

To: Boulder City Council

Cc: Chris Meschuk, Interim City Manager

From: Boulder Library Commission

Subject: Continue discussion on Library District

November 5, 2020

Early this year, you had put discussion of the library district on your work plan. Thank you. However, that effort was cut short as just days ahead of the first public hearing ever on the subject, the pandemic shut down our City. We urge you to honor your earlier commitment to this important matter by putting the library district on your work plan for 2021. This year's financial situation highlights the urgency for the City to diversify its sources of revenue.

The Boulder Library has suffered disproportionately in the last many rounds of staffing and budget cuts. COVID has had an impact on the functioning of libraries, but with an adequate budget BPL could be doing so much more. Public libraries are the foundation of our community, an essential part of maintaining and nurturing an educated work force.

After every economic downturn, demand for library services grows as people work to rebuild their lives. Our library's programs and services will be in even greater demand as our community rebuilds from the devastating effects of the coronavirus pandemic. School closures and job searches will put greater demand on our services. This year highlighted the renewed and imminent need in our nation to discuss race, policing, and privilege. The Library is one of the few places that strives to provide a place where communities can come together to have an open and civil dialogue about society. When libraries have resources and are supported, they provide equitable access to all members of our community.

Municipal Libraries including ours have furloughed or laid off staff in the face of budget cuts. Library Districts, by contrast, have retained staff and are re-deploying them to help with COVID-19 response along with the economic and social fallout from the pandemic. Library districts are well positioned to help rebuild local economies and to support individuals and families as they rebuild their lives.

While our city consistently ranks in the top tiers of creativity, entrepreneurship, educational attainment, and technological savvy, while *US News and World Report* ranked us as best place to live, it is appalling that we continue to underfund and underappreciate our central institution of social infrastructure.

Over the next month, we welcome the opportunity to continue our individual conversations with Council and appropriate City staff.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Moving forward.

Boulder Library Commission

Joel Koenig     Jane Sykes-Wilson     Steven Frost     Scott Steinbrecher     Juana Gómez