

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN THE CITY OF RIDGELAND, MISSISSIPPI
AND THE MADISON COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is adopted by the City of Ridgeland (“Ridgeland”) and the Madison County Library System (“MCLS”) for the purpose of fostering communication, cooperation, and better relations between them. Ridgeland is a member city of the MCLS and provides financial assistance to the MCLS. In return, the MCLS operates a branch library in Ridgeland (the “Branch”).

Ridgeland and its elected officials strongly support a diverse library collection that is consistent with the American Library Association’s Bill of Rights.¹ Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. This includes matters dealing with all sexual orientation or religious preferences. The City is deeply concerned that the Ridgeland Branch of the MCLS will continue to display or make available materials only in an age-appropriate manner.

Recent complaints by individuals inside and outside of Ridgeland have been lodged with both parties hereto concerning the Branch’s material collections and displays. In addition, disputes presently exist between Ridgeland and the MCLS regarding the status of Ridgeland as a contractual member of the MCLS. The parties to this MOU desire more open and direct communication between the governing bodies of these parties generally, and more particularly, concerning these issues. The City is deeply concerned that the Ridgeland Branch continue to maintain the community standards of the City of Ridgeland.

Ridgeland, through its elected officials, and the MCLS wish to protect and preserve the viewpoint neutrality of our library system. As such, it in no way wishes to censor, proscribe, or remove any materials and respects the library system’s duty to protect and serve the entire community. However, both Ridgeland and the MCLS also must protect all parent’s rights to serve as the guardians of pre-adolescent children who are our city’s most precious resource.

MCLS has and will maintain a transparent, fair and workable mechanism for materials challenges in the library, approved by the MCLS Board of Trustees. Patrons of MCLS are encouraged to make their complaints via this formal process, which is in writing and readily available to the public. While Ridgeland understands that the authority of MCLS’s operations lies with the MCLS Board of Trustees, MCLS understands Ridgeland’s concern with and desires to be made aware of any library related issues, including material challenges about which citizens have complained. To address those concerns, MCLS will, at the request of the Mayor or Board of Aldermen, meet to discuss any concerns or complaints, including formal material challenges made to MCLS as they arise. No confidential information regarding the identity of users will be supplied, and this information is provided for informational purposes only. No amendments, changes, or reversals to the determinations made in accordance with this policy will occur as a result of this information being shared.

Both parties hereto desire the MCLS, including Ridgeland’s current appointed Board of Trustees member, come before each newly elected and constituted Board of Aldermen for the City of

¹ See [Library Bill of Rights | Advocacy, Legislation & Issues \(ala.org\)](https://www.ala.org/advocacy-legislation/issues)

Ridgeland to present the contracts that may then exist between the parties and answer questions. Additionally, prior to the Board of Aldermen adopting its final budget, the MCLS, including the City's current appointed Board of Trustees member, will come before the Board of Aldermen each year to present both the MCLS's and the Ridgeland Branch's proposed annual budget, the Branch annual statistical report, outline goals for the upcoming year and discuss any library needs.

Beyond the items contained above, each party hereto understands that issues between the parties may arise in the future and can best be addressed by direct communication between the Board of Aldermen for the City of Ridgeland and the MCLS Board of Trustees. Such communication is endorsed by each party, and each party is welcome to address the other party regarding any issue. It is also the understanding of each party that it is advantageous to a prompt resolution of such issues that the respective Boards attempt resolution by following the Open Meetings Act. Each party recognizes that each board is governed by the Open Meetings Act. Both parties agree that they are bound by the laws of the State of Mississippi.

In short, it is the hope of each party hereto that the harmonious relations that existed for years before the present disputes arose can be restored. This MOU is executed to accomplish this purpose.

Dated:

<signatures>