

It is unfortunate an issue regarding the 2022 contract among Madison County entities and MCLS has not been resolved. The City of Ridgeland has fulfilled its obligation in finalizing the 2022 contract, which was written and approved by the Madison County Library System (MCLS). Ridgeland Board of Aldermen voted on April 11, 2022, to approve the contract, and Mayor Gene McGee signed the contract on April 12, 2022. Ridgeland then immediately began making payments under that 2022 contract which were received by the Library System. Unfortunately, it appears MCLS has not fulfilled its obligation in obtaining the remaining signatures required from other entities in order for the 2022 contract to be valid. At this time, the cities of Canton and Ridgeland, the Madison County Board of Supervisors, and MCLS have signed the 2022 contract; however, the City of Madison and Town of Flora have not signed the 2022 contract. Surprisingly, it has been brought to Ridgeland's attention that Flora had the 2022 contract listed on its agenda and ready for approval on three separate occasions, and each time it was placed on the agenda, Flora was instructed by MCLS officials to remove the 2022 contract approval item from their agenda.

After the Ridgeland Board approved and Mayor McGee executed the 2022 contract with MCLS, in a good faith effort and the understanding that MCLS would finalize its obligation to obtain contract approval from the other entities, the City of Ridgeland brought the FY22 library payment current at that time.

With regard to the 2009 contract, the City determined earlier this year that it was no longer valid, therefore requiring a new contract to be brought before the Board for approval. The 2009 contract became invalid when MCLS failed in its obligation to schedule an appearance before the Board to make the necessary request for yearly renewal of the contract. On April 8, 2022, a motion was made and approved at a special meeting of the Ridgeland Board to re-adopt the 2009 contract; however, it was not considered a legal motion because the agenda item listed the 2022 contract to be approved, not the 2009 contract. As a result of the illegal motion, the Board and Mayor reconvened for a second special meeting on April 11, 2022, to correct the mistake and adopt the 2022 contract.

Without a valid contract executed by all required signatories, the City of Ridgeland cannot legally pay MCLS the 3rd and 4th quarter payments. The possibility of a stand-alone contract between Ridgeland and MCLS was proposed by MCLS after the City's agenda deadline last week, and the City was to address the contract in accordance with its normal order of business. However, the Madison County Board of Supervisors met on August 15, 2022, and the Supervisors asked for time to research the legality of stand-alone contracts between all entities and MCLS; therefore, consideration of a stand-alone contract was not placed on Ridgeland's Board agenda for August 16, 2022.

The decision the Ridgeland Library made to reduce its hours of operation is within its discretion. The Library System is not an entity of the City. If the reduction of hours is due to a lack of funding, the City of Ridgeland will be pleased to make quarterly payments to the library once MCLS has fulfilled its contractual obligations. Additionally, the Friends of the Library raised over \$130,000 for the Ridgeland Library; however, that funding has yet to be donated to the Ridgeland Library.

In accordance with the request of the Board of Supervisors, the attorneys for the City, the County, and the Library System are coordinating to arrange a meeting in an attempt to resolve all issues. The City sincerely believes that, barring any new and unexpected wrinkles, the matter will be resolved legally at that time.

Issues of Importance:

- There is no disagreement between the City of Ridgeland and MCLS with regard to the 2022 contract.
- The City cannot legally pay the Library until it has a valid contract.
- In a joint city-county public library system, the law requires the consent of the board of supervisors of the county to the contract and the approval by the board of supervisors of any terms, agreements, and conditions.
- The City of Ridgeland has fulfilled its obligation to sign the 2022 contract proposed by the Library.
- Madison and Flora have not signed the 2022 contract.
- Flora was requested by a representative of the Library System NOT to sign the 2022 contract.
- The Mississippi Supreme Court issued an opinion in November of 2021 and held that it is the responsibility the entity contracting with the City such as the Library System to ensure the contract is legal and properly recorded on the minutes of the board.
- Why hasn't the \$130K (raised by Friends of the Library) been donated to the Ridgeland Library? Has it been spent? If so, on what?
- The City of Ridgeland is not opposed to a stand-alone contract with MCLS as long as it is deemed legal and binding by attorneys from all entities. It was a sudden change of direction by MCLS to request stand-alone contracts, and it was only a few days ago (August 10, 2022) that Ridgeland learned of this change.