



HIGHLAND CITY

HIGHLAND CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Tuesday, July 29, 2025

Approved by City Council on October 7, 2025

Approved by Library Board on October 30, 2025

City Council/Library Board Work Session

Highland City Council Chambers, 5400 West Civic Center Drive, Highland Utah 84003

6:00 PM WORK SESSION

Call to Order: Mayor Kurt Ostler

Invocation: Mayor Kurt Ostler

Pledge of Allegiance: Library Board Member Kevin Tams

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kurt Ostler as a work session at 6:08 pm. The meeting agenda was posted on the Utah State Public Meeting Website at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. The prayer was offered by Mayor Kurt Ostler and those in attendance were led in the Pledge of Allegiance by Library Board Member Kevin Tams.

PRESIDING: Mayor Kurt Ostler

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Brittney P. Bills	Present
Ron Campbell	Present
Doug Cortney	Present
Kim Rodela	Present
Scott L. Smith	Absent

LIBRARY BOARD MEMBERS:

Jessica Anderson	Absent
Amy Brinton	Present
Rachel Farnsworth	Present
Lynn Lonsdale	Absent
Kevin Tams	Present
Wesley Warren	Present

CITY STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Erin Wells, Assistant City Administrator/Community Development Director Jay Baughman, Library Director Donna Cardon, City Recorder Stephannie Cottle

OTHERS PRESENT: Jon Hart, Liz Rice, Kristin Richey, McKaiden Carruth

1. PRESENTATIONS

a. Highland City Library Jay Baughman, Assistant City Administrator/Community Development Director

The City Council and Library Board will discuss the current status, future needs, and funding mechanisms for the Highland City Library.

Assistant City Administrator/Community Development Director Baughman started the agenda item by inviting all staff, City Council Members, and Library Board Members to introduce themselves. He then used the aid of a PowerPoint presentation to provide background information regarding the implementation of a property tax in 2007 specifically for the Library; it generated roughly \$200,366 in revenue per year. The first year of the library, there were 7,935 items in the library and 98 programs; in 2018, Delinquent Property Tax was included as part of the Library funding (this may have been funded in years past but was not identified on any budget record). This added an annual average of \$18,667 per year. And, in 2019, vehicle tax revenue was also identified as part of the Library funding; this added an average of \$23,136 per year. In 2024, the library property tax rate is .000104, which generates \$314,801 per year. Last year there were 44,262 items in the library and 233 programs offered. He concluded that from 2007 to 2024, there has been no dedicated rate increase for the library, though the number of households in the City grew by 43 percent and population grew by 39 percent. Inflation has increased 45 percent over 17 years; the City is collecting \$65.77 per household instead of inflation adjusted \$90.53. He summarized library growth as follows:

- The collection grew by 82% to 44,262
- Circulation grew by 62% to 270,000
- Programs grew by 128% (233)
- Program attendance grew by 369% (9,022)

He then compared Highland's dedicated tax funding rates with those of surrounding communities, noting Highland has the second lowest dedicated tax funding rate for its library. He then presented a pie chart illustrating all funding sources for the library; 98 percent of funding comes from taxes, two percent from fees, and less than one percent from grants and donations. Due to the recent decision to join the library consortium, the library can no longer charge fines, but to offset that loss of revenue, non-resident library fees will be increased. He then noted that FY 2025-26 is the first year that the City Council has authorized a transfer of General Fund Revenues; the Library is also operating off fund reserves this next year, but this is not sustainable. Grant funding has been cut dramatically, and the library expects it will have to spend over \$9,000 on materials to maintain the current level of service.

Mayor Ostler clarified that he believes there was one instance in the past, perhaps 2017, when the City authorized a transfer of General Fund revenues to the library.

Mr. Baughman then discussed library expenditures, noting the most significant expense is personnel costs at 68 percent; other expenditures are as follows:

- Overhead – 16 percent;
- Books and materials – 10 percent;
- Software – 3 percent;
- Equipment – 2 percent;
- Programming – 1 percent.

Mr. Baughman noted that traditionally, the library budget has been balanced by paying below market on staff wages; however, the library cannot function without its employees as they perform book circulation and program administration. This led to high level discussion among the group regarding the City's philosophy relative to compensation of library employees; the applicant pool for library employment; and the duties performed by library employees. Mr. Baughman noted the City is currently recruiting for a new Library Director and will need to pay a more competitive salary going forward. It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with demand with only one

FT employee (Director). Full-time employment possibilities include Collection Development Manager and Library Program Manager. This year, the City supplemented the Library by \$21,000. Without that funding, it would be necessary to do a combination of the following:

- Cut the library book budget by 36%. *or*
- Eliminate all the programs (Programming budget + PT) *or*
- Eliminate an entire library assistant position and a library page position. This would necessitate cutting library hours.

Mr. Baughman then discussed the Library Fund Study; earlier this year, the Library Foundation commissioned LRB Public Finance Advisors to do a study of the Library Fund to assess the financial viability of the library in the coming years. The study was done this year because the library is at the point where it cannot maintain current levels of service without increased funding. He presented graphs that illustrate the different funding scenarios offered by LRB as well as results from the most recent resident survey regarding property tax increases to fund the library. He concluded that staff have formulated questions for the group to consider and address tonight:

Question for discussion #1 - What is an appropriate fund balance amount (% of operating costs) for the Library to maintain?

Question for discussion #2 - What is the future direction for the Library:

- Staffing?
- Materials Collection (physical & electronic)?
- Programming?
- Growth / Status-Quo / Reduction in Service?

Question for discussion #3 - What is the feasibility of proposing a Library Property Tax increase to the voters?

- Do we want to have the General Fund continue to supplement the Library Fund?
- Do we want to rely on fundraising/ donations?
 - Would need increased staff and/or willing and capable volunteers.
- Are there other revenue options that should be considered?

Mr. Baughman then facilitated discussion among the group to solicit answers to the questions. The feedback from the group centered on the purpose of the library fund balance; maintenance and improvement needs at the library; the need to educate residents about the fact that property tax does not account for inflation and the basis for a tax rate increase would be to continue to fund the library at the same rate as the past; resident support for the library; pursuing a public campaign regarding the value of the library prior to considering a tax increase; submitting the issue to the public again in the 2025 citizens survey; library funding methods employed in other cities; future library growth/expansion plans; and the idea of partnering with neighboring communities – Alpine and Cedar Hills – pertaining to charging user fees to fund library services.

Mayor Ostler then recognized the candidates running for City Council who were present at the meeting and invited them to provide any input they have regarding the matter.

Ron Campbell spoke as a candidate; he indicated that raising property taxes is a last resort for him, but it is an option that must be on the table as an option for continuing to provide the services offered at the library. He will explore all other options first, but he cannot say that he will never vote to raise taxes.

Kristin Richey stated this conversation has caused her to think about the town she used to live in where there was a group called the ‘friends of the Redlands Library’ that sponsored a fundraising event each year; the idea of a third-party group coming together to support the library seems like a good idea to her. The library in her former town got to a point where it had to reduce the services it offered; it was closed on Saturday and was only open until 5:00 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays. Somehow the people with young kids made their way through that situation. At some point, the public needs to consider where it can economize on certain issues and the library may be one of

those things for Highland City.

Library Board Member Tams stated that the library tax was a voter approved tax, and he wondered if the City could dissolve that tax without a voter action. City Administrator Wells stated she is not aware that the library tax was on an election ballot; she believes it was approved by the Council, but not by the voters. Mayor Ostler disagreed and stated he believes it was on a ballot. Ms. Wells stated she will need to research the matter further. She then noted that the City can lower the library tax to a point where it is negligible, and increase the City tax rate to an even point without having to follow the State of Utah Truth in Taxation process; however, the group recognizes that the library is facing a funding deficit so that will not fix the problem.

Liz Rice stated that she likes to look back and see how far the library has come; the Highland Library is amazing, and she considers it to be the heart of the community; the City's library was formerly located at Mountain Ridge Junior High, and she is amazed at how far it has come. She loves the library and wants to support it, but she is hesitant about some of the solutions that have been discussed tonight, such as partnering with another community as she feels one city will eventually take over the other and she does not want Highland's library to be lost. She then noted that other libraries have cut hours of operation due to limited funding. She has been going door to door during her campaign and has had many conversations with residents; some people have talked to her about the library, but most are talking to her about the recent school district split and the formation of a new district and how that will impact their property tax bill. She feels the City needs to 'mellow out' on taxes until there is a clear understanding of how the new district will impact property taxes. She anticipates property taxes will increase in the next two years for the school district. She then stated that most people know how she feels about the citizens survey; it isn't always clear who is responding to surveys, and she feels it is important for registered voters and taxpayers to answer the surveys because they are ultimately the people who will pay the costs. She stated she would also be opposed to charging a fee for using the library. She emphasized she cares deeply about the library; she is not willing to state right now that she would oppose a tax increase for the library, but she needs to know all the details and whether the citizens will feel comfortable with the adjustment.

Council Member Cortney clarified that the City Council cannot take any action this year to adjust the tax rate for the library; any such decision and vote could not occur until next year.

Wesley Warren stated that the way for elected officials to make their job easier would be to simply do what the residents want. The City Council is charged with representing the voices of the people and if he is elected, that is what he will do. During his campaign he has been open with residents on his feelings about taxes; he is pro-tax as he feels it is the way to fund a desired way of life in Highland. Many people talk about Highland having a unique feeling and aesthetic and those things must be maintained; the City has the opportunity to do that through taxes and people will gladly pay it to live here. The most difficult conversations he has had with residents involve subjects like their disappointment with how the City current looks or operates, but these residents are also the most strongly opposed to tax increases. He has explained to them that it is necessary to increase revenues to pay to fix issues in the community. He feels much of the conversation tonight has been centered on justifying the existence of the library and he would love if the matter were referred to the voters in order for them to vote on the issue. He feels there is an appetite in the community to fund the existence and growth of the library through taxes. The younger demographic of the City wants and needs a library. He understands his stance of being pro-tax is not popular, but he wishes to be transparent about his feelings.

McKaiden Carruth thanked the Library Board; the conversation has energized her, and she is grateful for the passion the Library Board Members have exuded and it is contagious. She loves there are advocates in the City for the library and those that it serves; there are many people who do not have enough and a big part of being a community is serving all residents, even if they do not vote. She referenced comments made by the Library Director and noted she is disappointed that the Library Director and Board have not felt they have the ability to share the financial situation of the library; if people had knowledge of the library's current situation, they would

be supportive of increasing revenues. Transparency about the conversation that has taken place tonight would help to address much of the backlash the City has heard in the past relative to a tax increase. She stated that if her campaign for City Council has taught her anything, it is that people are so much more rational than many assume they will be. If issues can be clearly communicated to them and the justification given for a tax or rate increase, most people will be open and accepting. It is important to keep the library open and thriving.

The Council and Library Board continued their discussion of the best direction to move in relative to including a survey question regarding the library on the 2025 citizens survey; Library Director Cardon stated she does not feel the Library Board will have enough time to prepare for a question on the 2025 survey and she asked for more time or for an independent survey regarding the library as a sole issue. The group also discussed potential future legislation that could impact the Road Fee and Public Safety Fee the City charges and whether a shift from fees to taxes would further jeopardize the library tax.

Council Member Rodela inquired as to the group's decided action item from this discussion. A majority of the Council Members supported the idea of a question on the citizens' survey regarding the tax rate for the library; Library Board Members expressed their concerns regarding the manner in which the last survey question was written, and they advised the Council to first ask the residents if they support the library before asking if they would consider a tax increase to maintain it. The group discussed the strategy behind developing a survey question and accepted additional input from Ms. Rice regarding her thoughts regarding the manner in which the 2024 citizens survey question regarding the library was written. She noted that asking people to answer 'likely' or 'not likely' is not sufficient. She also offered input regarding the need to develop an appropriate wage for the new Library Director.

Ms. Wells stated staff will draft a survey question for the Council to discuss further at their next business meeting.

Mayor Ostler thanked the Library Board for their extensive work and support of the library. Ms. Wells asked the Mayor and Council if the Library Board has their blessing to begin communicating their funding concerns to residents. The Mayor polled the Council and there was support for such communication and indicated they would like to be involved in helping the Library Board crafting that public communication.

ADJOURNMENT


Council Member Ron Campbell MOVED to adjourn the work session and Council Member Doug Cortney SECONDED the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.

I, Stephannie Cottle, City Recorder of Highland City, hereby certify that the foregoing minutes represent a true, accurate and complete record of the meeting held on July 29, 2025. This document constitutes the official minutes for the Highland City Council/Library Board Work Session.



Stephannie Cottle, CMC, UCC
City Recorder



6:00 PM WORK SESSION – JOINT CITY COUNCIL AND LIBRARY BOARD

Call to Order – Mayor Kurt Ostler
Invocation – Mayor Kurt Ostler
Pledge of Allegiance – Library Board Vice-Chair Kevin Tams

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1. INTRODUCTIONS

2. PRESENTATION

a. Library Facts and Information – *Jay Baughman, Assistant City Administrator & Community Development Director*

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Background Information

2007

- .000197 (\$200,366) property tax was created
- Approximately 3,342 households (14,591 population).
- Average cost per household was \$59.95.
- The first year we had:
 - 7,935 items in the library
 - 98 programs
 - 1,923 attendees to those programs

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Background Information

2018

- Delinquent Property Tax was included as part of the Library funding. (This may have been funded in years past but was not identified on any budget record)
- This added an annual average of \$18,667 per year

2019

- The Vehicle Tax was also identified as part of the Library funding
- This added an average of \$23,136 per year.

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Background Information

2024

- .000104 (\$314,801) property tax collected
- Approximately 4,786 households (20,2017 population).
- Average cost per household is \$65.77.
- Last year we had:
 - 44,262 (32,263 physical items & 12,023 eBooks) items in the library
 - 233 programs
 - 9,022 attendees to those programs

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Background Information

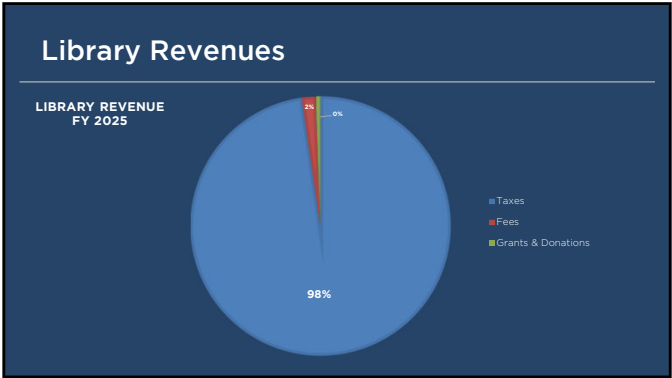
From 2007 – 2024

- No dedicated rate increase in 17 years.
- Approximately 43% increase in new households (1,444).
- Population grew by 39% (20,217).
- Inflation has increased 45% over 17 years. We are collecting \$65.77 per household instead of inflation adjusted \$90.53.
- Library Growth:
 - The collection grew by 82% to 44,262
 - Circulation grew by 62% to 270,000
 - Programs grew by 128% (233)
 - Program attendance grew by 369% (9,022)

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Dedicated Tax Funding Rates	
• Salt Lake City	.000580
• Mount Pleasant	.000534
• Brigham City	.000504
• Logan	.000470
• Provo	.000406
• Murry	.000331
• North Logan	.000323
• Santaquin	.000116
• Gunnison	.000115
• Highland	.000104
• Tremonton	.000053

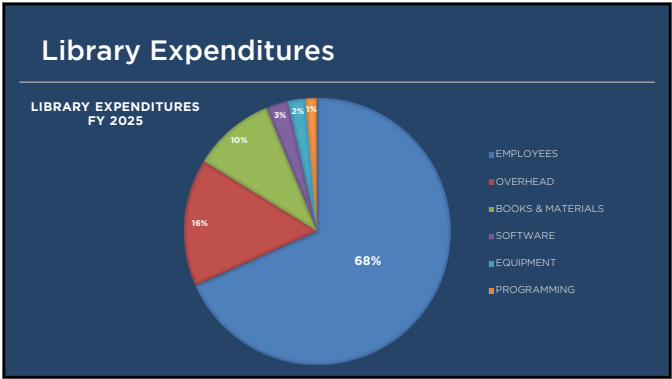
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- ### Library Revenues
- FY 2025-26 is the first year that the City Council has authorized a transfer of General Fund Revenues.
 - The Library is also operating off fund reserves this next year, but this is not sustainable.
 - Grant funding has been cut dramatically, and the Library expects it will have to spend over \$9,000 on materials to maintain the current level of service.

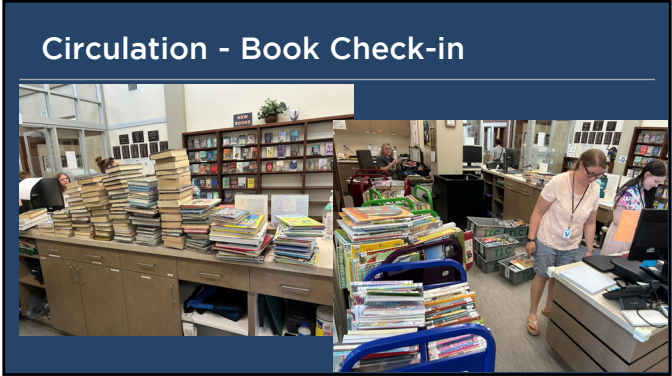
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- ### Library Expenditures
- Library Staff make up the largest part of the budget.
 - We have traditionally balanced the Library budget by paying below market on staff wages.
 - We cannot function without them.
 - Book circulation (check-in, check-out, reshelving, new materials prep, etc.)
 - Programs, including preparation and clean-up

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Programming - Storytime



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Library Expenditures

- We are recruiting a new Library Director and will need to pay a more competitive salary going forward.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with demand with only one FT employee (Director). Full time possibilities include:
 - Collection Development Manager
 - Library Program Manager

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Library Expenditures

This year, the City supplemented the Library by \$21,000. Without that funding, it would have to do a combination of the following:

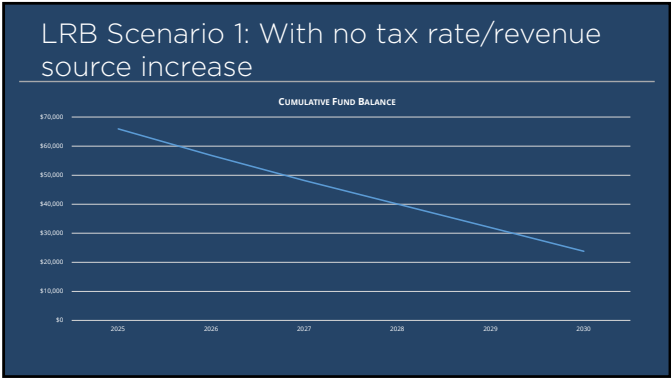
- Cut the library book budget by 36%. *or*
- Eliminate all the programs (Programming budget + PT) *or*
- Eliminate an entire library assistant position and a library page position. This would necessitate cutting library hours.

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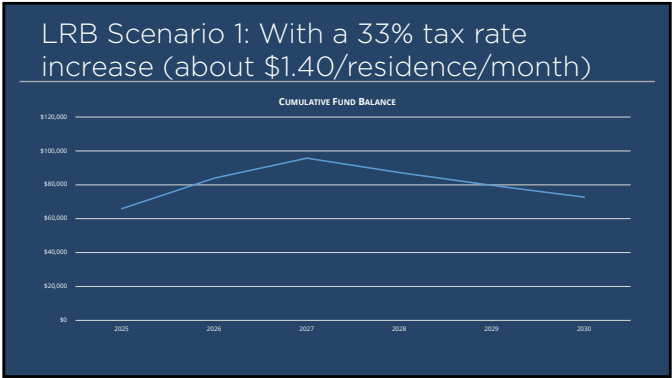
Library Fund Study

- Earlier this year, the Library Foundation commissioned LRB Public Finance Advisors to do a study of the Library Fund.
- To assess the financial viability of the Library in the coming years.
- The study was done this year because the library is at the point where it cannot maintain current levels of service without increased funding.

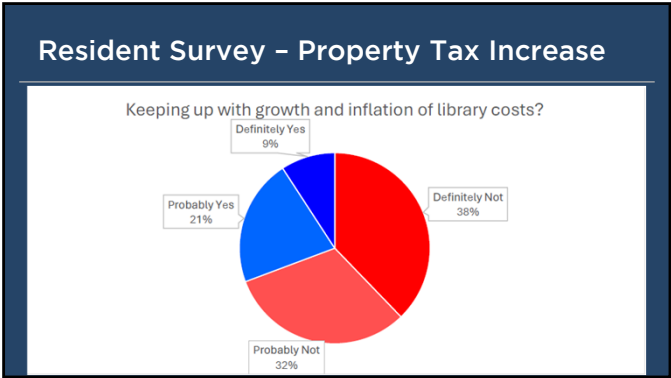
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Question for Discussion #1

What is an appropriate fund balance amount (% of operating costs) for the Library to maintain?

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Question for Discussion #2

What is the future direction for the Library:

- Staffing?
- Materials Collection (physical & electronic)?
- Programming?

Growth / Status-Quo / Reduction in Service?

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Question for Discussion #3

What is the feasibility of proposing a Library Property Tax increase to the voters?

- Do we want to have the General Fund continue to supplement the Library Fund?
- Do we want to rely on fundraising/ donations?
 - Would need increased staff and/or willing and capable volunteers.
- Are there other revenue options that should be considered?

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Highland City Library

V3 – UPDATED TO INCLUDE VEHICLE TAX & 2025/2026 FINANCIAL FORECASTS.

A society grows
great when old
men plant trees in
whose shade they
shall never sit.



History

2007

- .000197 (\$200,366) property tax was created/collected to fund the Library.
 - The tax will adjust to continue to provide that \$200k year over year.
- Approximately 3342 households (14,591 population).
- Average cost per household was \$59.95.
- The first year we had:
 - 7935 items in the library
 - 98 programs
 - 1923 attendees to those programs

History

2018

- Delinquent Property Tax was included as part of the Library funding.
(This may have been funded in years past but was not identified on any budget record)
- This added an annual average of \$18,667 per year

2019

- The Vehicle Tax was also identified as part of the Library funding
- This added an average of \$23,136 per year.

History

2024

- .000104 (\$314,801) property tax collected
- Delinquent Property Tax - \$19,794 and Vehicle Tax - \$21,461
- Approximately 4786 households (43% increase, 1444 new households)
- Population grew by 39% (20,217)
- Inflation increased 45% over the 18 years.
- \$59.95 adjusted for inflation would be \$90.53 (in 2024 we are collecting \$65.77)
 - The collection grew by 82% to 44,262 (32,263 physical items & 12,023 eBooks)
 - The programs grew by 138% (233)
 - Program attendance grew by 369% (9,022)

\$200,000 funding analysis

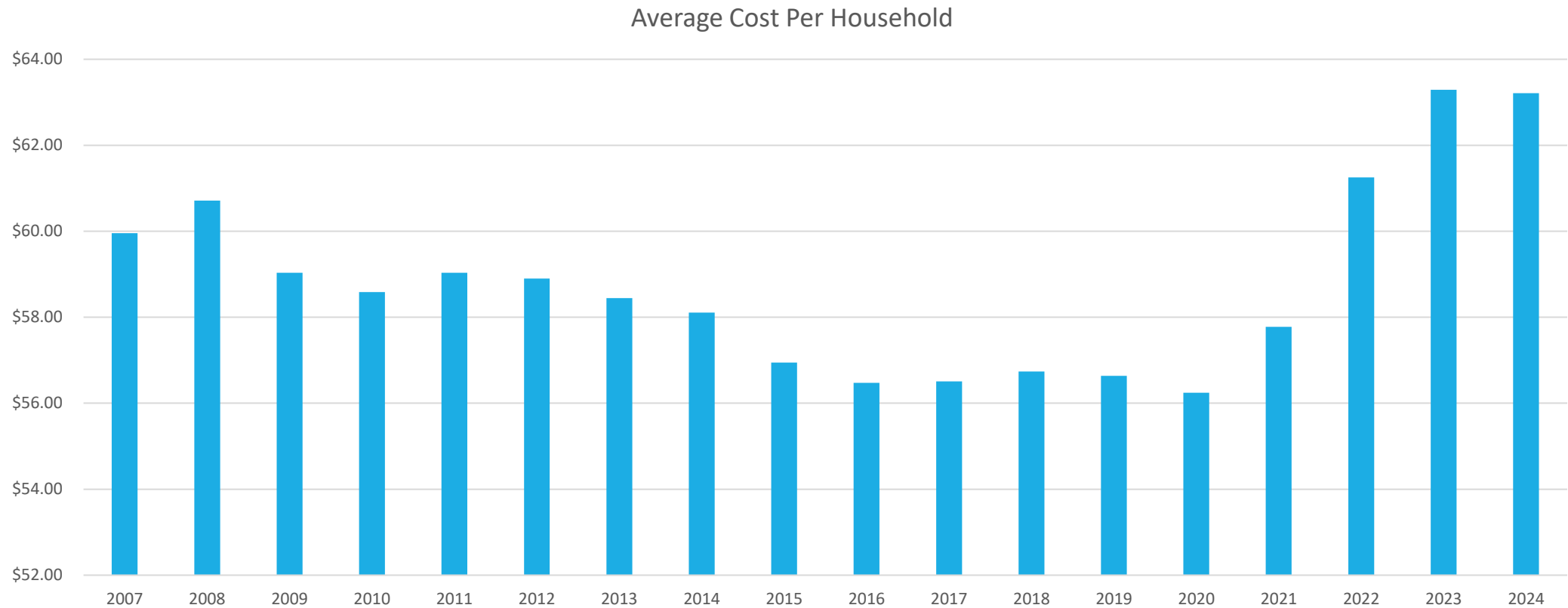
The Library was funded initially with \$200,000

Highland Residents approved that amount and expected to continue to pay to support the library.

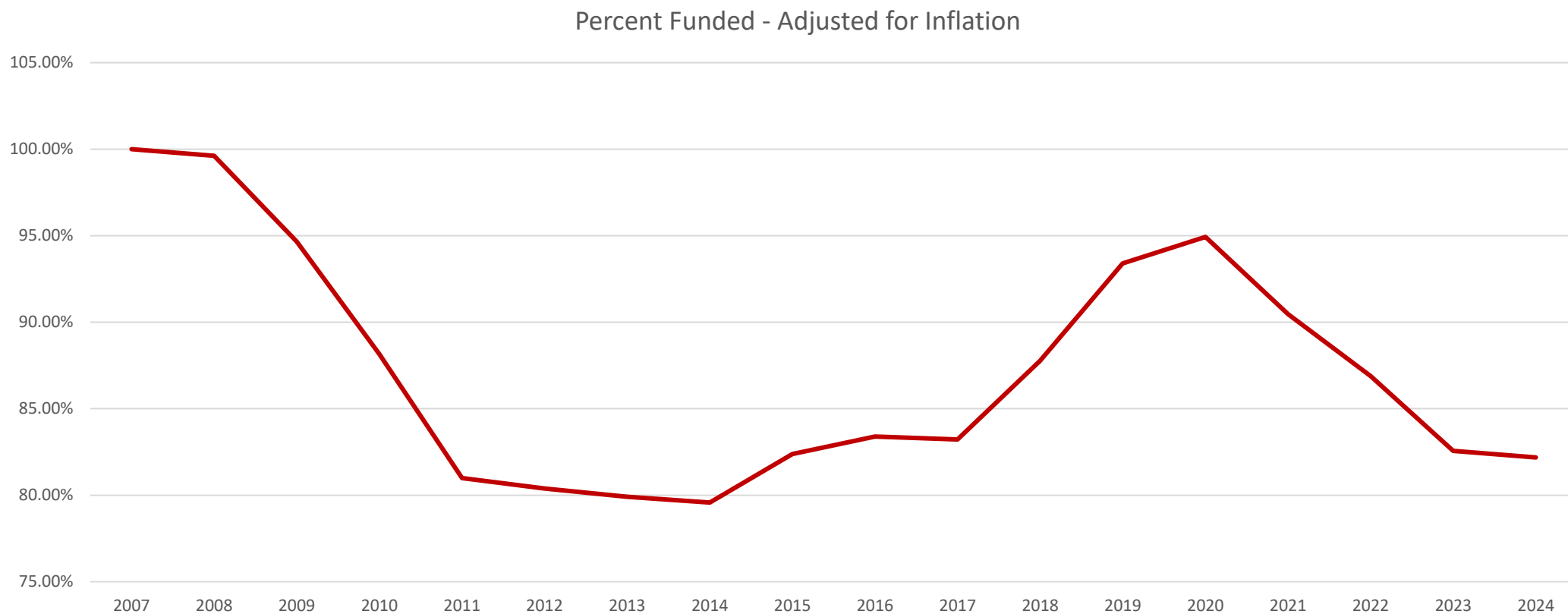
New resident growth was expected to help with funding.

With inflation how close are we to the \$200,000 amount – adjusted for inflation?

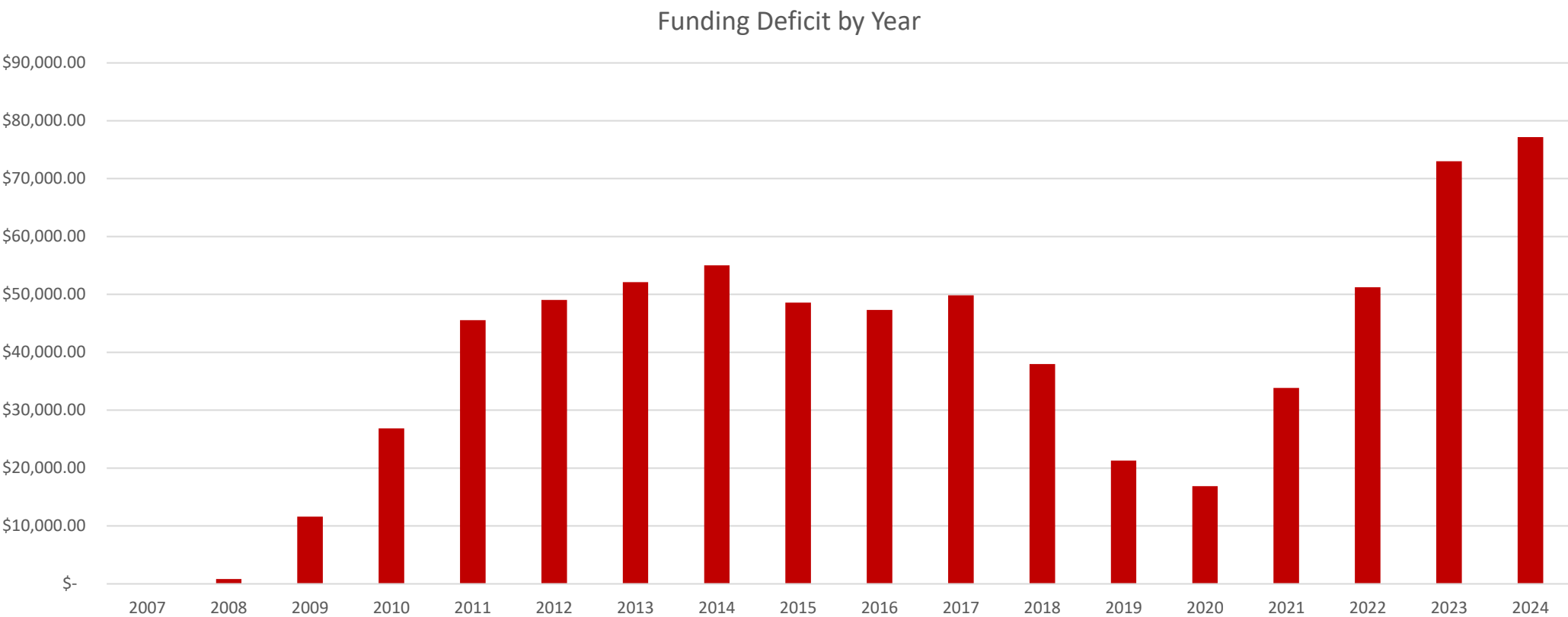
Average Cost Per Household 2008-2024



Percent Funded – Adjusted for Inflation



Funding Deficit by Year

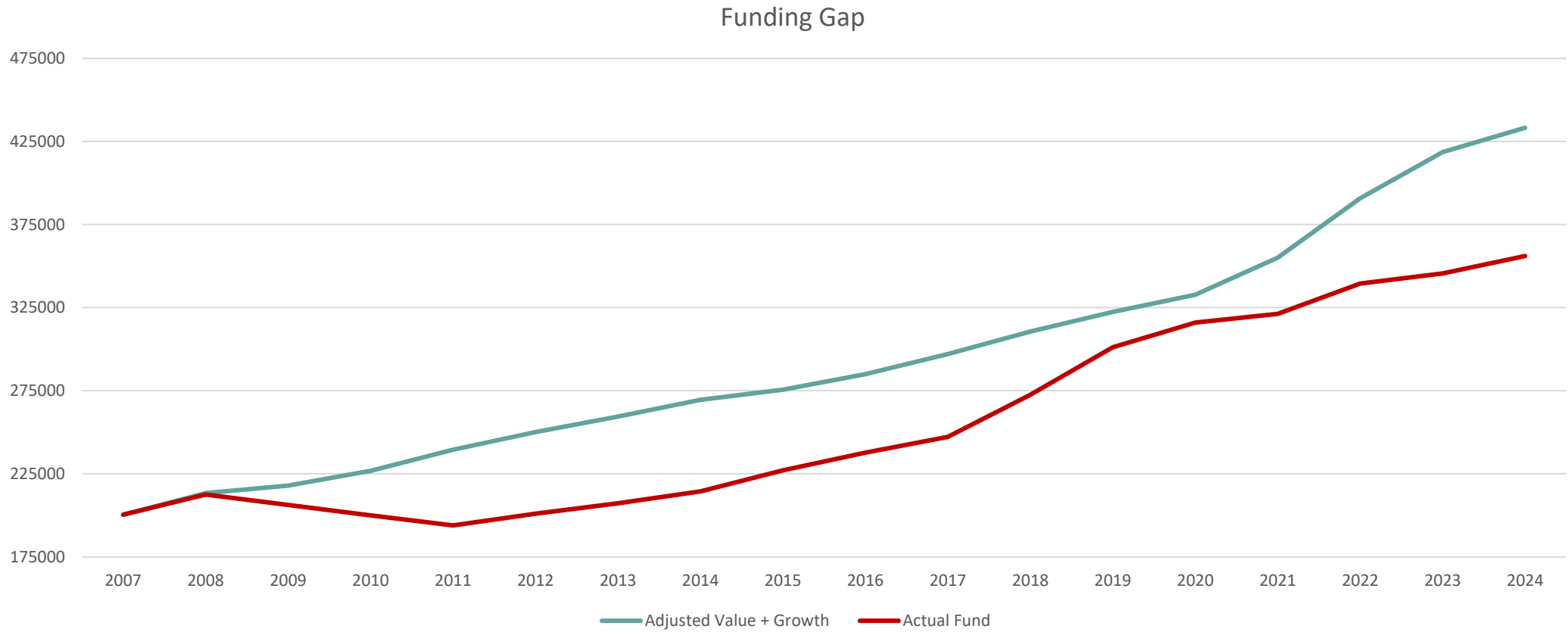


2008-2024 Funding Deficit

\$698,191

Funding Gap

If we would have adjusted the tax for inflation in 2024 we would have collected \$433,236 in 2024 and each household would be paying the same effective rate as in 2008.



Current State

- The 1,444 new households have partially covered inflation over the past 18 years (+85 per year).
- Vehicle Tax allocated in 2019 has also aided in covering inflation.
- To accommodate the additional 1,444 households and provide meaningful services and resource the library has had to be incredibly creative. For example: 70 children in storytime sessions where in the past these have had 35 children.
- Additional savings have been achieved by compensating our Director \$20k below market.
- New households receive diluted service (The same resources shared across a larger population)
- A final 500 new households are expected over the next 6 years (\$70M per year).
- Federal Funding (new \$11k expense) – Economic Challenges – Inflation

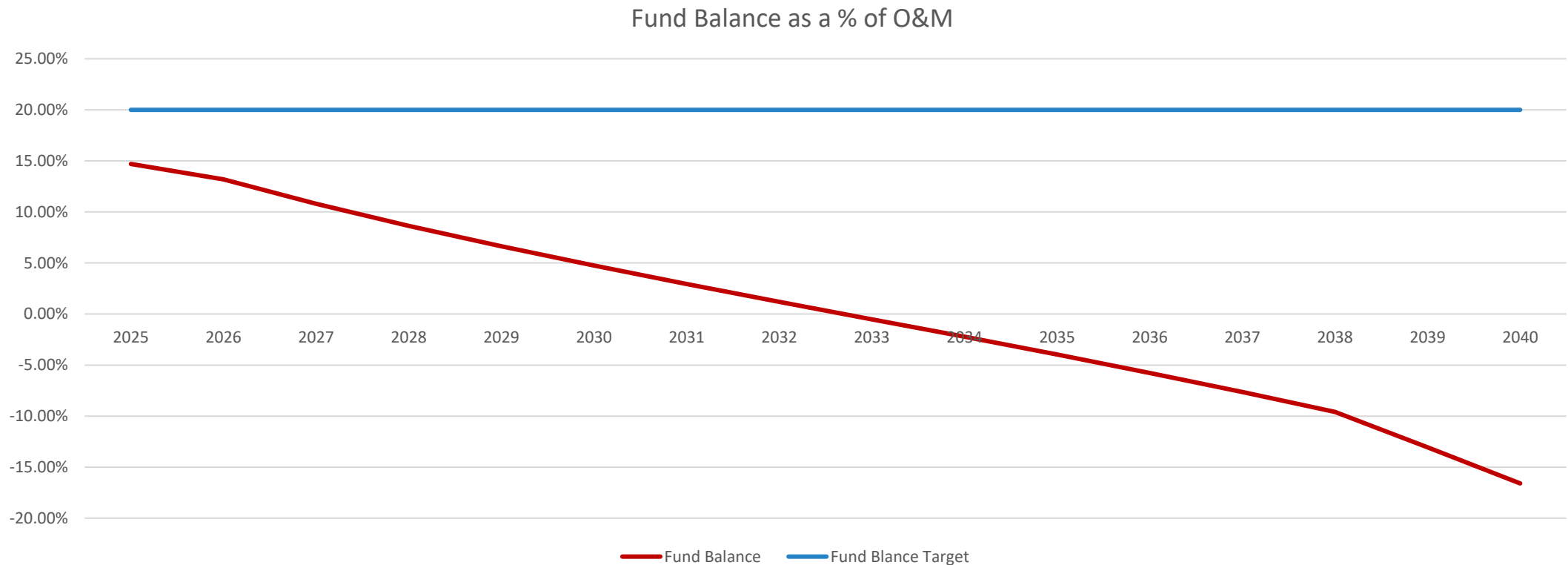
Collection – 10-year replacement cycle

- Children's books and other high-use items wear out quickly and often need to be replaced every 3–5 years due to frequent handling and damage.
- Non-fiction materials must be updated regularly to ensure patrons have access to accurate, current information.
- Replacing 10% of the collection each year keeps the library relevant to changing community interests and reading trends.
- While some classics remain useful long-term, most materials naturally age out over a 10-year cycle, requiring regular refreshment.

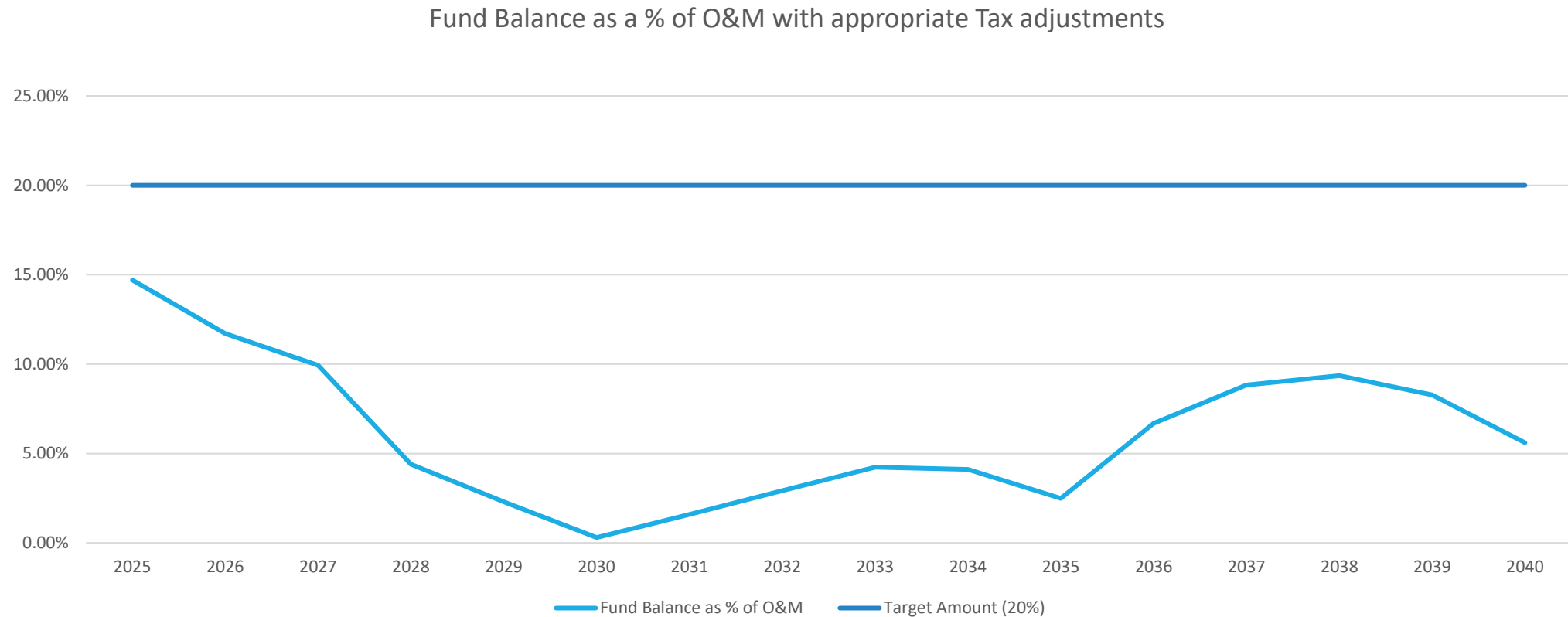
The Problem

- Relying on new households to fund inflation has diluted and will continue to dilute our library offerings.
- Funding based on property taxes needs to be adjusted on a frequent schedule to accommodate inflation.
- In 2024 Highland households are paying 33% less for the Library.
- Creativity and deferred maintenance has allowed us to function in our current state, but the debt is due and in order to maintain at least our current service levels we need to do proper book maintenance.
- With new households ending in the next 5 years, we need to revisit how we keep the Library funded.

Current State – Deferred Maintenance



Options - Add FTE & Refresh Collection



City Feedback

The council was concerned that asking for additional funds while maintaining a savings fund appears to be contradictory.

- Prior city budgets included vacation for part-time employees (which over estimated salary)
- The library, like all city entities, needs to have an appropriate savings to ensure it can cover unexpected expenses or scheduled major maintenance like Carpet, Furniture or other improvements.
- Maintaining a savings is an essential part of being financially responsible
- Proper savings are not a sign of excess, but of foresight and good stewardship.

Board Feedback

Maintaining core financial independence allows the Library to stay strong.

- Stable and Predictable Funding
- Community Investment and Equity
- Accountability and Transparency
- Protection from Budget Cuts
- Upholds Voter Intent