

POLITICS > COLORADO POLITICS

“We’re way past the crisis point”: Property tax law putting lives in danger, Colorado fire chiefs say

“Well-intentioned Gallagher amendment is actually putting a chokehold on counties across Colorado,” representative says

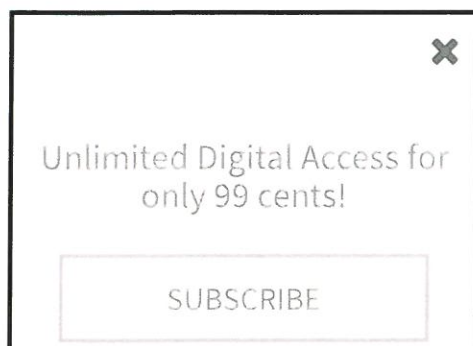
By **ANNA STAVER** | astaver@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
October 30, 2018 at 6:00 am

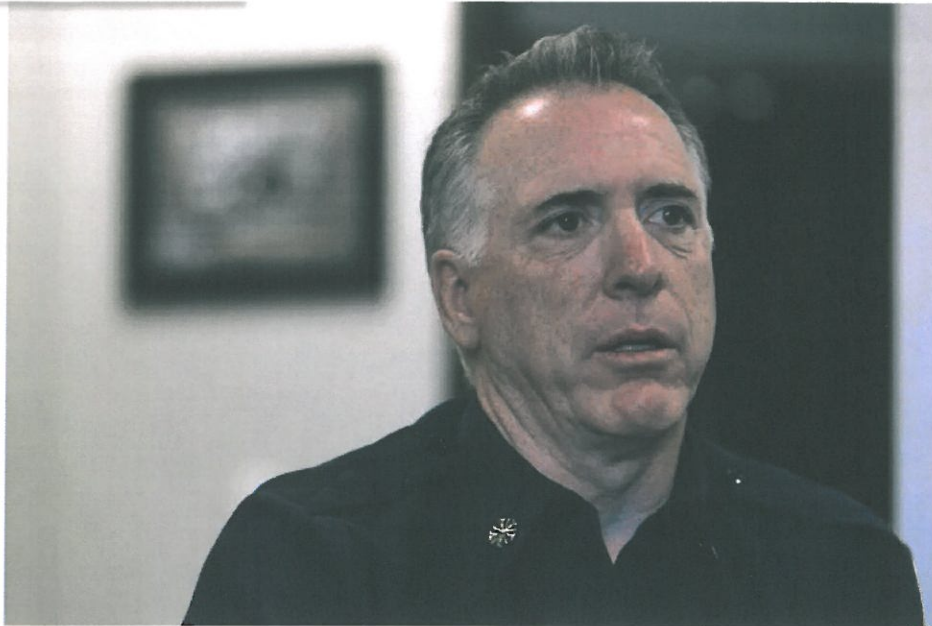
More than 50 fire districts across Colorado are requesting the same thing from their voters this fall: Give us a legal workaround to a property tax law that’s set to slash our budgets again.

Denver Post Newsfeed

Lives are at stake, they say.

“We’re way past the crisis point,” West Metro Fire Chief Don Lombardi said. “The fire districts have called 911, and no one is answering.”





Joe Amon, The Denver Post

Fire Chief Don Lombardi at the West Metro Fire Protection District Station 7 on Oct. 26, 2018 in Wheat Ridge.

Lombardi's district, which covers Lakewood, Edgewater and Wheat Ridge, could lose about \$5 million if his ballot measure fails and the property tax rate paid by homeowners drops as predicted in 2020. Wellington Fire Protection District thinks its loss would equal the cost of a fire station. The North-West Fire Protection District in Fairplay predicted a \$160,000 cut if voters reject their request.

The budget holes vary, but the fire chiefs all have the same fear: The Gallagher amendment is going to wind up getting someone killed.

The basic idea behind Gallagher, which Colorado voters passed in 1982, was that home owners shouldn't pay more in property taxes than businesses.

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It created a rule that no matter what happens to home values, homeowners can't pay more than 45 percent of the state's total property tax bill. It locked business owners into paying property taxes on 29 percent of their building's value, but the rate for homeowners was supposed to float up and down to keep that 45-55 split.

But then voters passed the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, which meant the rate couldn't rise without voter approval and home prices exploded on the Front Range.

Those two things together led to a situation where the residential assessment rate in most parts of Colorado is dropping faster than home values are rising — leaving fire, library and other special districts with decreasing revenues even as the populations they serve increase.

Firefighters from 20 Colorado counties want to put a stop that cycle this year. They're asking voters in different ways to essentially let their mill levies float up and down so they can collect the same amount of money every year.

"I tell people it's revenue stabilization," North-West Fire Protection District Chief Kristy Olme said.



Joe Amon, The Denver Post

Kristy Olme, Fire Chief for North-West Fire Protection District at Station 7 Oct. 26, 2018 in Wheat Ridge.

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When the Weston Pass Fire started burning south of Fairplay on June 28, Olme's district sent everyone they could to that first call: a single fire engine and three firefighters.

"If we get something big in the summer, we've got those three people on duty, and we might get two or three people from neighboring districts," Olme said.

The district could use a crew of wildland firefighters, but Olme said it's impossible to think about adding staff and services when Gallagher is set to slash her 2020 budget by \$160,000.

"That's three paid firefighters on my department," Olme said. "My current full-time staff is nine plus myself; three per shift."

The North-West Fire Protection District convinced voters to increase its budget in 2017, but the next scheduled drop in residential assessment rates is going to wipe half of that out. Olme is worried she'll have to cut the free wood chipping and property clearing services her firefighters provide to help people protect their homes, and she doesn't want to think about what would get cut if the rate dropped again in 2022.

"I think what it tells me, and what I think people need to understand is this well-intentioned Gallagher amendment is actually putting a chokehold on counties across Colorado," said state Rep. Daneya Esgar, D-Pueblo.

Esgar and five other state lawmakers spent the last half of 2018 trying to come up with a solution to the Gallagher problem. Their committee agreed on three different fixes — some temporary and some permanent — but another interim committee killed all but one proposal.

"We thought we were great. We had unanimous consent, Republicans and Democrats, only to meet a partisan brick wall at the next step to move these forward," Esgar said. "If that's not an indicator of how much work we have to do to educate people, I don't know what is."

Esgar, Rep. Bob Rankin, R-Carbondale, and Sen. Lois Court, D-Denver, all said they plan to put forward the Alternatives to Gallagher Interim Committee bills anyway. One of those bills backfill fire districts that lose a certain amount of money in 2020. It's a one-time payment designed to buy lawmakers more time to work on repealing and/or replacing the entire constitutional amendment.

"These elections don't always pass, and they're expensive to run. People perceive them as a tax increase," Rankin said. "We don't want critical local firefighting capability to go away in the meantime."

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GALLAGHER AMENDMENT, **JOHN HICKENLOOPER**,
WEST METRO FIRE DISTRICT

Anna Staver

Anna Staver covers politics and breaking news for The Denver Post. She's spent her career writing in statehouses, courthouses and even a few fair board meetings. She and her husband fell in love with the West a decade ago and have called Oregon, Idaho and Nevada home.

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NEWS > COLORADO NEWS

Colorado millennials are booking it to their public libraries, mirroring a national trend

Millennials are the most likely age group in the nation to use public libraries, according to Pew Research data

By **ELIZABETH HERNANDEZ** | ehernandez@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
November 6, 2018 at 6:00 am

When 23-year-old Curt Baker had two buddies visiting from Arkansas over to his new Denver digs last week, he knew there was one spot everyone had to check out: the Denver Central Library.

"I've only lived here about a month, but I love the connections and public resources available here at the library," Baker said Friday afternoon at the public library's downtown location. "We all really like libraries, so I thought I'd show my friends while we explore the city."

Baker has joined social events at the Denver Central Library that encourage conversations over coffee and donuts, and is using the downtown location's printers and free Wi-Fi as he applies for jobs.

Research confirms Baker and his twentysomething pals aren't outliers in their reverence for public libraries. A message popularized by every '90s kid's favorite cartoon aardvark has seeped into the collective millennial brain, according to a Pew Research study: "Having fun isn't hard when you've got a library card."

Nationally, millennials are the generation most likely to use public libraries, the Pew study found. The 2016 data show 53 percent of those aged 18 to 35 said they had used a public library or bookmobile in the previous 12 months, compared to 45 percent of Gen Xers, 43 percent of baby boomers and 36 percent of those in the Silent Generation. The survey question was worded to focus on public libraries, not libraries on college campuses.

Colorado is stocked with slightly more than 100 library districts that reported to the Library Research Service's annual survey. Those Colorado libraries saw more than 31 million visits in 2017, offering more than 10,700 programs for young adults and nearly 70,000 for adults.

Jon Walker, executive director of the Pueblo City-County Library District, has seen the millennial trend for himself.

While his libraries don't break out numbers to specifically track attendance by age, Walker said the Pueblo library district saw an 86-percent attendance increase in adult programming from 2017 to 2018, meaning people were scrambling to make it to sewing circles, coding classes and tie-dying events. The program attendance from January through September 2018 was 357,681, while the same time period in 2017 saw 191,822 participants.

"A lot of this interest is in our young adult population," Walker said. "That age group is definitely in our wheelhouse."

Walker thinks young adults' library love affair stems from two places. First, he's noticed fledgling parents finding solace behind library walls as they search for somewhere safe, affordable and educational to turn their kids loose.

Kiran Nole, 21, was hanging out with the almost 4-year-old twin boys she nannies in the Denver Central Library's children's section on Friday.

"They love coming here and interacting with other kids and reading books with me," Nole said. "And it's nice for me to come and talk to other nannies and parents. Also, I just found out I could check out movies here and that some of them are even new, so that's really cool, too."

Secondly, Walker has seen massive growth in the Pueblo library's program attendance for hands-on classes and events.

“This month alone, we’ve got dance programs, music programs and we had a film festival where people made their own films and then we showed them,” Walker said. “We aren’t abandoning investing in the book, but we are seeing some shift away from the traditional resources to these other kinds of activities just based on utilization.”

A Boulder Public Library program named “adultology” is shamelessly catering to folks wanting to feel more grown-up in the kitchen. Aspen Walker, community engagement and enrichment manager at the Boulder library, said the class teaches farm-to-table cooking and culinary experiences like learning how to brew kombucha.

Walker also pointed to the Boulder library’s “makerspace” — which features a full service woodshop and crafting supplies for sewing, mending, weaving and more — as being popular with young adults. A workshop coming up particularly excited Walker: library patrons can learn how to sew pockets on their clothes.

Chris Henning, spokesman for Denver Public Library, also has seen young adults gravitating toward some of the library’s less traditional offerings. “We’re seeing a larger number of millennials than we’ve had in a long time,” Henning said.

At the Denver Public Library, patrons can check out experiences: passes to Colorado state parks complete with a family activity backpack, admission to nearby museums and a lottery for tickets to plays and concerts with the Colorado Symphony and the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, GoPro cameras, indoor air quality monitors and more.

In August, the Denver library’s Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales Branch offered literary-themed tattoos, moving the needle toward a youthful, trendy service to remind everyone of the magic of ink on paper and skin. A free Netflix-esque streaming service called Kanopy is also leaving its Denver Public Library mark, offering thousands of videos in its digital catalog.

“Based on that sharing economy idea where they’re trying to save money and be resourceful, that’s where we’ve seen a lot of growth because of millennials,” Henning said.

Hana Zittel is an adult services librarian at the Denver Central Library branch, where she manages book checkout and designs programming for adults and young adults.

Zittel isn’t convinced that young folks are pumped on the library just for the museum passes and movies — she watches millennials’ love of the written word unfold around her every day.

"From what I see, millennials are big readers and see the merit of the library being free and open to everyone and a place where all ideas are welcome," Zittel said. "One of the most valuable things the library still represents is nurturing that love of learning and reading."

Zittel and her coworkers also help coordinate programs like the Winter of Reading, inspired from the classic summer reading programs normally aimed at children with a seasonal and generational twist.

"This may not be the same library you remember when you were a kid," Zittel said. "I was just sharing with a group of friends that they can get free tickets to museums through the library, and they were yelling at me to write the website link down for them. The connection over art and music and reading is something that really resonates with that age group, and the library has kind of become an epicenter for those interactions."

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PEW RESEARCH CENTER, **READING**

Elizabeth Hernandez

Elizabeth Hernandez is a Denver Post reporter covering breaking news and a little bit of everything else, too. A former education reporter at both The Post and Boulder Daily Camera, Elizabeth is passionate about using her platform to tell the stories of underrepresented Coloradans in an accurate, compassionate, engaging manner. She started at The Denver Post as an intern in 2014 and just kept coming to work until they hired her.

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To Restore Civil Society, Start With the Library

This crucial institution is being neglected just when we need it the most.

By Eric Klinenberg

Mr. Klinenberg is a sociologist.

Sept. 8, 2018

Is the public library obsolete?

A lot of powerful forces in society seem to think so. In recent years, declines in the circulation of bound books in some parts of the country have led prominent critics to argue that libraries are no longer serving their historical function. Countless elected officials insist that in the 21st century — when so many books are digitized, so much public culture exists online and so often people interact virtually — libraries no longer need the support they once commanded.

Libraries are already starved for resources. In some cities, even affluent ones like Atlanta, entire branches are being shut down. In San Jose, Calif., just down the road from Facebook, Google and Apple, the public library budget is so tight that users with overdue fees above \$20 aren't allowed to borrow books or use computers.

But the problem that libraries face today isn't irrelevance. Indeed, in New York and many other cities, library circulation, program attendance and average hours spent visiting are up. The real problem that libraries face is that so many people are using them, and for such a wide variety of purposes, that library systems and their employees are overwhelmed. According to a 2016 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, about half of all Americans ages 16 and over used a public library in the past year, and two-thirds say that closing their local branch would have a "major impact on their community."

Libraries are being disparaged and neglected at precisely the moment when they are most valued and necessary. Why the disconnect? In part it's because the founding principle of the public library — that all people deserve free, open access to our shared culture and heritage — is out of sync with the market logic that dominates our world. But it's also because so few influential people understand the expansive role that libraries play in modern communities.

Libraries are an example of what I call "social infrastructure": the physical spaces and organizations that shape the way people interact. Libraries don't just provide free access to books and other cultural materials, they also offer things like companionship for older adults, de facto

child care for busy parents, language instruction for immigrants and welcoming public spaces for the poor, the homeless and young people.

I recently spent a year doing ethnographic research in libraries in New York City. Again and again, I was reminded how essential libraries are, not only for a neighborhood's vitality but also for helping to address all manner of personal problems.

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For older people, especially widows, widowers and those who live alone, libraries are places for culture and company, through book clubs, movie nights, sewing circles and classes in art, current events and computing. For many, the library is the main place they interact with people from other generations.

For children and teenagers, libraries help instill an ethic of responsibility, to themselves and to their neighbors, by teaching them what it means to borrow and take care of something public, and to return it so others can have it too. For new parents, grandparents and caretakers who feel overwhelmed when watching an infant or a toddler by themselves, libraries are a godsend.

In many neighborhoods, particularly those where young people aren't hyper-scheduled in formal after-school programs, libraries are highly popular among adolescents and teenagers who want to spend time with other people their age. One reason is that they're open, accessible and free. Another is that the library staff members welcome them; in many branches, they even assign areas for teenagers to be with one another.

To appreciate why this matters, compare the social space of the library with the social space of commercial establishments like Starbucks or McDonald's. These are valuable parts of the social infrastructure, but not everyone can afford to frequent them, and not all paying customers are welcome to stay for long.

Older and poor people will often avoid Starbucks altogether, because the fare is too expensive and they feel that they don't belong. The elderly library patrons I got to know in New York told me that they feel even less welcome in the trendy new coffee shops, bars and restaurants that are so common in the city's gentrifying neighborhoods. Poor and homeless library patrons don't even consider entering these places. They know from experience that simply standing outside a high-end eatery can prompt managers to call the police. But you rarely see a police officer in a library.

This is not to say that libraries are always peaceful and serene. During the time I spent doing research, I witnessed a handful of heated disputes, physical altercations and other uncomfortable situations, sometimes involving people who appeared to be mentally ill or under the influence of drugs. But such problems are inevitable in a public institution that's dedicated to open access,

especially when drug clinics, homeless shelters and food banks routinely turn away — and often refer to the library! — those who most need help. What's remarkable is how rarely these disruptions happen, how civilly they are managed and how quickly a library regains its rhythm afterward.

The openness and diversity that flourish in neighborhood libraries were once a hallmark of urban culture. But that has changed. Though American cities are growing more ethnically, racially and culturally diverse, they too often remain divided and unequal, with some neighborhoods cutting themselves off from difference — sometimes intentionally, sometimes just by dint of rising costs — particularly when it comes to race and social class.

Libraries are the kinds of places where people with different backgrounds, passions and interests can take part in a living democratic culture. They are the kinds of places where the public, private and philanthropic sectors can work together to reach for something higher than the bottom line.

This summer, Forbes magazine published an article arguing that libraries no longer served a purpose and did not deserve public support. The author, an economist, suggested that Amazon replace libraries with its own retail outlets, and claimed that most Americans would prefer a free-market option. The public response — from librarians especially, but also public officials and ordinary citizens — was so overwhelmingly negative that Forbes deleted the article from its website.

We should take heed. Today, as cities and suburbs continue to reinvent themselves, and as cynics claim that government has nothing good to contribute to that process, it's important that institutions like libraries get the recognition they deserve. It's worth noting that “liber,” the Latin root of the word “library,” means both “book” and “free.” Libraries stand for and exemplify something that needs defending: the public institutions that — even in an age of atomization, polarization and inequality — serve as the bedrock of civil society.

If we have any chance of rebuilding a better society, social infrastructure like the library is precisely what we need.

Eric Klinenberg (@Ericklinenberg), a professor of sociology and the director of the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University, is the author of the forthcoming book “Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life,” from which this essay is adapted.

Correction: September 11, 2018

An earlier version of this essay included outdated information about a policy at the public libraries in San Jose, Calif. Patrons are prohibited from borrowing books and using computers once their overdue fees surpass \$20, not \$10.

A version of this article appears in print on Sept. 8, 2018, on Page SR6 of the New York edition with the headline: Why Libraries Still Matter

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Library

PUEBLO CITY-COUNTY

news & events

November 2018

Locations Key:
 AV Avondale Satellite
 BK Barkman

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BS Beulah Satellite

GI Giodone

LU Lucero

LB Lamb

LY Library @ the Y

GV Greenhorn Valley

PW Pueblo West

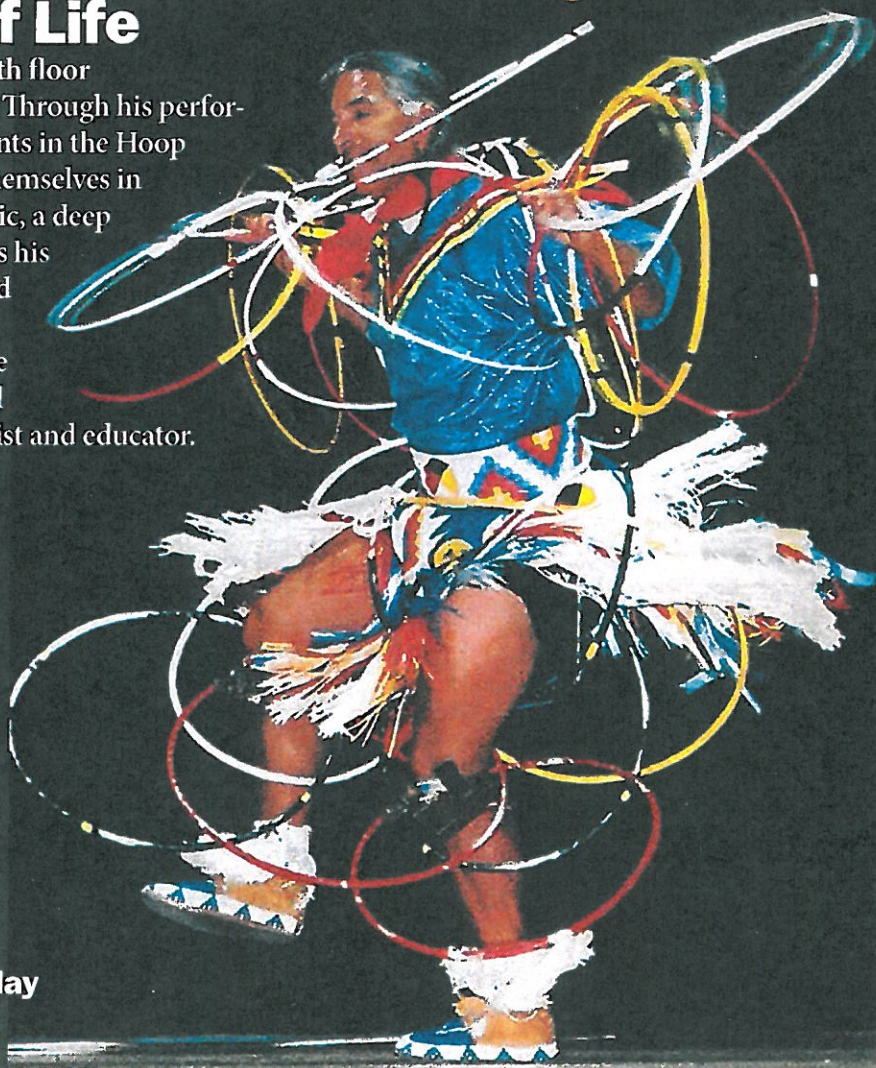
RA Rawlings

Celebrate Native American Heritage Month

Kevin Locke: Hoop of Life

Thursday, Nov. 15, 7 p.m., RA, Ryals Room-4th floor

Kevin is a worldwide musical and dance hero. Through his performances, he engages all ages as active participants in the Hoop Dance. This allows his audience to immerse themselves in the art of storytelling through dance and music, a deep rooted tradition in his culture. Tokeya Inajin is his Lakota name, meaning "The First to Arise" and is known throughout the world as a visionary Hoop Dancer, the preeminent player of the indigenous Northern Plains flute, a traditional storyteller, cultural ambassador, recording artist and educator.

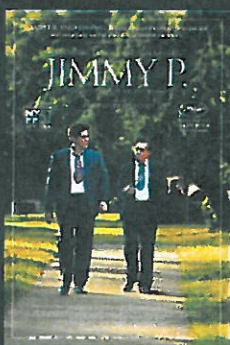


Hispanic Resource Center Film

Jimmy P. : Psychotherapy of a Plains Indian
 (NR)

Thursday, Nov. 15, 6:30-8:30 p.m., RA, InfoZone Theater-4th floor

In late 1940s Kansas, a gifted analyst (Mathieu Amalric) takes the case of a Native American war veteran (Benicio Del Toro) whose blackouts and blinding headaches appear to have no physical cause.



Native American Heritage Month display

Nov. 1-30, All locations

Hours:

Monday - Thursday
 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

10 a.m. to 7 p.m. (Greenhorn, Giodone and Lucero only)

Monday - Friday

9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 4 to 8 p.m. (Library @ the Y only)

Friday & Saturday

9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

10 a.m. - 6 p.m. (Greenhorn, Giodone and Lucero only)

Saturday

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Library @ the Y only)

Sunday (Rawlings only)

1 - 5 p.m.

Phone: 562-5600

Locations:

Barkman Library
 1300 Jerry Murphy Rd.
 Greenhorn Valley Library
 4801 Cibola Dr.
 Colorado City, Colo.
 Giodone Library
 24655 U.S. Hwy 50 E.
 Lamb Library
 2525 S. Pueblo Blvd.
 Library @ the Y
 3200 Spaulding

Lucero Library

1315 E. 7th St.

Pueblo West Library

298 S. Joe Martinez Blvd.

Rawlings Library

100 E. Abriendo Ave.

Satellite library locations:

Avondale Elementary

213 Hwy. 50 E.

Beulah School

8734 Schoolhouse Ln.

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Photo courtesy of Kevin Locke

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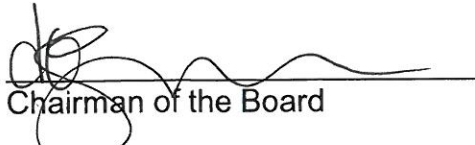
DATE: 11-13-18

PURPOSE: TIF Negotiations

CITATION:

- ☐ Purchase, sale, lease of any real or personal property (24-6-402(4)(a)).
- ☐ Legal advice (24-6-402(4)(b)).
- ☒ Developing strategy for negotiations, instructing negotiators, and determining positions relative to matters that may be subject to negotiations (24-6-402(4)(e)).
- ☐ Matter that is required to be kept confidential by law (24-6-402(4)(c)).
 - ☐ Personnel Files (24-72-204(3)(a)(II)).
 - ☐ Letters of Reference (24-72-204(3)(a)(III)).
 - ☐ Library and museum contributions if restrictions are placed on them by the contributor (24-72-204(3)(a)(V)).
 - ☐ Library records disclosing the identity of a Library user (24-72-204(3)(a)(VII)).
 - ☐ Address/phone number/personal financial information of past or present users of public facility unless requested by law enforcement (24-72-204(3)(a)(IX)).
 - ☐ Records regarding sexual harassment complaint or investigation to anybody other than a person of interest (24-72-204(3)(a)(X)).
 - ☐ Other _____

In lieu of written minutes, the session was digitally recorded, and the recording will be retained by the secretary of the Board for a period of 90 days after which time it will be destroyed.


Chairman of the Board
11-13-18
Date

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Attorney

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Chairman of the Board

Date