

TENTATIVE AGENDA  
FOR REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL  
**MAIN LIBRARY**  
**FIRST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**  
**7711 GOODWOOD BOULEVARD**  
**BATON ROUGE, LA 70806**  
**MARCH 19, 2015**  
**4:00 P.M.**

- I. ROLL CALL
- II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 19, 2015
- III. REPORTS BY THE DIRECTOR
  - A. FINANCIAL REPORT
  - B. SYSTEM REPORTS
- IV. OTHER REPORTS
  - A. MAIN LIBRARY AT GOODWOOD
  - B. RIVER CENTER BRANCH LIBRARY
  - C. MAINTENANCE AND ADDITIONAL CAPITAL PROJECTS
  - D. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS
- V. NEW BUSINESS
  - A. TO VOTE TO SEND COMMENTS TO CITY-PARISH ADMINISTRATION CONCERNING TAX ABATEMENT PROPOSAL - MR. SPENCER WATTS
- VI. OLD BUSINESS
  - A. REVIEW OF MILLAGE PROPOSALS AND VOTE ON MILLAGE RATE FOR LIBRARY TAX RENEWAL ELECTION – MR. SPENCER WATTS
  - B. REVIEW OF OPTIONS AND DISCUSSION REGARDING COURSE OF ACTION FOR A SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY – MR. SPENCER WATTS
  - C. REVIEW OF INFORMATION ABOUT MEETING ROOM USAGE AND MEETING ROOM POLICY REVISIONS– MR. SPENCER WATTS AND MS. MARY STEIN
- VII. COMMENTS BY THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL

**ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BOARD'S PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY, ALL ITEMS ON WHICH ACTION IS TO BE TAKEN ARE OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT, AND COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS MAY BE RECEIVED ON OTHER TOPICS REPORTED AT SUCH TIME AS THE OPPORTUNITY IS ANNOUNCED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OR THE PERSON CONDUCTING THE MEETING.**

Revised Minutes of the Meeting of the  
East Baton Rouge Parish Library Board of Control

March 19, 2015

The regular meeting of the East Baton Rouge Parish Library Board of Control was held in the first floor Conference Room of the Main Library at Goodwood at 7711 Goodwood Boulevard on Thursday, March 19, 2015. Ms. Tanya Freeman, President of the Board called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Members of the Board present were Mr. Stanford O. Bardwell, Jr., Mr. Logan Leger, Ms. Terrie Johnson, Ms. Kizzy Payton, and Mr. Travis Woodard. Absent from the meeting was Board member, Mr. Jason Jacob. Also in attendance were Mr. Spencer Watts, Library Director; Ms. Patricia Husband, Assistant Library Director of Branch Services; Ms. Mary Stein, Assistant Library Director of Administration; Ms. Rhonda Pinsonat, Library Business Manager; Mr. Ronnie Pierce, Assistant Library Business Manager; Ms. Liz Zozulin, Executive Assistant to the Library Director; and Mr. Brian Thornhill, Library LAN Administrator. Absent from the meeting was Ms. Sonya Gordon, Library Public Relations Coordinator. Captain Blair Nicholson of the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office; Mr. Frank Hillyard, videographer for Metro 21; Ms. Andrea Gallo, reporter with *The Advocate*, Ms. Diana Samuels, reporter with *The Times-Picayune (NOLA)* and several members of the community also attended.

Ms. Freeman asked Ms. Zozulin to take the roll which she did. Ms. Freeman then asked for the approval of the minutes of the regular Library Board meeting of February 19, 2015. Mr. Woodard made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Johnson and approved unanimously.

### **III. Reports by the Director**

#### **A. Financial Reports**

Ms. Freeman asked Mr. Watts to present the reports. Mr. Watts asked Ms. Pinsonat to make the financial report. Ms. Pinsonat said that the Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Encumbrances through February 28, 2015 show operating expenditures of \$4,351,054.96 or 10.31% of the operating budget. Through February, we should have spent no more than 16.7% of the operating budget.

Cash Collections from Property Taxes for 2015 remain strong as we are approximately \$1,800,000 and 4.82% ahead of the same three months in 2014.

Ms. Pinsonat asked if there were any questions. Mr. Woodard asked why the expenses were only 10% of the operating budget at the end of February instead of the projected amount of 16.7%. Ms. Pinsonat replied that approximately only one month of benefits has been recorded as opposed to two. Mr. Woodard then asked if the recorded expenses would catch up later in the

year. Ms. Pinsonat noted that many of the expenses will not be recorded by the Department of Finance until the end of the year.

## **B. System Reports**

Mr. Watts asked Ms. Stein to give the PowerPoint presentation *Around the Parish in 90 Seconds* which included the month of March 2015. Below are some of the highlights:

- Community conversations continue about the Library's strategic plan. Staff have been chatting with citizens at various branches, through e-mail, through hand-outs, and by phone.
- We launched the One Book/One Community read of *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Our street party in Town Square was very successful.
- A "Lucky Dog" vendor with his street cart arrived from New Orleans.
- The J.K. Haynes Middle School Band played under the direction of Mr. Wess "Warmdaddy" Anderson as the warm up band for the Michael Foster Project.
- The musicians were talented and amazing; having never played instruments until last October.
- The street party also featured fortune tellers, artists drawing caricatures, face painting and street performers.
- The Michael Foster Project took it to the streets starting a second line. The second line was joined by the Zulu tramps. Participants enjoyed this get-together for *A Confederacy of Dunces*.
- Kids of all ages celebrated Dr. Seuss's birthday as they "Read Across America". Football players Corey Webster and Marcus Randall read to children at the Bluebonnet Regional Branch Library.
- The Library launched the program, "1,000 Books before Kindergarten" on March 16<sup>th</sup>. Will Hillenbrand, children's author and illustrator, has given the East Baton Rouge Parish Library permission to use his brand on our flyers, bookmarks, and other printed material to promote this program.
- A STEM Robotics class was held at the Delmont Garden's Branch Library. These classes attract both girls and boys.
- In conjunction with the "One Book/One Community" read the author of *Butterfly in the Typewriter* and producer of the documentary film, *Omega Point* spoke to patrons at an after-hours program at the Main Library.

Ms. Stein noted that the Library has been featured in the press with wonderful mention about our VOLUMEN project. The college student involved in the project was one of the TEDx speakers. Our newsletter, *The Source*, contains information about our events and programs and the public grab copies as soon as they are printed.

Ms. Stein also said that several sportsmen who have written books, including Roman Bates, Everett Gibson, Michael Lewis, Barret Murphy, Jim Taylor and Roger Cador will speak to patrons on March 29<sup>th</sup> at the Main Library. Classical guitarist, Peter Fletcher will perform on March 28<sup>th</sup> also at the Main Library. Ms. Stein asked if there were any questions.

There being none from the Board, Ms. Freeman asked for public comments. Mr. John Berry, a member of the public, asked if the film, *Omega Point* is available to the public. Ms. Stein replied affirmatively. She said the producer, Joe Sanford, is allowing streaming of the documentary. It can be found by googling *Omega Point*.

Ms. Freeman read Item A under Other Reports.

#### **IV. Other Reports**

##### **A. Main Library at Goodwood**

Mr. Watts then presented the report on the Main Library at Goodwood. He said on March 11<sup>th</sup> the City-Parish accepted DPW's recommendation of the final acceptance of the Main Library at Goodwood project, and accepted the final change order which was approved by the Metropolitan Council. The final change order listed several credits including over \$10,000 for the sewer line breaks. The project closed out at a cost of \$35.852 million which was below the initial budget of \$37.6 million.

He also said today the work on the lock on the north courtyard gate was completed. But the gate now drags and will need further attention. This issue will be addressed as a warranty item.

He added that the drawings for the three suspended modification requests which include doors on the third floor hallway, additional exhaust capabilities in the preservation lab in the Baton Rouge Room, and an upgraded air conditioning unit for the central server room were received on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Watts also announced with sadness that Mr. Benjamin Bradford, architect with Cockfield Jackson Architects and one of the architects employed for The Library Design Collaborative Joint Venture, has left Cockfield Jackson to take a position with another firm. Mr. Watts added that Mr. Bradford was critical to the completion of the Main Library, and we are glad that he was involved in this work.

##### **B. River Center Branch Library**

Mr. Watts then discussed the River Center Branch project. He said we have entered into a much more active period in the construction document phase of the project. The most recent cost estimates for the project should be delivered to the architects this week. By April 3<sup>rd</sup> the construction document review set should be transmitted to DPW and the Library. A two-week review period is proposed, but this may not be sufficient to completely finish this process which

is complex. Mr. Watts noted that it is also proposed that the bid documents would be ready by April 24<sup>th</sup>. However, this date is contingent on the completion of the owner review of the construction documents by April 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Watts added that we have had discussions with the architects about a change in the finish color of the exterior cladding. The cladding was to be a silver color, but the architects are now proposing a switch to white. While the white cladding is dramatic and interesting, the staff and DPW are concerned about long-term maintenance and appearance in our climate conditions.

Mr. Watts said the staff has been involved in details among them; wall and floor finishes, plantings for the terrace, the dumpster enclosure, door hardware, and the placement of security cameras. All of these aspects of the project are important, and so the staff has invested time on this.

### **C. Maintenance Report and Additional Capital Projects**

Mr. Watts asked Ms. Husband to give a brief maintenance report. Ms. Husband said that the Facilities Management staff continues to perform routine preventive maintenance and repairs which are posted on the Library's website.

She then gave an update on the three major capital projects. The exterior lighting project for the Bluebonnet Regional, Central, Greenwell Springs Road Regional and the Pride-Chaneyville Branch Libraries is on schedule. The contractor has begun some preparatory work at the Bluebonnet Branch while they are waiting for equipment and supplies to be delivered. A quote was given for replacement of some additional lights which were omitted in the original scope of work.

In regard to the Greenwell Springs Road Regional and the Scotlandville Branch Libraries flooring projects, we will have a pre-bid meeting at both branches on Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>.

In regard to the Bluebonnet Regional Branch Library renovation project, we will have a pre-bid meeting at the Bluebonnet branch on Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Ms. Husband asked if there were any questions, and there were none.

### **D. Miscellaneous Reports**

Mr. Watts said that a couple of days ago the Library received a notice from the attorney for the Baton Rouge Airport stating that the FAA is requesting that the size of the parcel of land for the wind shear monitoring device on the Scotlandville Branch Library property be increased to 25' x 25' from 20' x 20'. The City-Parish will make the final determination on this, but it will necessitate amending the previously approved agreement of over a year ago. Mr. Watts asked the Board if they wished to convey to the City-Parish any reservations about this. Mr. Watts

added that increasing the size of the land parcel as requested will not make a substantial difference to the Library. He added that the staff is sympathetic to the plight of the Airport.

Ms. Freeman asked if we have a choice. Mr. Watts replied we could object, but it would be pointless. Ms. Freeman asked if there were any objections from the Board. There were none.

Ms. Freeman asked for public comments. Mr. Berry asked for the final cost of the Main Library to which Mr. Watts replied \$35.852 million. Mr. Berry asked for a line item breakdown. He said he is particularly interested in the money spent on the LEED certification.

Mr. Woodard asked Ms. Freeman if we can post on the Library website the final line-item breakdown for the construction of the Main Library. Ms. Freeman agreed.

She asked for additional comments. There were none so she read Item A under New Business.

## **V. New Business**

### **A. To Vote to Send Comments to City-Parish Administration Concerning Tax Abatement Proposal – Mr. Spencer Watts**

Mr. Watts said the Board has before them three applicants (Grand Lady, LLC; Jackson Group Investments, LLC; and RBP Baton Rouge, LLC) requesting tax abatements for their properties totaling \$22,159.79 each year for a span of five years in the amount of \$110,798.95. Mr. Woodard made a motion that the Board takes no position on all three applicants. The motion was seconded by Mr. Leger. Ms. Freeman asked if there was any further discussion. There being none she asked for public comments. There were none. The motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. Old Business**

### **A. Review of Millage Proposals and Vote on Millage Rate for Library Tax Renewal Election – Mr. Spencer Watts**

Ms. Freeman read Item A under Old Business. Mr. Watts thanked the Board for their hard work and diligence on March 10<sup>th</sup> at the special Board meeting. He added that we looked at a variety of millage rates and a variety of budget scenarios for each rate. Mr. Watts said from the observations and insights provided by the Board, the recommendation of the staff regarding what millage rate to propose for the tax renewal election is a minimum of 10.70 mills. He added that initially he thought we could ask for a slightly lower rate, but if we want to maintain services, provide for a slight increase in staff to serve a growth in population, and provide new services as they emerge, we need a 10.70 millage rate. Mr. Watts said that initially we assumed no staffing growth, but after discussions the Board and staff felt 8 new positions over the ten years would be warranted.

Mr. Watts then referred to a spreadsheet illustrating the cash flow projection over ten years at a

10.70 millage rate. The critical data to keep in mind are the projected cash balance. He then discussed the assumptions made for this millage rate. Some of the assumptions on revenues and expenditures are required by the City-Parish. These include a rollback in the millage in 2020 and in 2024. The final millage rate in 2024 would be 10.28. There is a projected cash balance at the end of the ten years of \$1.455 million. A 2% growth of property values per year is assumed. A new feature is an attrition rate of 4.5%. We are budgeting 4.5% less for personnel. But there is always going to be employee turnover and vacancies are not immediately filled. We have a high turnover rate because of our salary scale.

Mr. Watts noted that we reduced the book budget by 5% or \$300,000. We did this because we had recently increased the book budget to increase the collection which had had no growth for several years. We now feel this is a good maintenance budget now. Mr. Watts added that we reduced maintenance by 2% and staff training by 10%.

We feel we need to improve and renovate some of our branches. We assumed four capital projects at a cost of \$12.4 million which includes Jones Creek Regional Branch, Greenwell Springs Road Regional Branch, Baker Branch and Scotlandville Branch Libraries. They are listed by age with the oldest listed first. These branches were chosen from the Branch Assessment Study recommendations with a first tier level of renovation. We looked at the suggestions for furnishings in these branches, and felt we may cut back on some of the recommendations in this area. We trimmed the budgets for these improvements by about 20%.

Mr. Watts then again discussed the cash flow projection spreadsheet. He said the cash balance at the end of ten years is very low. The ending cash balance must be a positive number or the projection is not accepted by the City-Parish. The \$1.455 million is a very small amount. We would like to have a \$2.5 million cash balance in reserve since our casualty loss deductible is \$1 million per event. We would also like to have \$500,000 for emergency storm related expenses such as patching roofs and pumping out water while we wait to receive insurance reimbursement. He noted we cannot really count on reimbursement by FEMA.

Mr. Watts added that if one looks at the revenues coming in from the millage over time, one sees almost from the outset that we are not matching the expenditures with the revenues coming in. We are living off the reserves we have established over time. Therefore, we feel this is the most modest millage that will work for us. If we choose a millage less than 10.70 we will need to take out the capital improvements. He noted that to give a frame of reference, if we look at the last two decades we had projects of \$40 to \$60 million. For this tax renewal we are completing the projects of the last decade and adding a modest capital improvement budget of \$12 million. Mr. Watts said if we were to accumulate some surplus money over time, we might be able to add a branch to the capital projects. This surplus might be available if the expense of the capital improvements is less. He also noted that since we have 11 branches, if we address improvements to 4 over the next ten years, then during the next tax renewal the other 7 branches would need renovations. He concluded that since the reserve will be low at the end of ten years (2025), we will probably need to request a higher millage similar to the last two tax renewals to meet any capital needs

Mr. Watts said he wanted to point out that 11.1 mills was the rate established during the last two

tax renewal periods. From the State Bond Commission's viewpoint, that is a renewal rate. So this rate of 10.70 is a significant reduction in the rate. The difference between 11.1 mills and 10.70 mills is about \$17 million over the ten years. He also said that at a 10.70 millage rate we can maintain quality services, and continue to improve our facilities, and get by. It's not an expansive millage rate, but we can live with it, and not see our services decline or cut to those we now serve. Mr. Watts added that with this millage rate, the cost to a homeowner of a medium priced home of \$165,900 is \$97.26 per year. That breaks down to \$1.87 per week or the cost of four bestselling novels per year, or the cost of a dozen doughnuts per month. He said in the context of what we have requested in the past, we are asking for a reduction which is more of a maintenance budget.

Mr. Watts then referred to a chart which compares 4 millage rates (10.78, 10.7, 10.6, and 10.5). He noted that currently the millage with the rollback is 10.78. He pointed out the cash balance column and the fund balance column, noting that the fund balance is the projected revenues which include future revenue whereas, the cash balance is the actual cash we have on hand. He added that some who look at the fund balance think we have an excess of cash in reserve. But if one looks at the cash balance, one can see what we actually have in reserve which is a small reserve.

Ms. Freeman asked the Board for questions. She started by asking Mr. Watts if this is his bottom line recommendation, if this is the lowest we can request and hopefully run the Library System. She said it looks like in 2024 the millage rate will be less than the revenue we need to run the Library. Mr. Watts replied that he would anticipate that at the end of the millage period, we would need to ask for an increase, probably up to 10.7 at the very least.

Mr. Leger said we have a projection of a 10.65 millage rate. The ending cash balance is very small. He asked if the only difference is that you reduced the capital projects. Mr. Watts replied that we cut the capital projects by 35%. We tried to maintain the same four projects. If we had maintained them at \$12.4 million we would have no reserve.

Mr. Leger then asked if 10.7 mills is the smallest rate we can propose. He added on the chart of comparison of millage rates, the 10.5 mills ends with a negative \$3.5 million. He asked if \$3 million could be cut from the budget. Mr. Leger then asked if Mr. Watts is saying that there is nothing in the 10.7 mills projection that could be cut by \$3 million. Mr. Watts replied that we can always cut the budget, but he asked Mr. Leger where he would want to cut. Mr. Watts said this is why we had a work session, so that if we wanted other scenarios, we would have had time to run those. He added that we could take another \$300,000 each year from the book budget. But he noted he would not recommend that because we have an excellent collection. That is one of the things we want to maintain especially over different formats. Mr. Watts said he would not want to cut \$3 million in staffing which would need to be done by attrition. Using this method, one does not know in what department the vacancy will occur. He pointed out if one of our IT staff left who was in charge of the network architecture we would want to replace that position. Mr. Watts added that 70-80% of our budget is staff, and much of the rest of the budget is fixed costs. One cannot save on utilities. He noted in other places he had to close buildings for 2-3 hours per day, but the savings were miniscule. Some savings only occur when buildings are closed for 2-3 days at a time. Books and staff is where we could look to cut, but the staff feels that would represent a step backward for this community, and result in poor services. He said he felt we

want to maintain the collections and content we have.

Mr. Bardwell then asked Mr. Watts to address the impact on the Library if the State should make a change in the inventory tax law. Mr. Watts said the inventory tax accounts for about 9.96% of our property tax income. So it would be a 10% cut, or \$4 million per year which would be huge. He said it would have negative effects on the Library. Mr. Bardwell asked what the Library could do to avoid the impact. Mr. Watts replied if it passed, we would need to cut the Library budget, or ask for a supplemental millage.

Ms. Freeman replied as another option, we can plan for that impact now. It is good to realize now that this could happen as we consider a millage recommendation. We need to look at what we are proposing and take the inventory tax possibility into consideration.

Ms. Freeman asked if there were other questions from the Board. Mr. Bardwell said there is a precedent for not experiencing a rollback of the millage in the first four year term. He added that the Library was in that situation during this current tax period. We requested and the public supported us keeping the 11.1 mills because of operating expenses. So if we have reduced revenue because of the inventory tax, we would need to make the case that the millage not be rolled back. Mr. Bardwell asked if that would be an option. Mr. Watts replied that that would be an option, and probably the first solution for which we would ask. Mr. Watts asked Ms. Pinsonat how much would be generated with no rollback. Ms. Pinsonat replied that if the inventory tax generates 10%, that is equivalent to 1 mill. We are not rolled back a whole mill; not even a half of a mill.

Mr. Bardwell said the projection for 10.7 mills, assumes a rollback in 2020 to 10.49 mills. He asked what the assumption is of the increase in property values that allows us to maintain the same level of revenues at a lower millage. Ms. Pinsonat said the property valuation growth is assumed at 2% per year. Mr. Bardwell said then in four years that would be 8%, but you are losing 10% per year. Mr. Watts said a roll forward would help cumulatively. They might stagger the cut or delay it a year to give localities time to adjust. Mr. Watts said we have asked and legally we cannot ask for a contingent millage request. He added even if we could do that, it would probably confuse people.

Ms. Freeman said her concern with proposing the minimum millage rate is that if we know we will have insufficient funds, how can we ask the Metropolitan Council to approve that rate. She added that it does not make sense. Mr. Watts said the 10.7 mills rate will not put us in the red. Hopefully we will have a \$1.4 million cash balance at the end of the tax period. He said he agrees that this rate is somewhat like walking on a tightrope, but this is about the lowest we can ask for and still maintain good service. Ms. Freeman then asked if the 10.7 mills which is the lowest, is Mr. Watts' recommendation. He replied that this is his recommendation, but he would feel more comfortable with 10.78 or 10.8 which would give us more revenue. Ms. Freeman then asked if 10.8 would be his recommendation to which he replied it would be 10.7 which is doable, but tight.

Mr. Bardwell then said right now the inventory tax is not a fact. Mr. Watts agreed that the Governor has only made a recommendation that the inventory tax credit be repealed. Mr.

Bardwell noted that it hasn't happened yet. So we cannot make a concrete decision on speculation. Mr. Watts said even if we had an 11.1 mills rate, we'd have less money if the inventory tax credit were repealed.

Ms. Freeman asked if there were any other comments from the Board. Mr. Woodard said he would like to hear from the public before the Board finishes their discussion. Ms. Freeman agreed and opened for public comment.

Mr. Berry asked what is the total cash being collected, and when does the tax period begin. Ms. Freeman replied January of 2016. Ms. Pinsonat said that amount is on the comparison sheet of possible millage rates. Mr. Berry said that is \$457 million to which Ms. Pinsonat agreed that this is the total of projected revenues over ten years. Mr. Berry asked if there is \$57 million in reserve now. Mr. Watts replied that is not correct. He added that the fund balance is an estimate of revenues not yet collected which includes future years. He noted \$57 million is not the actual money we have. The cash balance is the actual money we have counting the next year's revenue. Mr. Berry said \$57 million was quoted in the paper by two Council members as money that could be used for other purposes in the City-Parish. Mr. Berry said if this is true he would like to know why the Library has \$57 million, and if it is not true, he would like to know the correct amount.

Ms. Freeman said she wished to answer part of the question. She said it is not up to the Board to decide what the millage rate will be. Our role is to recommend a millage rate. The Council will review that recommendation and then decide what they feel the rate should be.

Mr. Watts said it is really difficult to read governmental financial reports. People read these reports and think there is an excess of money. The sheet will show all of the accumulated money. The sheet shows the surplus, the unexpended money and the following year's revenue. Ms. Pinsonat said the fund balance includes estimated revenues. Mr. Berry asked if this were for 2016 to which Ms. Pinsonat said yes. We project we are going to collect a certain amount of revenue, most of which is property tax which is not collected until the end of the next year. So the fund balance includes the estimated revenues. Ms. Pinsonat said it is not cash. Mr. Berry said that makes sense. He asked what happens after the money is collected for 2015. That money will be reflected in the cash balance. That will be seen in the 2016 fund balance along with any excess money. Revenues minus expenses will be shown in the fund balance.

Ms. Freeman asked for additional public comments. She said the purpose of public comments is for the public to make a statement about the agenda item. It is not for the public to have a dialogue with the Board members or staff.

Ms. Kathy Wascom, a member of the public, spoke. She said she began working at the Main Library in 1981, first part-time and then full time. During her employment she watched a building deteriorate, and the ability to offer services curtailed. She noted there was a leaky roof, hoses from the ceiling into garbage cans to collect rainwater, books covered with visqueen, dust and mold in the building, worn and rippled carpet, and no infrastructure for computers and printers. Everything was done with a patchwork method as the staff dealt with one facility crisis and another. The staff did an incredible job handling these situations. Ms. Wascom said now that the Library is on a solid financial footing, it is not the time to decrease its income. In ten years

there will be adaptations in technology and learning that we can only attempt to foresee. The Library will need the income not to just survive, but to adapt and be creative. The library is an educational and cultural center for the entire parish. Ms. Wascom urged the Board to have a vision that continues to promote and expand its efforts. She also said the Library has adapted its programming to fill a community need and is a leader in promoting literacy and learning. It provides a safe and welcoming agenda to all age groups and families. In order to maintain this level of excellence, it will need its income sources and one does not want to diminish the Library. Ms. Wascom noted that we have worked so hard to create a wonderful library with all of the facilities and it has become a cultural asset to this community. She added that some residents cannot afford to go to a play, the ballet, or some other cultural event, but they can come to the library and enjoy such an events for free. The Library is much more than a place that houses books. We need the resources to keep and expand these resources. We don't want to be unable to offer some new technology in the future because we can't afford it. Ms. Wascom said she urges the Library Board to keep the millage rate the same. She said she is a taxpayer and she wants the Library well-funded and not scraping by.

Rev. Raymond Jetson, a member of the public, spoke next. He said he is thankful to have the opportunity to come and share with the Board. He is Pastor of the Starhill Church located across the street from the Eden Park Branch Library. He also said he wanted to encourage the Board to resist the temptation to take a step backwards. The Library in this community is having an impact. He pointed out that he can't tell the Board the number of times one of the members of his congregation and people from the neighborhood have suggested meeting at the Eden Park Branch Library. Prior to the renovations that took place that never happened. Rev. Jetson also noted that he has been to the new Main Library at Goodwood more times since it has opened than to the old building for as long as it was opened. He added that last October he had the opportunity to have eleven individuals from around the world who participated in the Advanced Leadership Initiative from Harvard University come to Baton Rouge. He said I came with them to the Library. On the bus ride back to their hotel, the topic of conversation was the cutting edge library in Baton Rouge. Rev. Jetson also commented that he has a 17 year old son, who apart from coming to the new Main Library, he appears to have an allergic reaction to books. He enjoys coming here into this space. It captivates him; he finds things that entertain and interest him. Rev. Jetson said he himself enjoys grabbing a book, going to a rocking chair and getting away from the cell phones and technology to read. He also said that our libraries are having an impact on the quality of life in this community. Sometimes being in a place of leadership, means making decisions that some people find unpopular. He said simply because it's in the paper, and simply because elected officials say something, it does not make it so. Part of the responsibility that the Board has is a responsibility to this Library System. So he strongly urged the Board to take it seriously and recognize that this is not the time to step backwards.

Mr. Harvey Landry, a member of the public, asked how much money is generated from late fines, and how long has that fine been a nickel. Ms. Freeman said she does not know how much money is collected, but the Board actually stopped collecting fines from patrons who are 65 and older because we didn't want to prevent these seniors from using the Library. Mr. Bardwell stated that we collect about \$100,000 from fines. Mr. Landry replied that the Board could double or triple the fines with little or no consequence to the public. Ms. Freeman said she will present that to the staff.

Ms. Caroline Brown, a member of the community, asked the Board to formulate a budget that will sustain this wonderful Library System. She said that is what the Board is charged to do here. The Board presents this budget to the Metropolitan Council. The Metropolitan Council needs to think about our whole City and Parish, and all that goes into running it. We do have lots of needs, but the Library Board members are the ones who are the protectors of our wonderful Library System which includes all of the books, all of the media, all of the staff, and all of the buildings that we need to keep going wonderfully. Ms. Brown said we haven't gotten to this point to now try to cut back because it's not the Board's decision, or her decision to take money from the Library System and give it to somebody else. Our Councilmen need to propose and then our electorate needs to choose. She said she took her civics class very seriously.

Ms. Freeman thanked all for their comments which she said have impacted her. She asked for other comments from the Board.

Mr. Woodard said he wished to thank the staff for the many budget scenarios and projections that were produced over the last couple of months. For the work that was done kudos and hats off. He said he wanted to address some of the comments that were made. Mr. Woodard noted that we've heard words like "step backward", "cut services", or "deteriorate". He said he feels he can speak for the Board in this case when he says that none of the Board members intends to let our system deteriorate, or cut services, or step backward.

Mr. Woodard said the Board had a work session a couple of weeks ago. We were presented with many projections and scenarios. We were given a budget similar to what was shown today with the main difference in expenditures being eight new staff positions. He said by adding eight positions we are changing our operating expenditures by 1.8% which is 1.8% annually. He added that this is a large number when one looks at the overall budget increases over a ten-year period. This is a 21.5% operating budget increase. He said he has a hard time accepting that without increasing our system or services, we are going to grow our expenditures by 1.8% annually. Mr. Woodard noted he will not support a budget that grows 21% over ten years.

He said when we talk about the Library millage, references are made to different numbers. He said in his way of thinking, the Library's tax rate is now 10.7 mills. Any reference to previous rates that were authorized collections, if we go back to 11.1 mills, that is not neutral, but a tax increase.

Mr. Woodard then said when we look at property appreciation over four years and tax receipts we are saying taxes grow by 2%. He said the last tax assessment was in 2012, so the next adjustment would be in 2016. In the budgets that the staff presented, the rollbacks are what kept the tax neutral at .2 of a mill. He noted that the next rollback in 2016 would need to be at 10.58 mills to remain neutral. He said 10.7 is an increase.

Mr. Woodard then discussed the inventory tax issue. He said he agrees with the comment that if the Library experiences a 10% decrease in revenue because the inventory tax credit is repealed, then we could give the electorate the opportunity through a special election to replace that revenue.

Mr. Woodard added that when we look back over the last ten years, we annually have had an ending cash balance higher than our projections. He said kudos to our staff who maintain expenditures within the budget, and to the City-Parish Finance Department for being very conservative in its budgeting.

Mr. Woodard then said he is making a motion that the Library millage for the next ten years be set at 10.5 mills. Ms. Freeman thanked Mr. Woodard and asked if there is any further discussion.

Mr. Leger said he wished to comment. Ms. Freeman asked if there was a second on Mr. Woodard's motion. Mr. Leger said he will second Mr. Woodard's motion of setting the Library millage rate for the next ten years at 10.5 mills. Mr. Leger said public sector finances are very difficult to understand. He added he has spent a great deal of time on understanding the difference between the fund balance and the cash balance. He said unfortunately one is not educated on this difference when one is appointed to a board or elected to the Metropolitan Council.

Mr. Leger said after looking at the large number of projections they reviewed, and in line with what Mr. Woodard has said, it is his understanding that although 10.7 mills is what the staff would like, 10.5 mills is a rate that the Library can survive on, and thrive on. This rate does not limit any of the offerings, the hours that we currently operate, and it actually allows for several million dollars in renovations and reconfigurations of the branches we already have. Mr. Leger said in the last twenty years the taxpayers have made an invested effort in expanding and improving the Library. The end result is a beautiful, vibrant and amazing library system that everyone can be proud of. He noted that people who come from all over the world are very impressed by it. He said in the next ten years, however, our needs will change. It will not be growing and expanding for the demands of a growing population, but reconfiguring and renovating the existing branches. Mr. Leger stated that the 10.5 millage rate will allow the Library to do that, and it is why he has seconded the motion.

Ms. Freeman then said we have a motion and a second for a 10.5 millage rate. Mr. Bardwell then said he'd like to make a substitute motion. He moved that the Board recommend to the Metropolitan Council the millage rate of 11.1 mills for the next ten years for the Library. Ms. Payton seconded the motion. Ms. Freeman said we now have a substitute motion that we keep the 11.1 millage rate. She asked if there is any more discussion.

Mr. Bardwell said he does not understand the figures that Mr. Woodard and Mr. Leger cited. He also said that his reading of the projections illustrates that the Library will be operating on thin ice. He added that we may end the next ten year period with \$1.4 million. He said this assumes that we will have the ability to use the cash balance of \$54 million at the end of this December. However, this money is already allocated. Mr. Bardwell said we would need instead to use that money to meet our expenditures that will not be covered by the 10.5 millage rate. He stated that only by using the \$54 million in reserves could we have a \$1.4 million surplus at the end of ten years. He said a \$1.4 million cash balance is very tight.

Mr. Bardwell said he was at first in favor of staying with the 10.7 mills. However, after hearing

the comments from the public, and the minimalistic character of how that plays out over time, he is inclined to choose 11.1 mills. He added that some of the expenses are going to be mandated by statutes such as 3% employee raises, the inflation factor, and the cost of living factor. These are not part of a wish list, but will be demanded by the City and the ordinances in place.

Ms. Freeman asked if there is any more discussion. Mr. Woodard said if the members of the Board choose to vote for 11.1 mills, and effectively recommend a tax increase at a time when the Library is not planning to add any new facilities to our capital improvement program, we may cost ourselves a lot of credibility. We need to think through the impacts and consequences of coming off a major capital program, completing that program and then asking to raise our taxes. Mr. Woodard said he thinks that is fiscally irresponsible, and he will not support that.

Ms. Freeman said she does not see that 11.1 mills is an increase. She also said we only make a recommendation to the Metropolitan Council. The Metropolitan Council then does what they feel they need to do. The Library Board's job as an advisory board is to take the public comments and advise the Council.

Ms. Freeman said the Board will take a vote and move forward. She said over the years that she has been on the Board she has seen such an increase in the services, in the culture, in the educational growth, and in the resources we have for students who appreciate it. We need to have an open mind to what the needs are and to think forward.

Ms. Freeman asked for any further discussion by the Board. Mr. Leger said he must echo what Mr. Woodard has said and that 11.1 mills is a tax increase, and recommending it would be absolutely fiscally irresponsible.

Mr. Bardwell made an additional comment. He said he understands what was said, and he doesn't disagree with it; that potentially it looks like a tax increase, and will not be well received. But he said he has more faith in the electorate, and especially our Library patrons. Mr. Bardwell said what he is concerned about is this budget has only \$12 million over ten years to do any remodeling or upgrades including meeting rooms collaborative spaces, more computers, and improved check-out counters in only four of our branches. He would like to see upgrades for ten of our branches over these ten years. We will not be able to do that with a 10.5 millage rate. Mr. Bardwell added he is not proposing we build anything new, but the branches we do have are getting older. If we only upgrade the four oldest branches, then in five years we will have several more older buildings. Mr. Bardwell said he was impressed with Rev. Jetson's statements about the effect this building has had with all of its new technology, and its dynamic spacing. That's what we need to put in all of the branches over the next ten years. Mr. Bardwell said we will never be able to do that without the money. He noted this is the basis I will use to support 11.1 mills.

Ms. Freeman said she visited several of the branches, and saw some things that surprised her such as the small area with just a few computers because these spaces were built in a time when we had just a few big computers. She noted we do a lot of maintenance, but these branches need more than routine maintenance.

Ms. Freeman said if there is no further discussion, the Board will vote. She said there is a substitute motion on the floor for a recommendation of 11.1 mills. She asked for those in favor to say so, and then for those opposed to respond. After this vote, Mr. Woodard asked that a roll call vote be taken which it was. Those voting for the motion of 11.1 mills were Mr. Bardwell, Ms. Freeman, Ms. Johnson, and Ms. Payton. Those voting against the motion were Mr. Leger and Mr. Woodard. Absent from the meeting and the vote was Mr. Jacob. Ms. Freeman said the motion passed for an 11.1 millage rate.

**B. Review of Options and Discussion regarding Course of Action for a South Branch Library – Mr. Spencer Watts**

Ms. Freeman read Item B under Old Business. Mr. Watts asked the Board if we could defer this item until next month. He said the staff would like to present several concept options for the Board's consideration. From these the Board may wish to pursue one or two of the options. Ms. Freeman asked for a motion. Mr. Woodard made a motion to defer this item. It was seconded by Ms. Payton. The motion passed unanimously.

There were no further public comments, so Ms. Freeman read Item C.

**C. Review of Information about Meeting Room Usage and Meeting Room Policy Revisions – Mr. Spencer Watts and Ms. Mary Stein**

Mr. Watts said that the Board has had as a priority, the review of the millage rate scenarios which required much of their time. So they have not had time to consider revising the meeting room policy. He added that the staff has given the Board three examples of meeting room policies from other library systems. Mr. Watts added that this is a complicated issue, but he hopes the Board can give the staff some indication of the types of events the Library will permit, and the fee schedule for these events. Even if this approval is on a provisional basis, it would be helpful. Some applicants have been waiting for approval of their events for a couple of months.

Mr. Watts added as with other library systems, we also get requests for private social events. These would need to take place after library hours, and be fee based. The Library can only accommodate a limited number of these types of events. There might only be scheduled 10-12 of these events per year.

He noted the staff would also like the policy language revised to include the following:

- Allow governmental agencies to book rooms.
- Permit the on-site collection of dues or other routine book-keeping and low level organizational transactions; allow the distribution of business cards and simple promotional materials.
- Outline what constitutes a non-profit, or the process for determining the non-profit status of an organization.

Mr. Watts also said the suggested fees have been based on rates charged by other organizations in this area for comparable services. He added that if the Board wishes to lower the fees below 50%, then we probably should not offer this type of service.

Mr. Watts reminded the Board that the staff has experimented during this year as directed by them. So the staff has experience with the types of events we can accommodate. He added that after the Board approves changes to the policy, the staff understands that revisions can be made, if circumstances change.

Mr. Watts asked Ms. Stein to give her input on the meeting rooms since she is impacted the most. Mr. Bardwell said he understands that the Board needs to provide some feedback. But he wants to know what the staff would like the Board to approve. He suggested that the staff present an itemized list for the Board's approval. Mr. Bardwell said he needs this detail including fees in order to make a motion. He concluded that the Board may need to table this item until they receive more detailed information.

Mr. Watts noted that the Board received an outline of meeting room issues to use as a guide. Mr. Bardwell asked if the Board could approve that. Ms. Freeman noted that the agenda item does not state voting on a policy, so the Board will need to defer the vote.

Ms. Stein then spoke, saying that the motion could include allowing governmental agencies, allowing organizations to collect dues and conduct other routine book-keeping matters. She added, the motion could include using Library spaces after hours based on staff availability. She noted that the Library's mission is not to book our rooms for so many after-hours events, that the staff needs to overextend their resources and time. Ms. Stein mentioned that the staff would determine the procedures to follow for these types of groups. In regard to fees charged to groups, the staff could determine the fees to charge to recover costs, and state that in the policy. Ms. Stein noted that Mr. Watts had described it on a direct cost basis.

She then said caution is required when commercial groups wish to use the meeting rooms. There are some commercial entities that we would like to use our rooms. But we would want to ensure that the public knows that the Library is not endorsing these commercial groups. If it were a ticketed event with limited invitations that could present a problem as events held in our meeting rooms are to be open to the public.

Ms. Stein noted that the use of our meeting rooms is primarily for the Library, for non-profits and for homeowner associations. We do welcome others if there is a space available because it exposes the public to what the Library has to offer. As long as the staff can manage, this type of use is a win-win for all.

Mr. Leger said he felt the Library should avoid commercial events which are open to the public. This will prevent the public from associating that business with our brand, and assuming the Library endorses the event. He added if a business wishes to use a meeting room for training or a vendor luncheon that is private and by invitation, that would be acceptable. Ms. Johnson agreed with Mr. Leger. She said the Library needs to protect its brand. We need to be selective

in what we choose and make these decisions thoughtfully determining what's best for the Library.

Mr. Bardwell said the Board had been given a three page detailed list of possibilities for consideration. He said the staff could ask the Board to provide their feedback on each item on the list. This would give the staff some direction on what the Board wants. We could then vote on this at the next regular Board meeting or sooner at a special Board meeting.

Ms. Freeman asked if Mr. Bardwell was making a recommendation or did he want some feedback. Mr. Watts replied to avoid a special meeting he suggested that he send the three page document to the Board again requesting that they provide their comments by a given date. The staff will review the comments and provide a list of the results. These could be discussed and voted on at the April meeting. Ms. Freeman said the list would serve as an outline of the policy.

Ms. Freeman asked for any other comments by the Board. There being none, she asked for public comments. Mr. Landry asked what the current policy is toward political organizations such as the Democrats or Republicans, and toward quasi-political groups such as Together Baton Rouge and the Tea Party of Louisiana, and what would be allowed under the new policy. Ms. Stein replied that non-profit groups that have a political purpose are allowed to meet in the Library now. These groups cannot campaign or hold a political rally in the Library. They can have planning meetings. We have had forums with candidates present. This is allowed as long as all the candidates were invited. Mr. Watts added that there are certain restrictions we must follow based on the Louisiana statute which forbids public buildings from being used for political purposes.

Ms. Freeman then said that it has been decided that Mr. Watts will e-mail the Board the list of proposed changes to the meeting room policy. The Board will provide feedback on this list prior to the next meeting, so that the staff can produce a summary of items to be discussed and voted upon at the next meeting. Mr. Watts agreed that at the next meeting the Board will have a concise list to consider and vote upon.

There being no other comments, Ms. Freeman asked for comments by the Board, Item VII.

## **VII. Comments by the Library Board of Control**

Mr. Bardwell thanked the members of the public who attended this meeting and expressed their comments on the millage rate proposal. He noted that Rev. Jetson has already left the meeting so he didn't have the opportunity to thank him for his words.

Ms. Freeman also thanked the public. She said their comments influenced her thoughts. She had reviewed the millage figures. But the public's words about what they thought and felt about their Library System encouraged her.

She asked if there were any other comments from the Board.

There being no further comments, and with no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m. on a motion by Ms. Payton, seconded by Mr. Woodard.

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Ms. Tanya Freeman, President

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Mr. Spencer Watts, Library Director