Presentation to the Moorhead City Council
November 9, 2026
by NLLN Executive Director, Dr. Kathy Brock Enger

Hello Madam Mayor, Council Members,

My name is Kathy Brock Enger. I am the Executive Director of Northern Lights Library Network (NLLN) and I am here today to formally thank you for the opportunity to support of the City of Moorhead's new library and community center, The Loop.

Thank you to the council for all you have done to make the new library a possibility. The community is surely grateful for your work, especially as you see how the library is so delightfully currently in use.

A special thank you to Chizuko Shastri, Vice President of Northern Lights Library Network who represents Lake Agassiz Regional Library on the NLLN Governing Board. Chizuko made this opportunity possible.

Thank you to the NLLN Governing Board for sharing our resources with the City of Moorhead.

The NLLN Governing Board is comprised of representatives from four regional public library systems and representatives from public, academic, school and special libraries in the region.

Our membership is comprised of two hundred eighty academic, public, school, and special libraries in twenty-three counties in North-Central, Northwest, and West-Central Minnesota covering a geographic region of 26,950 square miles (Minnesota is comprised of 86,939 square miles), and includes the following twenty-three counties: Becker, Beltrami, Cass, Clay, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Douglas, Grant, Hubbard, Kittson, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Roseau, Stevens, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin.

Northern Lights Library Network is fully funded by the Minnesota Legislature.

We are a library nonprofit and our board is a volunteer board.

The Minnesota Legislature funds Northern Lights Library Network to recognize the kinds of library services people need at the local level and to determine the supporting structures required for local library systems to function successfully, taking into account the unique needs of people at the local level and the different types of libraries served.

It is the intent of the Minnesota Legislature to bring the democratic approach of libraries to citizens throughout the State of Minnesota:

- to support the freedom of access to information:
- the freedom to read,
- the freedom to understand content, context, and difficult or simple concepts,
- freedom to meet in unbiased spaces,
- the freedom of speech,
- the freedom to think freely for oneself.

Freedom that is clearly activated and energized for citizens through libraries.

I can't think of a more democratic agency than libraries and as a library nonprofit serving libraries, I can't think of an agency more democratic than Northern Lights Library Network.

There was a time not too long ago that Northern Lights Library Network was targeted for extinction. In an effort to eliminate Northern Lights Library Network, an increase in funding was not forthcoming for 15 years. Throughout that time, as executive director, I cut all expenses to the bone; yet, I didn't lay off staff and continued to serve the region. I learned that organizations can operate well with few expenses. The Minnesota Legislature prevailed and with a funding increase in 2023, we were able to continue to support libraries.

As a result of the funding increase, Northern Lights Library Network was able to support Moorhead's new city library and we hope to continue to support libraries in

our region with the help of the Minnesota Legislature and sound fiscal management.

If you would be so thoughtful, I'd like to say a few words about freedom.

Let it ring.

Libraries are beacons of democracy that ring freedom loud and clear, all around.

Let freedom ring.

All of my forebears emigrated to Minnesota and I am standing before you today because they made Minnesota home. I love this state and so appreciate the fact that my relatives brought me here.

My grandfather Martin Brock emigrated to the U.S. from Denmark and fought for the U.S. in the trenches in France during the First World War.

During The Cold War, Martin's son, my father Dale Borup Brock, joined the navy, and flew over Soviet air space as a flight engineer, taking pictures between the Second World War and the Koren War.

Both put their lives on the line for freedom. As I look around this room, I recognize that everyone here has

stories of their family, friends, or themselves serving this country so we can freely determine our own destinies.

Let freedom ring.

I often wonder how long it took for my relatives to become citizens once they landed in Minnesota, with their broken English, many tilling the land for the first time.

How long were they able to live here in Minnesota as they sought to become citizens?

How were they able to freely work here, to build this country, to build this state?

To work unhindered until they could become citizens?

Let freedom ring.

I have an early 16 mm film clip that my father took of me holding an American flag in my girl scout uniform, marching in the Memorial Day Parade in Alexandria.

At the time, I didn't understand his pride.

Now, I do.

Let freedom ring.

Thank you for your service.