

To Washburn City Council Members:

The purpose of this letter is to help each of you understand our position regarding the request from the City Administration and Public Works Departments to compensate the City of Washburn for expenses related to Book Across the Bay. We feel it is important for each of you to understand our situation.

February 18, 2023 will be our 26th year of providing our unique winter event for the communities of Washburn and Ashland. As always, hundreds of volunteers work year-round to bring this event to life. This event is a critical fundraiser for many school and other non-profit organizations.

Last week we learned that our request for the event permit would be allowed on your agenda but that the City Administration would recommend to the council the request be denied approval. Book Across the Bay board members have met with the Administration several occasions to discuss costs and expenses that, they say, the City of Washburn incurs as a result of Book Across the Bay. The Administration has requested \$4100.00 be paid to the City to cover those expenses. This calculation includes expenses related to police services for \$644.00, \$70.00 for Administrative Time, and \$3500.00 for plowing by the Public Works Department.

Book Across the Bay cannot make a payment like that and we are requesting the same application and fee schedule as other City events are offered.

As you know, we also work with the City of Ashland and there are no excessive fees from them beyond the normal event applications. Making a payment to Washburn would almost certainly end up causing a required payment to Ashland.

The expenses the Administration brings up are not services we have requested nor do we intend to request them. We provide, at our own expense, additional law enforcement with the Sheriff reserves; they patrol the event. We welcome the presence of the City of Washburn police officers, but we do not request them nor do we place any additional requests with them.

The EMS team members of Washburn and Ashland are on stand-by; we have volunteers who coordinate communication in the event of an emergency. On-ice minor injuries and illnesses are managed and transported by our volunteer teams. We provide physician and first aid services to participants at the finish line. In the event of a true emergency, we would rely on the EMS teams as would any event or organization at any time.

In regard to the Public Works Department, we appreciate prior efforts to assist us. They have been critically important in solving inevitable yet unexpected emergencies or complications with the event. However, the stated cost of event plowing is not a request we have made. In fact, quite the contrary. We have requested that the City does not assist with plowing at the event site. The timing and details of plowing are critical; volunteers utilize Book Across the Bay equipment to prepare the site.

In short, we feel that the expenses the City Administration is listing are made by choice by the City of Washburn. We have not asked for these services.

It is important to understand that Book Across the Bay is 100% orchestrated by volunteers; the proceeds pay the expenses and the rest of the earned money goes to the volunteer groups who did the work. We guarantee this to our volunteer groups; otherwise, this event would not be sustainable. For example, the music boosters for Washburn School District have received more than \$30,000.00 in the last ten

years for their efforts to provide the chili feed at the finish line. Athletics teams, Scouts and others in your community have been beneficiaries for years.

We simply cannot run this event without our volunteer groups. In hard years where turnout is low and very little money is earned, Book Across the Bay board members personally carry the debt of the expenses to make sure the volunteer groups are compensated. Extreme weather and the pandemic have caused some hard years.

In addition to our essential volunteers, we rely on donations that are made by individuals and businesses alike. Many of you may be aware of our business sponsors over the years; they are critical to our success. Because local businesses invest in us, we make every effort to purchase our necessary supplies locally. On average the cost to produce Book Across the Bay is over \$65,000.00.

Other than Book Across the Bay being a critical fundraiser for our volunteer groups, it is a beneficial fiscal event for both Washburn and Ashland. It draws more than 4000 participants and spectators. Those people spend money in our communities. They utilize gas stations/convenience stores, restaurants, and shops. They fill hotel rooms and other rental units in the region. Regional economic impact is estimated to be in excess of 1.6 million dollars.

Again, we cannot make a \$4100.00 payment to the City of Washburn and should you decide it to be necessary, we would be forced to change our venue. We are hopeful you will allow us to once again create this unique and valuable experience for the City of Washburn and greater Chequamegon Bay community. The below board members would welcome any conversation via telephone should a council member like to discuss the matter further prior to the meeting.

Sincerely,

Book Across the Bay Board Members

Andrew Matheus, 715.209.1068

Tom Fitz, 715.292.3745

Benjamin Thoen, 773.710.4937