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April 10, 2025

Re: SCMCA Meeting April 10, 2025
Public Comment for City Selection Committee/Board of Directors Meetings
Public Comment for General Membership Meeting
Review of the Joint Powers Agreement for the Regional Library

Dear Honorable Mayors, Council Members, and Staff:

I request that your group initiate your own review of the 2014 Joint Powers Agreement for the Regional Library (JPA).

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Sarah Gurney, a veteran of 18.5 years on the Sebastopol City Council, 4 time Vice Mayor, 5 time Mayor, past Vice Chair and Chair of the SCMCA.

I mention my credentials as an elected to let you know that I understand and appreciate, from my personal experience, the breadth of your base of knowledge, the weight of your responsibilities, and the burden of time and dedication placed upon you by elected office. **And I am asking you to do more work.**

I served as Sebastopol's representative on the regional committee convened in 2012 by then Supervisor Mike McGuire to review the 1975 JPA. Ours was to be a 6-month task that took 2 years.

I'm placing that same task in front of you tonight, because **you were written into the updated JPA by myself and your predecessors in office by the requirement for its review at the 10-year mark.** Speaking as an individual member of Sup. McGuire's Ad Hoc, I want to make sure we made appropriate changes back then. From a regional perspective, how are the policies in the amended JPA working now? Has our Sonoma County Library System (SCL) achieved the jurisdiction-free, equitable existence that we envisioned?

You all, as the later representatives of the signors of the JPA, have the duty to

your public to make sure the JPA's terms have been successfully implemented. You are the governors of the system. I ask you to step up.

I appreciate the Library's Administration promoting a survey to help assess the current situation. It's important for you to know, **in a public process:** who received the survey; who responded; the summary data of the responses; the integral specific data; the demographics of the transmission; the response; and so on.

Your responsibility to conduct this review is critical because the Library's patrons are your voters. You need to investigate, **on your constituents' behalf,** if the equitable system been achieved. You can review and compare the branches' respective: demographics of service area; circulation; square footage; number of programs; and so on.

Our Library system operates on tax payer money: property tax and sales tax. In these times, tax payers want to know that their funds are being used appropriately. The recent re-up of the sales tax measure (Nov. 2024) narrowly passed. The Citizens' Oversight Committee for Meas. Y was slammed by the 2024 Grand Jury and, as a Member of the Oversight Committee, I have asked twice, and been refused both times, for the Committee to agendize its discussion of those concerns. Taxpayer/voter support is not guaranteed.

Meanwhile, the Library System, at its 2024 fiscal year end on June 30th, stated a \$39 million net-positive position, per the Pisenti Brinker auditor's report. **There is money available.**

The current system, emphasizing the branch-by-branch approach, poses questions for your consideration. Are there disparities between leases under which each City provides a building? **Are there inequities** between branches? **Are there inadequate facilities** for your constituents' needs?

Your review is also critical given the dramatic cultural shifts, technological developments, demographic changes, and funding challenges of the 11 years that have gone by since the last review.

In closing – like the US Postal Service and our public school system, our public libraries are a **foundational seat of democracy.** Our library system deserves your prompt attention, enhancement, and protection.

Respectfully,

Sarah Glade Gurney