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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

City Council Declares Monroe Community Library Surplus & Transfers Ownership to SBCEA, a Local Non-Profit Organization

MONROE, Ore. - April 17, 2025 – A public hearing was held by the Monroe City Council on Monday, April 14, 2025 declaring the Monroe Community Library property, located at 380 N. 5th St., Monroe, OR 97456, as surplus and proposing to transfer ownership of the library property to the South Benton Community Enhancement Association (SBCEA).

The City Council heard public comments regarding the disposition of the Monroe Community Library property. After the close of the public hearing, the City Council considered Resolution 2025-18, a resolution declaring the Monroe Community Library as City of Monroe surplus property and authorizing the sale (i.e., transfer of ownership) of the library property to SBCEA. All City Councilors voted in favor of transferring library ownership to SBCEA.

SBCEA's mission is to unite the communities of South Benton County, preserve their heritage, and provide a positive environment for youth and families. If you have lived in South Benton County for a time, you may be aware of two youth summer programs which SBCEA partners with the Alpine Community Center. Those programs are "Art in the Park" and "Read on Wheels". Art in the Park hires local high school students to help run a six-week arts program for children in grades K-8. Read on Wheels provides a bus that takes books to children's homes where they are given an opportunity to board the bus to either have a book read to them, or to read a book to a volunteer on the bus. Each child then receives a book to keep.

Back in February 2007, the community effort behind a new library in the South Benton County area was in full swing and that effort was officially given a name: the South Benton Library Project. At that time, SBCEA agreed to sponsor the library project. SBCEA was and still is a non-profit organization. With SBCEA's sponsorship, it opened up the South Benton Library

Project to new grant opportunities. It would take nearly six years of fundraising, \$2.4 million dollars in donations and grant funds with an army of volunteers but groundbreaking for the new library was June 11, 2012. It was almost another full year before construction of the new library was completed. The Monroe Community Library's opening day was Tuesday, May 14, 2013. In July 2013, SBCEA offered to transfer ownership of the library property to the City of Monroe. On July 22, 2023, the Monroe City Council approved the transfer of ownership from SBCEA to the City of Monroe.

For the City of Monroe, transitioning the ownership of the library back to SBCEA was a logical choice. SBCEA, as previously mentioned, sponsored the original South Benton Library Project and with SBCEA's non-profit status made it possible for a new library to be more than just a vision but reality for residents in South Benton County. SBCEA, the South Benton Library Project, and its volunteers raised funds to build it. With ownership of the library returning to SBCEA, unlike the City, SBCEA has the volunteers, fundraising experience, and resources to ensure the Monroe Community Library will be here for all of us to enjoy for years to come.

"This City Council is doing its due diligence to ensure there is a library that will have sufficient, sustainable funding to maintain/replace the big things like the roof or painting the building; ongoing daily, monthly and annual cleaning, janitorial, and maintenance projects, and finally – most importantly – providing the proper care this unique library truly needs and deserves to be here for future generations to come." said Mayor Sheets.

"Once this ownership transfer is completed, there will be no change to the library's location. There will be no change in the library's hours of operation for the public. And there will be no change to the library services provided as SBCEA has already signed a new IGA with the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library for staff and books. The only change is the ownership of the library building," Sheets continued. "Please know the benefits of the Monroe Community Library changing ownership from the City of Monroe to SBCEA, a non-profit organization, with 25 years of community service and support, in our community, with our library, makes this a simpler decision for City Council. We know the library will be in good hands!"

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