was written on 9/27/23 to Rivistas of \$5,511.04 for the annual renewal of the Baker Library magazine selections. We also wrote a check on 10/01/2023 to Heavens Best of \$2,994.75 for carpet</p>



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	<p>cleaning for the Baker Library. Other current checks written today include Cengage Learning - Gale \$2,733.15 for 3 online subscriptions available on the website (Chilton, Legal Forms, Miss Humblebee); EBSCO \$2,477 for the annual Novelist subscription, ZooBean of \$1,029 for the BeanStack subscription used by the children’s librarian. The General Fund has a current cash balance of \$230,775 with a few weeks to go until the November tax turnovers begin coming in. This is truly awesome news!</p> <p>The Other Funds has received a total of \$1,164.72 in Amazon book sales for the previous 3 months July, August, September. It had one monthly expenditure to VISA of \$83.65 for shipping costs for books sold.</p> <p>The Capital Investment Fund had no activity.</p> <p>The Sage Fund has not received income to date. Sage usually sends out membership invoices in October. This fund wrote 5 checks to small couriers totaling \$2,252.60. It has no VISA expense this month.</p> <p>The Approved Bills Reports were passed around for the directors to review and initial along with the check packets split among those present. The Library District VISA was included with online payments that were passed around for the directors to review.</p>
<p>Next Meeting</p>	<p>The next regular board meeting will be November 14, 2023 at noon. It will include items that were tabled today.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Bigelow adjourned the meeting at 1:06 pm.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted,</p> <p>Perry Stokes Secretary to the Board PS/ch</p>

**BAKER COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT
LIBRARY BOARD**



Resolution No. 2023-24.05

Resolution Adopting Plan of Action for Audit Division

Nov 14, 2023

WHEREAS Baker County Library District is now meeting in regular session for the conduct of business; and

WHEREAS the District has received and reviewed the fiscal year 2021-2022 audited financial statements from Gaslin Accounting, PC; and

WHEREAS our auditor noted certain internal control matters that were reported to management of the Baker County Library District in a separate letter dated December 12, 2022. The letter stated that the District does not have adequate staff to verify the financial statements for which we rely on the accounting firm to perform. This is considered a significant deficiency in internal controls; and

WHEREAS the district has consulted with its audit agency representative and received guidance on crafting a Plan of Action to satisfy the requirement;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Baker County Library District that the corrective Plan of Action is reviewed and approved as follows:

- The Business Manager will take full responsibility for all financial statements related to the Financial Report to be presented to the accounting firm under contract to perform audit work, including the Government Wide statements and preparation of required note disclosures which will satisfy internal control procedures related to the deficiency noted.
- The District recognizes the importance of proper internal controls to prevent and detect fraud. However, economic factors limit the District's ability to provide additional staff in order to achieve adequate verification of financial statements. Therefore, the board acknowledges the importance of continuing its oversight of management activities to minimize the risks associated with this deficiency in internal control.

Adopted by the Board of Directors of Baker County Library District this 14th day of Nov 2023.

FOR THE BOARD:

Signature

BCLD Board President or Designee

ATTEST:

Signature: Perry Stokes

District Secretary

	2023-2024 PROJECTED	2023-2024 BUDGET FINAL	2023-2024 ASSESSOR RPT	\$ CHG VS BUDGET
TOTAL ASSESSED VALUE (TAV) (Shown in 1,000s)	2,031,005		1,968,189	
% change vs prior year	<u>4.0%</u>		0.8%	
General Fund @ Tax Rate .5334/1,000				
TAX BEFORE COMPRESSION	1,083,338		1,049,832	
GAIN/LOSS FROM EXTENSION			0.21	
LOSS DUE TO COMPRESSION	-5,190		-4,883	0
Compression %	-0.48%		-0.47%	
ADD'NL TAX FARM LAND/HISTORICAL	0		157	
TOTAL TAXES RAISED	1,078,148		1,045,106	
Collection %	93.0%		93.0%	
Collection LOSS	-75,470		-73,157	
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	1,002,677	1,002,677	971,948	\$ (30,729)
\$ change	47,621		7,777	
% change	5.0%		0.8%	
Local Option Tax @ tax rate .249/1,000				
TAX BEFORE COMPRESSION	505,720		490,079	
GAIN/LOSS FROM EXTENSION	0		0	
LOSS DUE TO COMPRESSION	-27,262		-24,616	
Compression %	-5.39%		-5.02%	
ADD'NL TAX FARM LAND/HISTORICAL			73	
TOTAL TAXES RAISED	478,458		465,536	
Collection LOSS	-33,492		-32,588	
LOCAL OPTION TAX TOTAL	444,966	444,966	432,948	\$ (12,017)
\$ change	32,020		5,097	
% change	7.8%		1.2%	
TOTAL	1,447,643	1,447,643	1,404,897	\$ (42,746)
\$ change	79,641		12,874	
% change	5.8%		0.9%	
OTHER TAXES TOTAL	0		230	
TOTAL LESS OTHER TAX	1,447,643	1,447,643	1,404,666	\$ (42,746)
PRIOR YEAR TAXES	60,000	60,000		
OTHER TAXES				
GRAND TOTAL	1,507,643	1,507,643	1,404,666	\$ (42,746)
	84,641			
	5.9%			

BAKER COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT

TAX REVENUE HISTORY

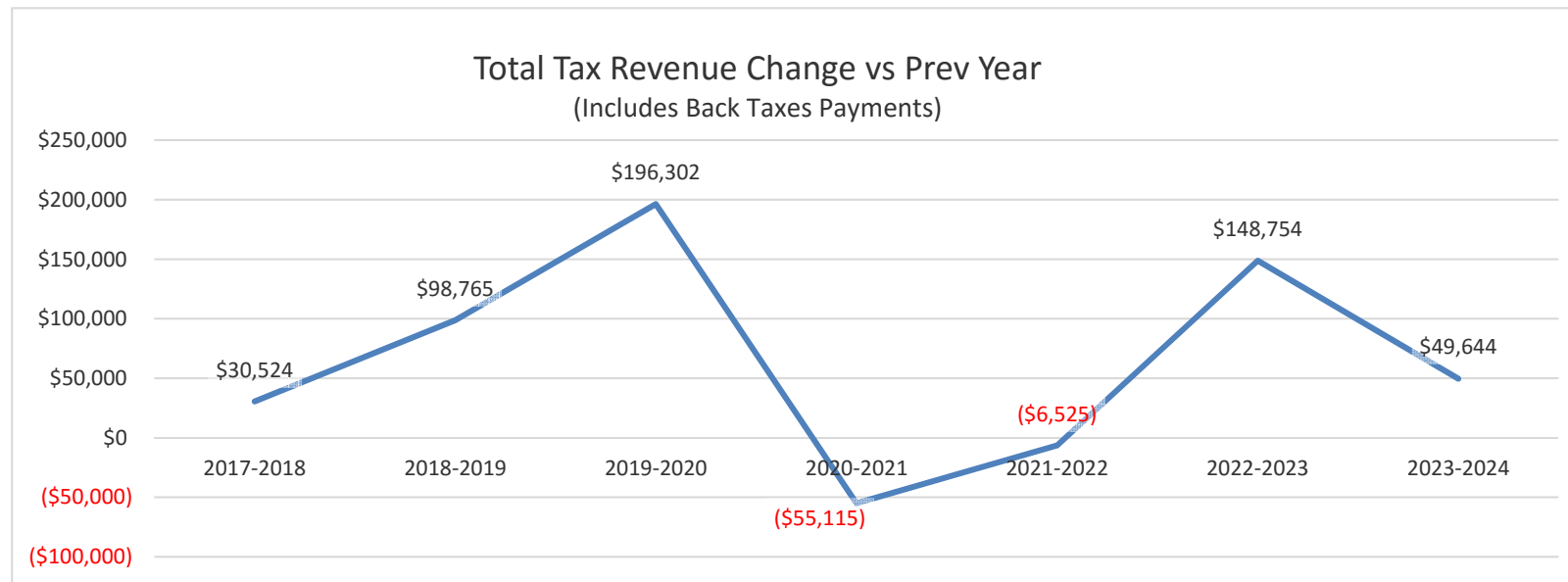
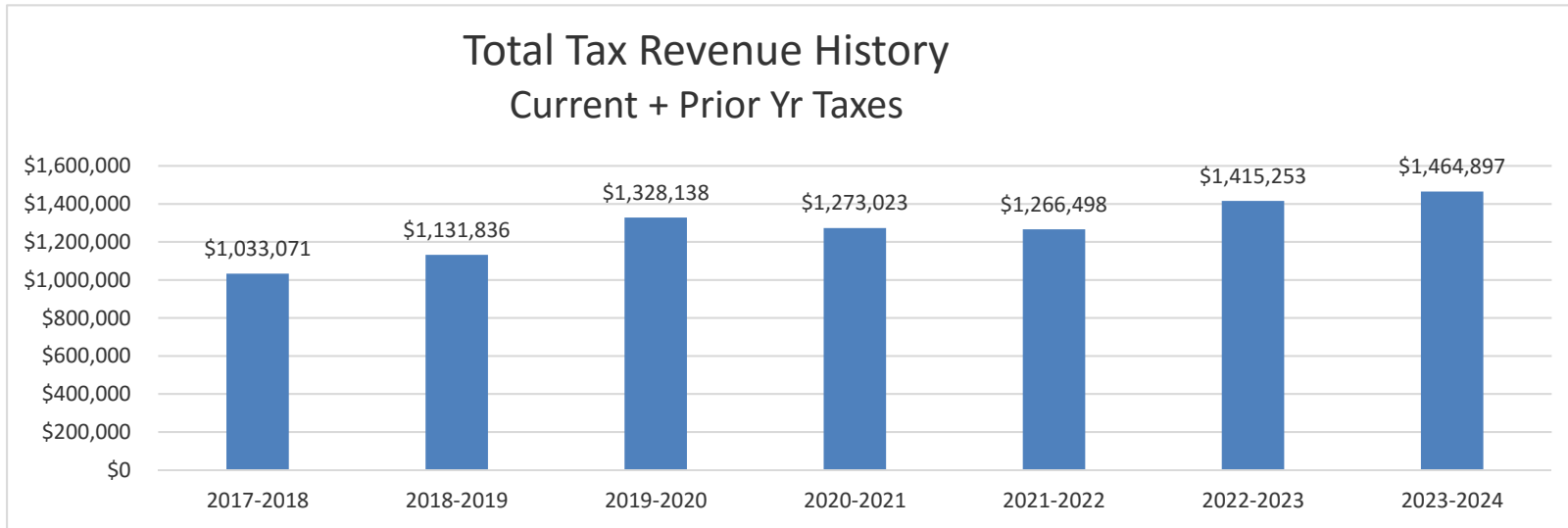
	Current yr tax	Local option tax	SUBTOTAL
2017-2018	\$734,035	\$270,030	\$1,004,065
2018-2019	\$796,909	\$304,025	\$1,100,934
2019-2020	\$853,170	\$337,382	\$1,190,552
2020-2021	\$864,213	\$363,214	\$1,227,427
2021-2022	\$847,841	\$370,765	\$1,218,606
2022-2023	\$942,425	\$418,227	\$1,360,652
2023-2024	\$971,948	\$432,948	\$1,404,897
TOTAL	\$1,437,682	\$1,645,416	\$5,741,584

Prior yr tax	TOTAL	
\$29,006	\$1,033,071	
\$30,902	\$1,131,836	9.6%
\$137,586	\$1,328,138	17.3%
\$45,596	\$1,273,023	-4.1%
\$47,892	\$1,266,498	-0.5%
\$54,601	\$1,415,253	11.7%
\$60,000	\$1,464,897	3.5%
	\$5,741,584	

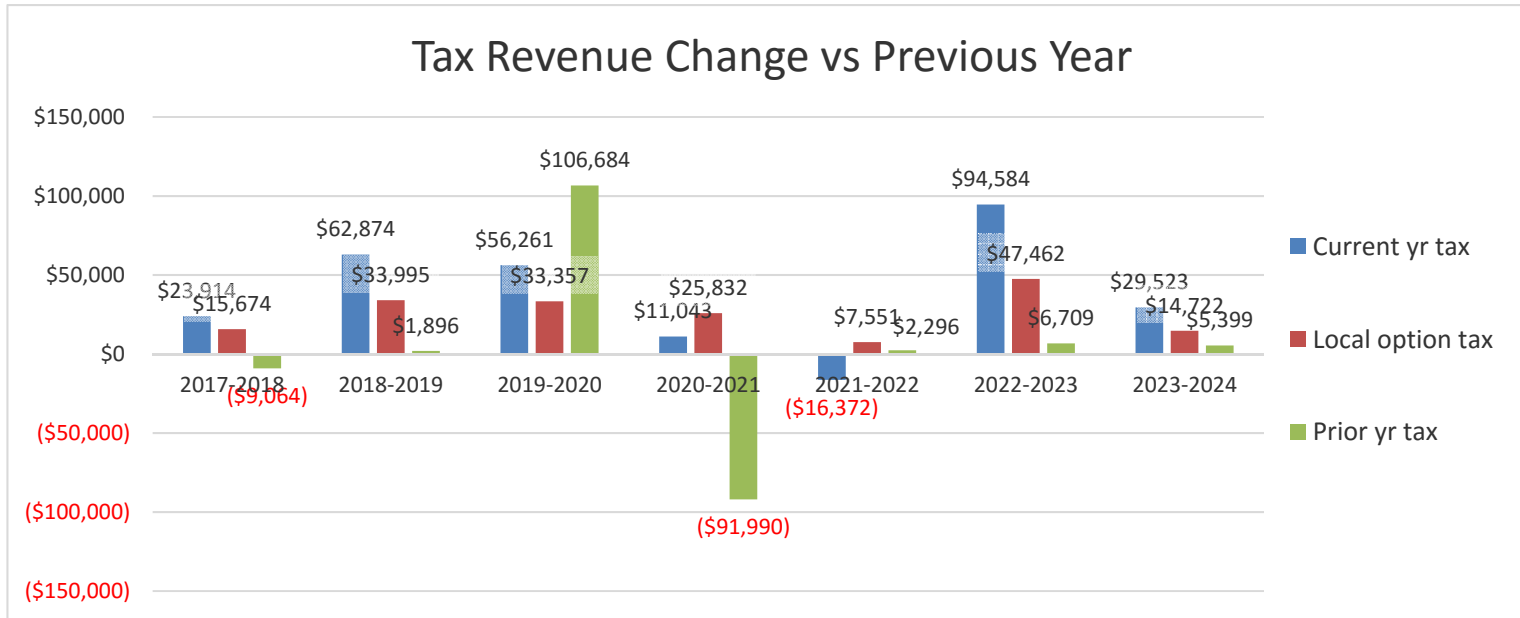
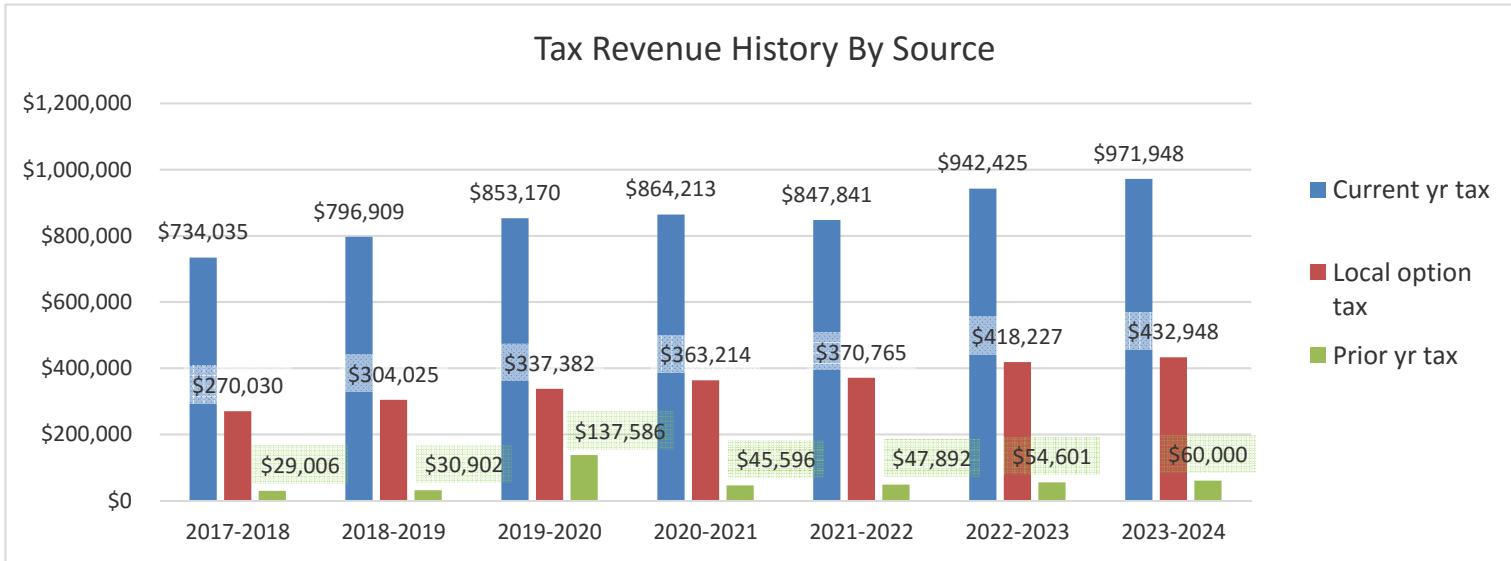
CHG VS PRIOR YEAR

	Current yr tax	Local option tax	SUBTOTAL
2017-2018	\$23,914	\$15,674	\$39,588
2018-2019	\$62,874	\$33,995	\$96,869
2019-2020	\$56,261	\$33,357	\$89,618
2020-2021	\$11,043	\$25,832	\$36,875
2021-2022	(\$16,372)	\$7,551	(\$8,821)
2022-2023	\$94,584	\$47,462	\$142,045
2023-2024	\$29,523	\$14,722	\$44,245

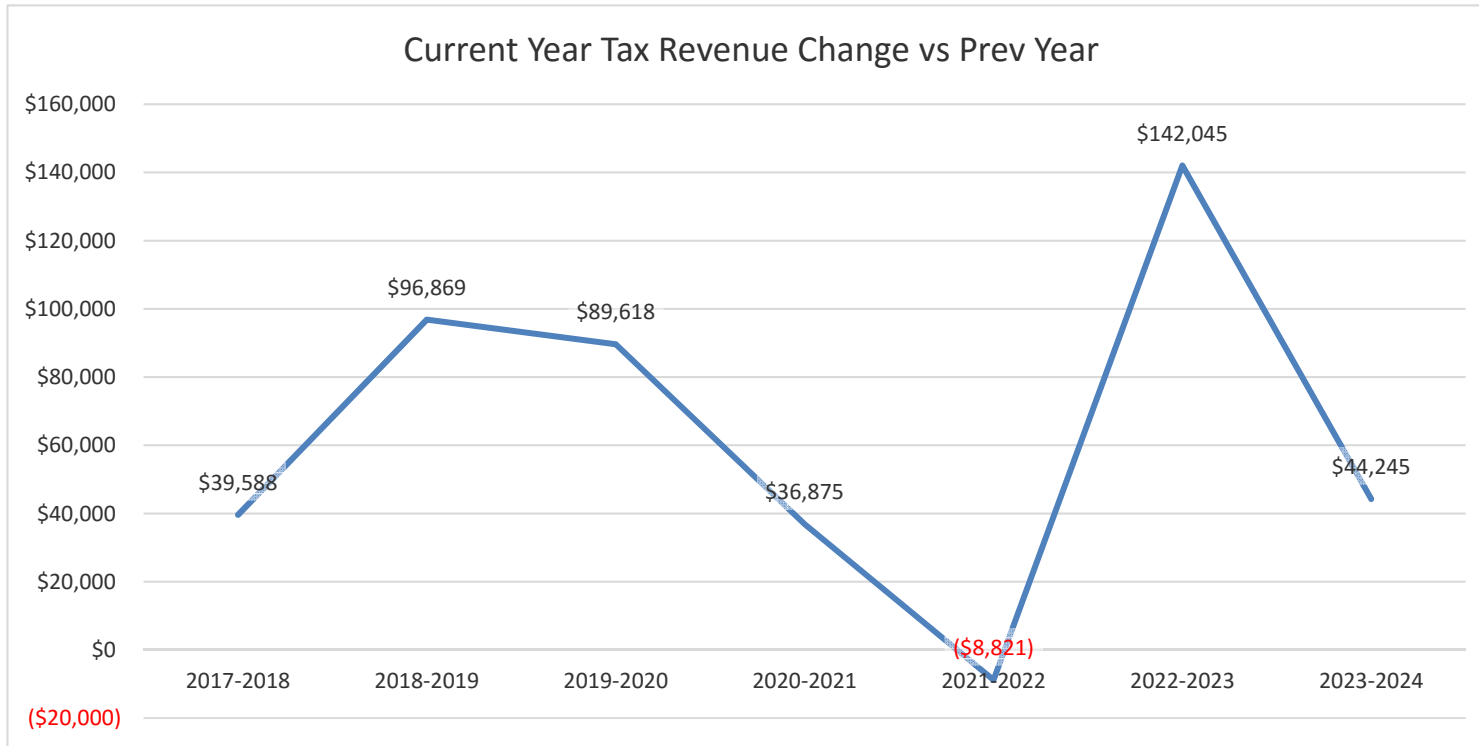
Prior yr tax	TOTAL
(\$9,064)	\$30,524
\$1,896	\$98,765
\$106,684	\$196,302
(\$91,990)	(\$55,115)
\$2,296	(\$6,525)
\$6,709	\$148,754
\$5,399	\$49,644



BAKER COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT



BAKER COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT



CONCORD MONITOR

(<https://www.concordmonitor.com>)

Opinion > Columns (/Opinion/Columns/)

Opinion: Out of balance – the overwhelming cost of book banning

By [PETE BROMBERG](#), [SY MONTGOMERY](#) and [KATHERINE TOWLER](#) (/byline?byline=By PETE BROMBERG, SY MONTGOMERY and KATHERINE TOWLER)

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Book challenges in libraries are nothing new, but until recently they generally involved a single title, in a single library, being filed by one person. Such challenges are best handled locally, where those raising questions have, in most cases, acted in good faith.

But today we are seeing the weaponization of school and public library policies by a small number of people, filing an unmanageable number of challenges that grind our public institutions to a halt.

The bombarding of our local libraries with book challenges comes at a high cost. It is a cost burden that is borne by all taxpayers, yet it is being driven by very few people who are not representative of the majority of Americans who oppose book banning and who don't believe there are problematic books on library shelves.

For example, the [American Family Survey](https://www.deseret.com/pages/american-family-survey-reports) (<https://www.deseret.com/pages/american-family-survey-reports>), (BYU / Deseret News) found that only 16% of Americans believe public school libraries include inappropriate books on their shelves and that a mere 12% agree that books should be removed from libraries if a parent objects.

Despite widespread opposition to book banning, a few zealous people, often bragging that they haven't read the book they are challenging and filing cut-and-paste complaints, are able to pervert current policies and processes and force the rest of us to pay the price.

How few people are filing complaints? The Washington Post studied over 1,000 book challenges and found that 11 people were behind the complaints. In one Utah school district, a married couple was behind 199 out of 205 challenges. The district reported that the challenges required 10,000 hours of staff time and cost more than \$100,000. In Texas, documents show (<https://abc13.com/spring-branch-isd-book-ban-school-library-books-student-resources-texas-schoolbook-restrictions/13037457/>) that more than 16 employees spent over 225 hours at a cost of \$30,000 on a single book challenge at the Spring Branch ISD.

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Of course, citizens should be able to offer feedback on public policy. But we must have a sensible balance. Americans already enjoy numerous opportunities to share their concerns on policy through multiple channels including calls, emails, public hearings, and board and committee meetings. But the appropriate scope of feedback from constituents is policy, not the nitty-gritty of operational decisions. Indeed, we would be hard-pressed to identify any agency that allows a single person to initiate, without vetting, a time-consuming and expensive review process.

In considering what a balanced approach looks like, it is helpful to remember that we already have meaningful vetting in place for the acquisition of library books. Books are selected by professionals (often state-licensed), who consider reviews and publisher recommendations and apply state and federal laws and local policies that were all passed in public meetings. In schools, policies are further aligned with state standards. There are significant opportunities for public input at every stage of policymaking.

Given the many existing opportunities for public input and the high cost of abuse of process that we are now seeing across the country, it is clear that we are in need of a more reasonable, common-sense approach that balances the rights of citizens to provide input with the responsibility of our government officials to effectively and efficiently manage limited public resources.

Local policies have traditionally served us well but are now being abused,

creating gridlock and wasteful spending as our public servants struggle to manage an avalanche of paperwork, committees, and ongoing appeals. The time spent dealing with book challenges takes librarians, teachers, and board members away from meaningful work — investing in student success, improving literacy, and delivering programs that support the educational, cultural, and economic vitality of our communities.

Common sense legal and policy guardrails are now needed to balance the public's right to express concerns with the right of our public institutions to operate efficiently on behalf of all citizens.

One policy proposal is simply to allow for public comment and feedback on public policy and law, but clarify that feedback about operations (book selection, programming, spaces, services, etc.) while welcomed, will not automatically lead to a formal, time-consuming review. If we step back and apply a small government lens to the problem, it is evident that we need to update library policies to keep individuals from initiating unpopular book challenges that lead to endless committees and appeals, bloat operations, suck up time and money, and negatively impact our students and our communities.

These guardrails are necessary to reduce waste and bureaucracy and prevent individuals from effectively hijacking the valuable time of our teachers, librarians, administrators, and board members, compelling them to spend time on challenge after challenge, and forcing them to serve a loud minority interest instead of delivering value and service to all taxpayers.

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