

October 24, 2020

Dear Members of the Great Falls Public Library Board,

I am writing in support of the GFPL policies on safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. The GFPL staff have done an admirable job in keeping the public safe while still providing services to as many people as possible in as many ways as possible.

I feel comfortable going into the library during its limited hours, knowing that people will wear masks. Wearing masks is not a political act. Wearing masks is not debatable. All public health experts tell us that wearing a mask helps protect the wearer, and it helps protect others. This is crucial. The library sets an positive example with its compliance.

We have public libraries because we believe that we can do more together than we can separately. We agree to some limitations on our personal freedom for the greater good. If I borrow a book from the library, I cannot highlight it, turn down the pages or take it into the shower with me. That's the sacrifice I make for the greater good. If I need the personal freedom to do those things with a book, then the library is not the place for me. It is not all about me.

Are there sacrifices we have to make, compromises, in this time of coronavirus? Yes. For 17 years my husband and his reading tutor have met twice weekly in one of the small rooms in the library basement to read. Since March they have not been able to meet. That is a safety measure, a sacrifice for the greater good.

COVID-19 has exploded in Cascade County. And so has, for some reason, resistance to masks. Masks are key to public safety, to keeping the library and its patrons and its staff safe. To bow to pressure from anti-maskers in 2020 feels almost like bowing to pressure from book-banners in 1920.

Please know that the public supports the mask mandate. Library users and donors support the mask mandate. Keep up the good work.

Respectfully,

Jessica Crist and Turner Graybill

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