



CITY OF RIDGELAND STATEMENT

The City of Ridgeland continues to work diligently to reach a resolution with the Madison County Library System (MCLS). The City of Ridgeland has been providing funding to MCLS since their inception and has historically provided funding at a higher level than any other municipality within the system. We desire to continue our longstanding relationship that benefits both our communities and the constituency we serve.

Ridgeland and its elected officials strongly support a diverse library collection that is consistent with the American Library Association's Bill of Rights. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues.

Every community library around the state of Mississippi and the nation provides a place for knowledge, learning, and programs that have been a bedrock for people of all ages to depend on. The Ridgeland Library is no different – it's an institution that we as a community treasure and want to see thrive. We share the thoughts of MCLS that "our libraries are a repository of knowledge and culture, providing far more than access to books."

Over the course of the last few weeks, we have worked with MCLS and their legal counsel to come to an agreement and are still making great efforts to find a solution. We are regretful that these issues have become contentious, and we have put forth a good faith effort to demonstrate our willingness to work with MCLS on these matters. We do not wish to use the media as a platform to resolve issues but to work together to ensure the City and the library system continue our long-standing harmonious relationship.

Once again, we would like to reiterate that the City of Ridgeland in no way tried to withhold, is not withholding, and will not withhold money because of any books in the library system. We do not have the desire to censor or ban any books. There is currently a dispute between the city and MCLS as to whether a valid contract exists. The City is requesting to enter into a new contract that would give the Board of Aldermen the authority to make the contributions.

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Gene F. McGee, cmo - mayor • Paula W. Tierce, phr - city clerk / human resources director

board of aldermen: D.I. Smith, cmo - at-large • Ken Heard, cmo - ward 1 • Chuck Gautier, cmo - ward 2
Kevin Holder, cmo, mayor pro tempore - ward 3 • Brian P. Ramsey, cmo - ward 4 • Bill Lee - ward 5 • Wesley Hamlin, cmo - ward 6

We have laid out a few stipulations within the Memorandum of Understanding that we feel are fair and represent the community in which we serve. The City of Ridgeland stands firm on the following areas of the agreement:

- Ridgeland wishes moving forward to be able to review the MCLS budget on an annual basis instead of only having access to the Ridgeland branch budget. The Board needs the complete financial picture to evaluate its discretionary spending.
- Ridgeland is concerned that certain materials be displayed in an age-appropriate manner. We have received numerous complaints from our community regarding the matter.
- The City has requested quarterly meetings with MCLS in the spirit of providing better communication between the parties that will provide a structured forum to share information and resolve any disputes as they may arise.
- Ridgeland and the MCLS are obligated to provide citizens with a transparent, fair, and workable mechanism to express concerns and attempt to resolve disputes with regard to challenged resources.
- These differences do not diminish the Library Board's ability to run the library. They simply establish a framework for the City to make decisions regarding its discretionary spending.

We are proud of our city and the importance of having a library branch that serves all of our constituents. We wish to come to a resolution soon with MCLS and to continue the harmonious relationship we have had in place for many years.

Gene McGee, Mayor of Ridgeland
City of Ridgeland Board of Aldermen