

**CITY OF SEBASTOPOL'S REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY
COMMISSION ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN FOR DISCUSSION**

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Fred Engbarth
Representative of the City of Sebastopol appointed to the
Sonoma County Library Commission

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines a proposed governance and oversight framework for responding to the mold contamination and moisture intrusion discovered at the Sebastopol Regional Library.

The Report is divided as follows:

Disclaimer

Executive Summary

II Introduction

II Approach

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IV. Service Continuity

V. Measure Y/W Funds

VI. Independent Oversight Measures

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The primary recommendation is that all decisions be guided by four core principles: *public and staff safety, transparency, independent oversight, and fiscal responsibility.*

The library should remain closed until qualified independent professionals verify that remediation is complete, and the facility is safe for occupancy.

The report calls for:

- Independent environmental, building-envelope, and financial reviews.
- Regular public reporting on testing results, remediation progress, costs, and reopening plans.

- Objective reopening criteria based on professional certification rather than predetermined schedules.
- Continued library services through alternative delivery methods, including pop-up services, mobile outreach, temporary pickup locations, and expanded digital access.
- Comprehensive tracking of remediation costs, insurance recoveries, and potential funding sources.

The report also recommends evaluating whether *Measure Y/Measure W* funds may legally be used for remediation and restoration, while first clarifying the respective financial responsibilities of the City of Sebastopol, insurance carriers, and the Sonoma County Library.

Finally, the report urges the Library Commission to use this incident as an opportunity to strengthen long-term facilities management through a countywide assessment of library buildings, improved preventative maintenance practices, and enhanced environmental risk monitoring.

Overall, the proposed action plan is intended to ensure a safe reopening of the Sebastopol Regional Library, maintain public confidence throughout the remediation process, and reduce the likelihood of similar facility issues throughout the Sonoma County Library system.

This incident is a "wake-up call" that it is no longer whether our library facilities need investment—the Facilities Master Plan¹ has documented those needs. The question is whether we address them through planned, shared investments today or through emergency repairs, service disruptions, and branch closures tomorrow."

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL'S REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSION ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

As a Sonoma County Library Commissioner, appointed by the City of Sebastopol, I have a dual role: **(1) Representative and liaison** – Commissioners are expected to represent the interests and needs of their appointing jurisdiction and community, serve as a liaison with local officials, and provide reports and updates on library activities to that jurisdiction; and, **(2) Independent fiduciary/governing board member** – Once appointed, a commissioner serves on the governing board of the Sonoma County Library and must make decisions in the best interests of the countywide library system as a whole, not solely in the interest of the appointing body.

The Commission establishes policy, hires and evaluates the Library Director, adopts and monitors the budget, and exercises the powers granted under the Joint Powers Agreement. In practice, this means a commissioner should:

- Maintain communication with the appointing authority.
- Keep the appointing authority informed through reports and updates.
- Understand and advocate for local community needs.
- Exercise independent judgment when voting as a member of the Library Commission, considering the interests of the entire Sonoma County Library system.

¹ <https://sonomalibrary.org/sites/default/files/attachments/facilities/SCL-FMP-Final-Report-Consolidated-2023-11-05.pdf>

So, the relationship is not one of direct control or agency, where the appointing authority directs how the commissioner must vote. Rather, the appointing authority appoints the commissioner and receives information and advocacy from that commissioner, while the commissioner has an independent duty to govern the Sonoma County Library for the benefit of the entire system.

I have not, to date, been directly involved in the discussions following the discovery of a mold incursion at the Sebastopol Regional Library.

On June 30, 2026, Stephen Zolman asked me to provide a personal assessment and outline a possible "action plan" for review by the City Manager, Mary Gourley, and the City Council.

I am happy to do so.

As your appointed Library Commissioner, my role is not to manage remediation directly but to ensure that the City, Library administration, consultants, and contractors are subject to independent verification. This is particularly important because the current situation involves potential health concerns, significant public expenditures, and questions regarding the building's condition and maintenance history.

I believe that it would be in the best interests of the parties to retain the services of a commercial property mediator.

Mediation is an informal, confidential process where a neutral third party helps disputing sides negotiate a mutually acceptable settlement. When a potential dispute exists, mediation acts as a preventative, cost-effective tool to align expectations, preserve relationships, and resolve issues before they escalate into formal, expensive litigation. Mediation is a voluntary, confidential process where a neutral third party helps landlords, tenants, or developers resolve disputes—such as lease terms, rent, or maintenance—without costly, lengthy litigation. It saves time, preserves business relationships, and allows for creative, mutually beneficial solutions.²

II. **APPROACH**

While the presence of mold in the Sebastopol Regional Library is concerning, the focus is a thorough and responsible response. We should rely on professional assessments, following recommended remediation procedures, and maintain open communication with staff and the public.

² **The Power Of Mediation In Commercial Lease Disputes**

<https://www.snproplaw.com/blog/2024/august/the-power-of-mediation-in-commercial-lease-dispu/>

Because we are located in the Santa Rosa/Bay Area, we have access to specialized commercial Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) providers and local mediators.

- [JAMS Real Estate Services](#): Provides highly experienced former judges and specialized attorneys who handle complex commercial, retail, and mixed-use real estate disputes. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
- [Mediate.com California Directory](#): Allows you to search for local business mediators offering both in-person and Zoom sessions in the Santa Rosa and North Bay area. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
- [American Arbitration Association \(AAA\)](#): Offers structured commercial mediation protocols for business-to-business and contractual real estate conflicts. [1, 2, 3, 4]

Members of our community have different perspectives regarding the mold situation. Some are primarily concerned about potential health impacts, while others are concerned about service disruptions, costs, and the duration of the closure.

Rather than approaching these concerns as competing interests, I view them as shared responsibilities. The goal is to protect health and safety, maintain public confidence, and restore services, as soon as conditions permit, while ensuring a safe environment for everyone.

My assumptions: (1) everyone in the response to this crisis cares deeply about the library and the community it serves; (2) reasonable people can interpret risks and priorities differently; and (3) we all benefit from relying on credible information and professional expertise rather than speculation or rumor.

I encourage a focus on interests rather than positions.

Instead of asking, "Who is right?" let us ask, "What information do we need, what concerns must be addressed, and what actions will best protect both public health and public trust?"

Avoid the following:

- Don't assign blame before investigations are complete.
- Don't guarantee reopening dates you cannot meet.
- Don't dismiss health concerns raised by staff or patrons.
- Do provide regular updates, even when there is little new information.
- Do express empathy and appreciation for public patience.

Ask the following:

- What facts are agreed upon?
- What information is still missing?
- What concerns are driving each stakeholder's position?
- What actions can be taken immediately while longer-term issues are resolved?

This approach shifts the conversation from blame and fear to problem-solving and trust-building, which is often the most effective path through a mold-related crisis.

III.

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN FOR DISCUSSION

1. PROTECT PUBLIC AND STAFF HEALTH

Immediate Objectives

- Support continued closure until independent environmental professionals certify occupancy.
- Require written clearance criteria before reopening.
- Ensure OSHA, California public-health, and industry remediation standards are followed.
- Confirm staff accommodations and alternate work locations.

Success Measures

- Independent environmental clearance report.
- No employee exposure claims.
- Public release of testing results.

2. DEMAND FULL TRANSPARENCY

Actions

Request a comprehensive public briefing including:

- Timeline of events.
- Environmental testing results.
- Moisture intrusion findings.
- Estimated remediation costs.
- Insurance recovery opportunities.
- Reopening scenarios.

Deliverables

- Monthly public status reports.
- Dedicated webpage with all reports and updates.
- Community town hall meeting.

The City and Library have already begun issuing joint public updates; commissioners should build on this practice with regular reporting.

3. ENSURE INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT

Actions

Request:

1. Independent industrial hygienist review.
2. Independent building-envelope assessment.
3. Root-cause analysis of moisture intrusion.

Key questions:

- How long has water intrusion existed?
- Were previous warning signs overlooked?
- Could other library facilities have similar vulnerabilities?
- What preventative measures failed?

4. MAINTAIN LIBRARY SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY (Also see, PART III, below)

Since holds have been transferred to Forestville and alternative services are being provided, commissioners should assess whether additional support is needed.

- Pop-up library services.
- Mobile library stops.
- Community-center pickup locations.
- Increased digital resource promotion.
- Temporary programming sites.

Success Measures

- Circulation levels maintained.
- Program attendance preserved.
- Minimal reduction in service access.

5. FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT

Request Regular Financial Reporting

Track:

- Investigation costs.
- Remediation expenses.
- Temporary service costs.
- Insurance reimbursements.
- Capital repair requirements.

Develop a complete fiscal impact statement before approving major expenditures.

6. REGIONAL FACILITY RISK ASSESSMENT

The discovery of elevated moisture in wall assemblies should trigger broader concern about aging facilities.

Proposal

Conduct:

- Countywide facility condition assessment.
- Moisture and mold vulnerability review.
- Deferred-maintenance inventory.

Outcome

Prioritized capital improvement plan for all Sonoma County Library facilities.

7. DEVELOP REOPENING CRITERIA

Before reopening, require:

Building Criteria

- Remediation completed.
- Moisture source corrected.
- Damaged materials replaced.
- HVAC system evaluated.

Environmental Criteria

- Clearance testing completed.
- Indoor air quality certification.
- Independent verification reports.

Public Communication Criteria

- Public release of findings.
- Reopening FAQ.
- Staff training regarding public questions.

8. LONG-TERM POLICY IMPROVEMENTS

Establish Systemwide Standards

Create policies for:

- Moisture inspections.
- Building-condition reporting.
- Environmental hazard response.
- Staff reporting procedures.
- Emergency facility closures.

Annual Review

Require annual facility-risk reporting to the Library Commission.

IV

SERVICE CONTINUITY

A deeper dive into service continuity options.

Goal: Preserve public access to library services, maintain community visibility, and demonstrate the Library's commitment to service continuity during remediation and restoration efforts.

Consider:

1. **POP-UP LIBRARY SERVICES:** Pop-up libraries ³ and mobile outreach ⁴ bring books, Wi-Fi, and library staff directly into your community. In Santa Rosa, the Sonoma County Library deploys the 29-foot **BiblioBus** to bring materials, free printing, and internet access to parks, schools, and underserved neighborhoods. Possible Locations: Parking Lot Across from the Sebastopol Center for the Arts
2. **SEBASTOPOL COMMUNITY-CENTER PICKUP LOCATIONS AND/OR A LOCATION WITHIN THE SEBASTOPOL CENTER FOR THE ARTS.**
3. **INCREASED DIGITAL RESOURCE PROMOTION.**
4. **TEMPORARY PROGRAMMING SITES:** Examples: Ives Park, Ragle Park, etc.
5. **TEMPORARY STRUCTURE:**⁵ Public libraries use several temporary structures depending on their needs: **portable modular buildings**, **bookmobiles (mobile libraries)**, and **open-air pavilions** or **tents**.

These solutions ensure uninterrupted service during renovations or provide pop-up access to underserved neighborhoods. The Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) frequently utilizes temporary structures like modular bungalows or trailers to maintain community access to books, computers, and printing services during extensive branch renovations or following disasters.

Examples include,

- **Portable Modular Buildings:** Relocatable structures often used as interim branch replacements while main library buildings undergo structural remodeling. They can be anchored to temporary foundations and include utilities.
- **Bookmobiles and Mobile Vans:** Custom-built vehicles or retrofitted trailers that bring a curated selection of books, Wi-Fi, and library staff to different neighborhoods, parks, and schools.
- **Outdoor Pavilions and Pop-Up Tents:** Semi-permanent, weather-resistant outdoor structures used to host community events, story times, or shaded outdoor reading rooms.
- **Repurposed Commercial Spaces:** In many cases, libraries lease vacant commercial properties—like storefronts in strip malls—as short-term branch spaces.

³ **Pop-Up Perfection: Staging a Pop-Up Library**

<https://publiclibrariesonline.org/2016/09/pop-up-perfection-staging-a-pop-up-library/>

⁴ BiblioBus - Mobile Library Services

<https://sonomalibrary.org/visit/locations/bibliobus>

⁵ See, *Modular Genius: Portable Library Buildings*

<https://www.modulargenius.com/lc/portable-library-buildings.html>

Building Libraries & Library Additions: General Information

<https://libguides.ala.org/library-construction>

6. LIBRARIES OUTSIDE"⁶

7. **LARGE TENT OR PAVILLION:** A weather-resistant commercial tent can serve as a temporary service point for: Holds pickup, Browsing collections, Storytime events, and, Community meetings

8. **HYBRID SERVICE MODEL:** A combination approach may provide the greatest level of service continuity:

V.

MEASURE Y ⁷ AND/OR MEASURE W ⁸FUNDS

It is my personal belief that is a strong argument that Measure Y/Measure W funds could legally be used for mold remediation at the Sebastopol Regional Library, provided the expenditures are structured as facility maintenance, repair, remediation, and restoration necessary to keep the library safe and operational.

What the Voters Authorized

The Sonoma County Library's Measure Y expenditure plan expressly includes:

⁶ Libraries Outside

<https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/ideas/libraries-outside/>

Libraries and Parks: A nature-smart partnership

https://www.childrenandnature.org/resources/fnn-libraries-and-parks-a-nature-smart-partnership/?utm_source=Children+%26+Nature+Network&utm_campaign=94771892b2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_08_05_08_50&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-94771892b2-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D&mc_cid=94771892b2&mc_eid=71aa2f7bde/

⁷ <https://www.sonomalibrary.org/sites/default/files/attachments/commission/Measure-Y-Ordinance.pdf>

⁸https://sonomacounty.gov/Main%20County%20Site/Administrative%20Support%20%26%20Fiscal%20Services/Registrar%20of%20Voters/Documents/Elections/2024/11-05-2024/SoCo_Nov2024GenElec_15_MeasW_SoCoLibrary.pdf

"Maintain⁹ and improve aging library facilities¹⁰ – many of which are over 40 years old – to make them safe, clean and welcoming."¹¹

The Library also states that Measure Y and the renewed Measure W funds are used to:
"Maintain library facilities."¹²

Measure W, approved in November 2024, continues the Measure Y sales tax and funding authority for maintaining and enhancing library services and facilities.^{13 14}

Likely Eligible Mold-Related Expenses

Potentially eligible Measure Y/W expenditures could include:

- Environmental testing.
- Industrial hygiene consulting.

⁹ *Maintain* existing library buildings and infrastructure so they remain safe, functional, accessible, and reliable. This includes routine and deferred maintenance such as roof repairs, HVAC replacement, plumbing and electrical work, fixing leaks, addressing safety hazards, and maintaining accessibility features. Public libraries across the U.S. report significant backlogs of deferred maintenance and repair needs. *Public Libraries: Many Buildings Are Reported to Be in Poor Condition, with Increasing Deferred Maintenance* <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-107262>

¹⁰ *Improve* library facilities by modernizing or upgrading them to meet current and future community needs. Improvements can include energy-efficiency upgrades, technology infrastructure improvements, accessibility enhancements, renovations of public spaces, expanded meeting rooms, improved internet connectivity, and updates to building systems. [\[library.ca.gov\]](https://www.library.ca.gov/), [\[ala.org\]](https://www.ala.org/)
See, for example, *The California State Library Building Forward Library Facilities Improvement Program* <https://www.library.ca.gov/uploads/2025/11/Building-Forward-Legislative-Report-2025.pdf> **and** *America's aging public library infrastructure requires billions for construction, renovation: New data analysis* <https://www.ala.org/news/2021/05/americas-aging-public-library-infrastructure-requires-billions-construction-renovation>

¹¹ *de Measure Y Oversight Committee 2023-2024 Report*
https://sonomalibrary.org/sites/default/files/attachments/governance/measurey/Measure-Y-23-24-EN_final.pdf

¹² Unless a document specifically excludes environmental remediation, mold repair/remediation is ordinarily included within "maintain library facilities." *Community Investment in Libraries*
<https://sonomalibrary.org/governance/librarysalestax> **and** *Many Buildings Are Reported to Be in Poor Condition, with Increasing Deferred Maintenance* <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-107262> **and** *Many Public Libraries Need Significant Repairs, But Lack the Funding* <https://www.gao.gov/blog/many-public-libraries-need-significant-repairs-but-lack-funding>

¹³ Measure W
https://sonomacounty.gov/Main%20County%20Site/Administrative%20Support%20%26%20Fiscal%20Services/Registrar%20of%20Voters/Documents/Elections/2024/11-05-2024/SoCo_Nov2024GenElec_15_MeasW_SoCoLibrary.pdf

¹⁴ *Guidelines for the Citizens' Oversight Committee for the expenditure of Measure Y Funds*
<https://sonomalibrary.org/sites/default/files/attachments/commission/Measure-Y-Oversight-Committee-RRs.pdf>

- Moisture investigations.
- Mold remediation.
- Replacement of damaged walls and finishes.
- HVAC cleaning and restoration.
- Building-envelope repairs that address the source of moisture.
- Temporary health and safety measures.
- Restoration necessary to reopen the facility safely.

As a commissioner, I would recommend your support for a legal and financial analysis addressing:

1. Can Measure Y/W funds be used immediately for remediation?
2. What portion should be paid by insurance first?
3. Will any costs be reimbursed by the City of Sebastopol as building owner?
4. Are there reserve funds available before Measure Y/W revenues are used?
5. How will these expenditures be reported to the Measure Y/W Oversight Committee?

Critical Governance Issue

The most important question may not be whether Measure Y/W funds *can* be used, but whether they *should* bear the entire burden.

The Sebastopol library building is owned by the City of Sebastopol, while the Sonoma County Library operates the library service.

Therefore, it is important to seek a clear understanding of:

- Ownership responsibilities.
- Lease or occupancy obligations.
- Insurance coverage.
- Cost-sharing arrangements between the City and the Library.

Those issues determine whether sales-tax funds should be used as the primary funding source or only after insurance and owner obligations are exhausted

VI **INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT MEASURES**

WHY? Independent oversight of mold repairs in a library helps ensure that the remediation is effective, transparent, and protective of public health, library staff, patrons, and collections.

Key reasons include:

- **Verification of the problem.** An independent industrial hygienist or environmental consultant can assess the extent of contamination and identify moisture sources without being influenced by the contractor performing the remediation. This helps ensure the scope of work is appropriate.
- **Conflict-of-interest protection.** If the same company both assesses the mold and performs the remediation, there may be incentives to either overstate or understate the extent of the problem. Independent oversight provides objective review.
- **Health and safety assurance.** Mold can affect indoor air quality and create health concerns for building occupants. Independent experts can verify that containment,

removal, cleaning, and ventilation procedures meet accepted standards and adequately protect workers and the public.

- **Protection of public assets.** Libraries contain books, archives, equipment, furnishings, and building materials that may be damaged by mold or by improper remediation. Independent oversight helps ensure valuable collections are protected.
- **Quality control and accountability.** Independent oversight can include inspections during the work and post-remediation verification (sometimes called clearance testing) to determine whether the affected areas have been properly cleaned and restored.
- **Public trust.** Libraries are public facilities funded by taxpayers. Independent review demonstrates that decisions are based on objective evidence and can increase confidence among library users, staff, commissioners, and local government officials.

Independent oversight of library mold remediation helps ensure objective assessment, proper remediation, protection of public health and library collections, verification that repairs are effective, and accountability for the expenditure of public funds.

1. INDUSTRIAL HYGIENIST: ¹⁵As a JPA Commissioner, your role is not to manage remediation directly but to ensure that the City, Library administration, consultants, and contractors are subject to independent verification. This is particularly important because the current situation involves potential health concerns, significant public expenditures, and questions regarding the building's condition and maintenance history. The City and Library have reported mold discovery within wall cavities and moisture indications in multiple wall assemblies, making independent oversight essential.

The Commission should request retention of an industrial hygienist who has **no financial relationship with the remediation contractor.**

Responsibilities

- Review all sampling protocols.
- Evaluate mold and moisture findings.
- Approve remediation work plans before commencement.
- Conduct clearance testing after remediation.
- Certify whether spaces are safe for occupancy.

Why It Matters

The same contractor should not both perform remediation and certify its success. Independent validation reduces liability and increases public confidence.

Commissioner Deliverables

Require a written report addressing:

- Areas tested.
- Sampling methodology.
- Laboratory results.
- Remaining risks.
- Reoccupancy recommendation.

¹⁵ An independent industrial hygienist is a self-employed or third-party consultant who specializes in anticipating, identifying, and controlling workplace hazards. They test environments for hazards like asbestos, mold, toxic chemicals, and noise, helping California businesses comply with [Cal/OSHA](#) regulations and keep workers safe.

2. INDEPENDENT BUILDING ENVELOPE INVESTIGATION:¹⁶ The mold itself is not the root problem; moisture intrusion is.

An independent building-envelope consultant should evaluate:

- Roof systems.
- Exterior walls.
- Windows.
- Flashing.
- Drainage systems.
- HVAC-related moisture sources.

Current public updates indicate elevated moisture levels may exist in wall assemblies throughout the building. Determining how moisture entered the structure is critical to preventing recurrence.

Key Questions

- Where did water enter?
- How long has intrusion been occurring?
- Is the problem isolated or systemic?
- Are design defects involved?
- ARE THERE WARRANTY OR CONTRACTOR CLAIMS AVAILABLE?

3. FORENSIC TIMELINE REVIEW¹⁷

Commissioners should request a factual chronology.

Review Elements

- Prior complaints.
- Maintenance reports.
- Work orders.
- Contractor inspections.
- Building condition assessments.
- Staff observations.

The goal is not to assign blame but to understand:

- When signs first appeared.
- Whether warning signs were missed.
- Whether reporting systems worked properly.

Outcome

A lessons-learned report for future facilities management.

4. INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT¹⁸

¹⁶ An independent building envelope investigation is a specialized, objective assessment of a structure's exterior shell (walls, roof, windows, and waterproofing). Conducted by third-party experts, it is designed to trace water intrusion, air leaks, and material deterioration back to their true root cause, independent of the original construction or design teams

¹⁷ An independent forensic timeline review is an impartial, step-by-step reconstruction of past events, used primarily in civil, criminal, or employment disputes. It involves neutral, certified experts analyzing objective evidence—such as emails, system logs, financial records, and surveillance—to establish exactly *what* happened and *when*, ensuring the findings are legally defensible

¹⁸ Independent financial oversight in California is a system of objective checks and balances to ensure public funds are spent legally and ethically. It prevents fraud, waste, and mismanagement by using external, unbiased bodies (like CPAs or citizen groups) to evaluate government and public agency budgets.

Because remediation costs can escalate rapidly, establish formal financial reporting requirements.

Monthly Reporting

Track:

- Investigation costs.
- Consultant contracts.
- Remediation expenditures.
- Temporary service costs.
- Lost service impacts.
- Insurance claims.

Commissioner Questions

- Are costs within budget?
- Is insurance covering eligible expenses?
- What portion may require capital funding?
- Are emergency procurement procedures justified?

5. THIRD-PARTY CONTRACT REVIEW¹⁹

For large remediation projects, commissioners may request review by County Counsel or independent procurement staff.

Review Areas

- Competitive bidding requirements.
- Emergency contracting authority.
- Scope adequacy.
- Contractor qualifications.
- Conflict-of-interest disclosures.

Purpose

To ensure the public receives maximum value and transparency.

6. REOPENING VERIFICATION PANEL²⁰

Before reopening, create a formal review process.

The Commission could require sign-off from:

1. Environmental hygienist.
2. Remediation contractor.
3. Building-envelope consultant.
4. City building official.
5. Library Director.

Reopening Checklist

- Moisture source eliminated.
- Damaged materials removed.

¹⁹ An **independent third-party contract review** is when an objective, outside legal or industry expert analyzes a contract provided by someone else. The goal is to identify hidden risks, unfair clauses, and ensure the agreement complies with California-specific laws (like AB 5 worker classification or the Freelance Worker Protection Act) before signing.

²⁰ An **Independent Verification Panel** (POST-COVID) in California was a concept used during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were local, third-party citizen or public health panels established by some California counties. Their purpose was to review and verify that local businesses had successfully implemented mandatory safety protocols before the businesses were allowed to reopen.

- Air quality verified.
- HVAC inspected.
- Occupancy deemed safe.

No single entity should be solely responsible for declaring the building safe.

7. PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNITY OVERSIGHT²¹

An informed public is an additional layer of oversight.

Recommendations

Publish:

- Environmental reports.
- Moisture assessments.
- Consultant reports.
- Remediation plans.
- Cost summaries.

The City and Library have already issued public updates regarding testing and remediation planning; a structured public reporting process would expand and formalize this effort.

Community Meetings

Hold:

- Monthly status briefings.
- Public Q&A sessions.
- Commission updates at regular meetings.

8. SYSTEMWIDE FACILITIES AUDIT²²

A commissioner should think beyond the immediate crisis.

Because moisture was found in concealed wall spaces and additional investigation may be necessary, the Commission should evaluate whether similar risks exist elsewhere in the Sonoma County Library system.

Proposed Audit

Review all library facilities for:

- Water intrusion history.
- Deferred maintenance.
- Roof age.
- Building-envelope condition.
- HVAC performance.
- Mold vulnerability.

Deliverable

A countywide facility-risk matrix and capital-improvement priority list.

VII. CLOSING STATEMENT

²¹ Public transparency and community oversight in California refer to the legal and structural frameworks designed to hold government agencies accountable to the public. They ensure that civic operations, law enforcement, and public officials remain open, responsive, and checked by the citizens they serve.

²² "California systemwide facilities audit" typically refers to major, government-mandated assessments of the physical, operational, and safety conditions of state-owned properties—such as higher education campuses, K-12 public schools, and general state office buildings.

The discovery of mold contamination and moisture intrusion at the Sebastopol Regional Library presents a serious challenge, but it also presents an opportunity.

Our responsibility now is not to assign blame, speculate about causes, or rush toward predetermined conclusions.

Instead, our obligation is to ensure that decisions are guided by facts, professional expertise, transparency, and a steadfast commitment to public health, employee safety, sound fiscal management, and uninterrupted library service whenever possible.

As a Library Commissioners, my role is not to manage day-to-day remediation activities.

A Commissioner's role is governance.

I am responsible for asking the right questions, insisting upon independent verification, ensuring accountability for public expenditures, and maintaining public confidence in the institutions we serve.

The community deserves assurance that the library will not reopen until qualified professionals have confirmed that the facility is safe for occupancy. Staff deserve a safe workplace. Taxpayers deserve transparency regarding costs, funding sources, and decision-making. Library patrons deserve reliable access to services throughout the closure and confidence that their library system is acting responsibly and prudently.

This incident should also serve as a reminder that facilities stewardship is a core component of maintaining excellent public library services.

Deferred maintenance, aging infrastructure, moisture intrusion, and environmental risks are challenges facing public facilities throughout California and across the nation.

By learning from this experience and applying those lessons throughout the Sonoma County Library system, we can reduce future risks and better protect the public assets entrusted to our care.

I believe the guiding principles moving forward should be straightforward:

- Safety before schedules.
- Facts before assumptions.
- Transparency before speculation.
- Prevention before recurrence.
- Accountability before convenience.

If we remain committed to those principles, the Sebastopol Regional Library can reopen as a safe, healthy, and welcoming facility while strengthening public trust in both the Sonoma County Library and the City of Sebastopol.

The ultimate measure of success will not simply be the reopening of a building. It will be the confidence of our staff, patrons, and community that the response was handled with integrity, diligence, transparency, and an unwavering commitment to the public interest.

Respectfully submitted,

Fred Engbarth

Representative of the City of Sebastopol
Sonoma County Library Commission

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1 PROPOSED MOTIONS

DRAFT

Direct staff to provide a funding analysis identifying all potential sources for mold investigation, remediation, and restoration costs, including insurance proceeds, City of Sebastopol responsibilities, capital reserves, and the permissible use of Measure Y/Measure W revenues, together with an opinion from legal counsel regarding expenditure-plan compliance.

That approach protects the Library Commission's fiduciary responsibility while ensuring Measure W taxpayers understand exactly how their dedicated sales-tax revenues are being used.

DRAFT:

Direct the Library Director to provide monthly public updates regarding the Sebastopol Library remediation effort; obtain independent environmental and building-condition reviews; present a fiscal impact report; develop reopening criteria; and return with recommendations for a systemwide facilities risk assessment and preventive maintenance program."

This approach positions a commissioner as focused on safety, transparency, fiscal responsibility, uninterrupted library service, and prevention of future facility failures.

DRAFT:

Direct the Library Director to retain and/or obtain reports from independent environmental, building-envelope, and financial reviewers; establish public reporting requirements; provide monthly updates to the Commission; develop objective reopening criteria certified by qualified third parties; and present recommendations for a systemwide facilities risk assessment." This approach allows the Commission to demonstrate diligence, transparency, and fiduciary responsibility while maintaining clear separation between governance and day-to-day operational management.

ATTACHMENT 2: NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

Norman Public Library Central to close for remediation (ARCHIVE)

<https://www.normanok.gov/news/norman-public-library-central-close-remediation>

Library environmental remediation activity (Robert L. Carothers Library and Learning Commons)

<https://www.uri.edu/news/2024/11/library-environmental-remediation-activity/>

Prescott Valley Library Auditorium Mold Discovery During Construction

https://theprescotttimes.com/news/prescott-valley-library-auditorium-mold-discovery-during-construction/article_092361dc-6dc9-11ee-a077-6bbfb6db7adc.html

ATTACHMENT 3: READINGS

A Brief Guide to Mold in the Workplace Safety and Health Information Bulletin

SHIB 03-10-10; updated 11-08-13

<https://www.osha.gov/publications/shib101003>

A Complete Guide to the Water Damage Restoration Process

<https://safetyculture.com/topics/water-damage-restoration>

BPG Mold

https://conservation-wiki.com/wiki/BPG_Mold

3.8 Emergency Salvage of Moldy Books and Paper

https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/3.-emergency-management/3.8-emergency-salvage-of-moldy-books-and-paper?__cf_chl_f_tk=GhnKCBg.L8yduNRJUdhy35CNdsN5ERk0pfhCRFcsYzA-1782850163-1.0.1.1-273UH_d8orpUee01ODm1zm0Tyvo9TW01VSL6Fq.E5gY

Exposed to Mold at Work? Understand Your Rights as an Employee

<https://www.oshaeducationcenter.com/mold-in-the-workplace-employee-rights/>

Frequently Asked Questions about Mold (CDPH)

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/clh/dehl/ehi/Pages/AQS/Frequently-Asked-Questions-about-Mold.aspx>

Levels of Mold Remediation: Understanding the Stages of Mold

<https://pksafety.com/blogs/pk-safety-blog/levels-of-mold-remediation-understanding-the-stages-of-mold-88c47d>

LIBRARY PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION TUTORIAL

<https://chinapreservationtutorial.library.cornell.edu/content/mold/>

MANAGING A MOLD INFESTATION: GUIDELINES FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

<https://ccaha.org/resources/managing-mold-infestation-guidelines-disaster-response>

MOLD (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/mold-health/about/index.html>

Mold Clean Up Guidelines and Recommendations

https://www.cdc.gov/mold-health/about/clean-up.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm

MOLD CONTROL AND PREVENTION IN LIBRARIES

<https://aspenenvironmentalservices.com/blog/mold-control-and-prevention-in-libraries/>

Mold Prevention & Protocol FOR BUILDING OCCUPANTS

<https://web.uri.edu/ehs/wp-content/uploads/sites/2063/URI-Mold-Prevention-and-Remediation-Protocol-Building-Occupants.pdf>

Mold Remediation Timeline: What Property Owners Should Expect

<https://moldremediationauthority.com/mold-remediation-timeline-expectations/>

Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings Guide: Chapter 3 Investigating, Evaluating and Remediating Moisture and Mold Problems

<https://www.epa.gov/mold/mold-remediation-schools-and-commercial-buildings-guide-chapter-3>

Preservation Matters: Disasters - Mold on Cultural Resources and Collections

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/preservation-matters-disasters-mold-on-cultural-resources-and-collections.htm>

Toxic Mold Basics

<https://www.anthemcap.com/anthem-california/find-legal-support/resources/consumer->

Workplace Safety: Analyzing the True Cost of Mold Remediation

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/clh/dehl/eh1/Pages/AQS/Frequently-Asked-Questions-about-Mold.aspx>

ATTACHMENT 3: DISCUSSION DRAFT: LONG-TERM MOLD PREVENTION PLAN

1. GOALS

- Protect public health (staff and patrons)
- Preserve collections (books, archives, equipment)
- Reduce liability and emergency remediation costs
- Build climate resilience (wildfire smoke + rain + humidity cycles)

2. ROOT CAUSES TO ADDRESS

Mold is always driven by **moisture + time**. In Sonoma County libraries, typical contributors include:

- Roof leaks and deferred maintenance
- Coastal humidity (especially west county branches)
- Poor HVAC dehumidification or ventilation imbalance
- Plumbing leaks inside walls
- Flooding or stormwater intrusion
- Restricted airflow (tight shelving, storage rooms)
- After-hours shutdown of HVAC systems

3. BUILDING & INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

A. Moisture Control (Top Priority)

Target: keep indoor RH between 40–55%

Actions:

- Install permanent **humidity and temperature sensors** (networked)
- Add **automated alerts** when RH exceeds 60% for >24 hours
- Upgrade or tune HVAC systems to include **dehumidification cycles**
- Ensure **continuous ventilation (not fully shut off at night)**

Capital improvements:

- Replace aging HVAC units with **variable-speed systems**

- Add **dedicated dehumidifiers** in:
 - archives
 - lower floors/basements
 - west county branches (e.g., Guerneville, Occidental areas)

B. Building Envelope Integrity

Conduct a **system-wide annual envelope audit**:

Focus areas:

- Roof membranes and flashing
- Windows and seals
- Exterior wall penetrations (cables, vents)
- Foundation and crawlspaces

Upgrades:

- Improve **drainage and grading** around buildings
- Install or repair **gutters, downspouts, and splash blocks**
- Use **vapor barriers in crawlspaces**

C. Plumbing Risk Reduction

- Annual inspection of all plumbing and restrooms
- Install **leak detection sensors** under sinks and in mechanical rooms
- Replace aging pipes proactively (especially in older branches)

4. INTERIOR ENVIRONMENT & OPERATIONS

A. Airflow Management

- Maintain **clear spacing behind shelving (2–4 inches minimum)**
- Avoid placing shelving directly against exterior walls
- Use **circulation fans in problem zones**

B. Cleaning & Housekeeping Protocols

- Use **HEPA-filter vacuums**
- Avoid excessive wet mopping; use controlled moisture cleaning
- Replace water-damaged materials within **24–48 hours**

C. Collection Protection

- Store rare or archival materials in:
 - controlled humidity rooms
 - sealed archival containers where appropriate
- Use **desiccant systems** in special collections

5. MONITORING & EARLY DETECTION

A. Building Monitoring System

- Install centralized dashboard for:
 - humidity
 - temperature
 - leak sensors
- Integrate with county facilities or library IT systems

B. Routine Inspections

- Monthly staff walk-through checklist:
 - musty odors

- discoloration on walls/ceilings
 - condensation on windows/pipes
- Quarterly facilities inspections (professional)

C. Mold Testing Policy

- **Do not rely on routine air testing**
- Use testing only:
 - after remediation
 - when source is unclear

6. RESPONSE PROTOCOL (STANDARDIZED ACROSS ALL BRANCHES)

Within First 24 Hours

- Identify and stop moisture source
- Isolate affected area
- Begin drying (fans + dehumidifiers)

Within 24–48 Hours

- Remove porous materials if contaminated:
 - carpet
 - drywall
 - ceiling tiles

Escalation

- Use certified remediation contractor if:
 - area >10 sq ft
 - HVAC contamination suspected
 - repeated incidents at same location

7. CAPITAL PLANNING & BUDGETING

A. Risk-Based Prioritization

Rank branches based on:

- Age of building
- History of leaks or mold
- Proximity to coast or flood zones
- HVAC condition

B. 5–10 Year Investment Plan

Include:

- HVAC upgrades
- Roof replacements
- Smart sensor systems
- Crawlspace encapsulation

C. Funding Opportunities

- FEMA hazard mitigation grants
- California climate resilience grants
- Energy efficiency programs (for HVAC upgrades)

8. STAFF TRAINING & POLICY

A. Training Topics

- Recognizing early mold signs
- Proper reporting procedures
- Emergency moisture response

B. Policy Standardization

- One **county-wide mold prevention SOP**
- One **incident reporting system**

9. CLIMATE RESILIENCE CONSIDERATIONS

Sonoma County risks:

- Heavy winter storms
- Atmospheric rivers
- Coastal fog + humidity
- Post-wildfire building vulnerability

Adaptations:

- Design for **higher baseline humidity**
- Ensure **backup drying capacity (portable dehumidifiers)**
- Maintain **emergency response kits at each branch**

10. METRICS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Track annually:

- Number of mold incidents
- Time to response
- Buildings exceeding humidity thresholds
- Maintenance backlog

Set targets:

- 50% reduction in incidents within 3 years
- Zero repeat mold events in the same location

11. EXAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Year 1

- Install sensors in highest-risk branches
- Standardize policies and training
- Address known active issues

Years 2–3

- Expand monitoring system
- Begin HVAC upgrades
- Complete envelope audits

Years 4–10

- Complete major capital improvements
- Integrate mold prevention into all new construction/renovation

The most effective strategy is **proactive moisture control + continuous monitoring**. If humidity is controlled and water intrusion is quickly addressed, mold becomes a rare, manageable issue rather than a recurring crisis.

ATTACHMENT 4.: ASSET MANAGEMENT, RISK REDUCTION, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE IMPACTS. (RECOMMENDATIONS)

ASSET MANAGEMENT, RISK REDUCTION, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE IMPACTS. (RECOMMENDATIONS)

1. DEVELOP A COUNTYWIDE FACILITIES FUNDING COMPACT

Ask the Library Commission and JPA member agencies to establish a shared understanding that deferred maintenance is growing faster than available funding.

Key elements:

- Agree on facility condition standards.
- Prioritize life-safety, ADA, roof, HVAC, and building envelope projects first.
- Create a multi-year capital improvement schedule.
- Establish annual funding targets for maintenance and capital reserves.

The Facilities Master Plan already identifies long-term maintenance and modernization needs, providing a foundation for these discussions.

2. PRODUCE BRANCH-SPECIFIC RISK ASSESSMENTS

City councils respond better to local impacts than countywide statistics.

For each branch:

- Building age.
- Deferred maintenance backlog.
- Estimated replacement value.
- Consequences of failure (closure, reduced hours, water damage, ADA exposure, etc.).
- Cost of repairing now versus later.

Recent branch closures and renovations demonstrate how facility issues can directly affect public service.

3. CREATE A FAIR COST-SHARING FORMULA

JPA agencies are more likely to participate when there is a transparent formula.

Possible factors:

- Population served.
- Square footage.
- Library visits.
- Building ownership responsibility.
- Assessed property values.

The goal is to reduce annual debates and replace them with predictable contributions.

4. TIE CAPITAL REQUESTS TO COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

Avoid framing requests as:

"The library needs a new roof."

Instead:

"Without roof replacement, we risk closure of a branch serving thousands of residents annually."

Connect facility investments to:

- Literacy.
- Student success.
- Digital access.
- Workforce development.
- Emergency resilience.

- Community meeting space.

5. PURSUE JOINT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Rather than relying exclusively on municipal budgets:

- State library grants.
- Federal infrastructure programs.
- Energy-efficiency incentives.
- Community foundations.
- Public-private partnerships.
- Sonoma County Public Library Foundation fundraising.

The Roseland project provides an example of combining public and philanthropic investment.

6. ESTABLISH A DEDICATED FACILITIES RESERVE

One of the biggest causes of deterioration is insufficient annual reinvestment.

A best practice is:

- Annual condition assessment updates.
- Dedicated facilities reserve fund.
- Scheduled replacement cycles for roofs, HVAC systems, parking lots, and building systems.

This helps prevent emergency closures and costly deferred maintenance.

7. BUILD A COALITION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Consider annual presentations to:

- Sebastopol City Council.
- Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.
- Other city councils participating in the JPA.

Present:

- Current facility condition ratings.
- Deferred maintenance trends.
- Upcoming risks.
- Funding options.

The Facilities Master Plan already gives credibility to the message because it was developed through a formal system-wide assessment process.