



Memorandum

Date: May 27th, 2025

To: Itasca County Commissioners

From: Tasha Connelly, Mayor of Grand Rapids

Re: Library Funding and Joint Powers Agreement

The City of Grand Rapids and Itasca County governments have a long-standing collaborative and cooperative relationship. This partnership and strategic thinking have produced joint power agreements at mutual interest points: the animal control center prior to 2010 and the airport in 1967, which are arrangements that pool our resources, expertise, and collective power to achieve shared and mutually beneficial goals that would be difficult or impossible to achieve each on our own. Most recently, we worked closely with Itasca County with the government center expansion helping to ensure that the work the County was mandated to do was not impinged. We have a long-standing history of goal orientation, and it is under these same problem-solving efforts that we are before you today. The City of Grand Rapids, as you are now aware, has reached a critical funding juncture where it can no longer be the majority (84%) funder of our area library. While we are appreciative of the County's 16% (\$145,00) contribution to the revenue stream for 2025, the City is responsible for \$830,187 (85%) and it is not equitable in geographical usership. Like the animal control center and the airport, the City is looking to partner equally with the County to provide library services to our residents. With sixty-five percent (65%) of library card holders being Itasca County residents who live outside of the City of Grand Rapids and thirty-five (35%) of the card holders City residents, we are hoping to close the gap and move to a 50/50 agreement. We know that seventy five percent (75%) of all Itasca County library transactions occur at the library in Grand Rapids, which includes communities that already have libraries housed within them.

It is true that without an equitable solution in funding, the City will not be able to maintain library services without substantial and far reaching cuts that will impact all our constituents. While in theory this would appear to not be a County problem, the City is the county seat, the heart of Itasca County. Our library provides access to knowledge, literacy, education, community engagement, resources, electoral processes, and has economic and social impacts that are pivotal to our collective and shared history and to our communities. The City is looking to exhaust all efforts cooperatively before making drastic decisions. I am optimistic and look forward to working with you to create an equitable funding agreement that allows both government entities to provide needed library services to all our residents.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tasha Connelly', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tasha Connelly, Mayor of Grand Rapids