

Request to Pause Confirmation and Implementation of the Big Wood River Library District

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Commissioners:

I respectfully request that the Board of County Commissioners pause any further action toward confirmation, implementation, asset transfer, taxation, or operational transition associated with the Big Wood River Library District until significant concerns regarding due process, statutory compliance, and the adequacy of the public process in Bellevue can be fully examined and addressed.

This request is not about the value of libraries or library services. It is about whether Bellevue residents were provided the process required by law before being asked to approve a permanent governmental restructuring and a new taxing authority.

Idaho law requires local governments to determine whether participation in a library district is in the best interest of library services. Yet Bellevue never undertook a meaningful public evaluation of that question. No comprehensive analysis was presented to residents. No findings were adopted. No meaningful discussion occurred regarding the long-term consequences of dissolving Bellevue's municipal library structure and transferring authority to a regional district.

Among the issues that were never adequately evaluated or explained to the public were:

- The long-term financial impact on Bellevue taxpayers.
- The consequences of relinquishing Bellevue's municipal library structure.
- The ownership, control, and disposition of Bellevue library assets.
- The future level and location of library services available to Bellevue residents.
- The extent to which Bellevue residents would retain local influence over decisions affecting those services.
- The long-term tax implications associated with participation in the district.

These are not minor details. They are the fundamental questions residents should have been able to evaluate before casting their votes.

The election results themselves demonstrate why this lack of process matters.

While the levy was approved district-wide, the geographic voting pattern reveals a profound division among the communities that will be subject to the tax. Hailey voters approved the measure by more than sixty percent. Every rural precinct voted against it. Bellevue approved the measure by only 50.35 percent.

This cannot reasonably be characterized as broad regional consensus. Rather, it reflects overwhelming support from one municipality, rejection by all rural precincts, and only the narrowest possible approval within Bellevue itself.

Under these circumstances, confidence in the integrity of the formation process is essential. Yet many Bellevue and rural residents remain unaware of the practical consequences of joining the district because those consequences were never fully analyzed, publicly debated, or explained by Bellevue's elected officials or staff.

The issue before the County is not whether the election produced a numerical majority. The issue is whether the public received adequate information and due process before being asked to approve a permanent restructuring of local government and taxation.

Before implementation proceeds, residents deserve assurance that:

- All statutory requirements were satisfied.
- Bellevue properly evaluated whether participation in the district was in the best interest of library services.
- Residents were provided meaningful information regarding the financial, operational, and governance consequences of joining the district.
- The transfer of assets, authority, and taxing power was subjected to appropriate public review.

Accordingly, I respectfully request that the Board postpone confirmation, implementation, asset transfers, intergovernmental agreements, organizational actions, and any other steps necessary to operationalize the district until these concerns can be independently reviewed in a public and transparent manner.

At a minimum, the County should conduct or commission a review of the formation process, Bellevue's compliance with applicable statutory requirements, and the adequacy of the information provided to Bellevue residents before the election.

The formation of a permanent taxing district deserves more than a simple tally of votes. It requires public confidence that the process was transparent, informed, and lawful. Given the narrow approval in Bellevue, the rejection of the measure by every rural precinct, and the substantial unanswered questions regarding the process employed by Bellevue and issues around taxation without representation, a temporary pause is both prudent and justified.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Wrede

Bellevue Resident and Bellevue City Council Member

Submitted in my individual capacity and not on behalf of the City of Bellevue.

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