

MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL  
**MAIN LIBRARY**  
**FIRST FLOOR LARGE MEETING ROOM**  
**7711 GOODWOOD BOULEVARD**  
**BATON ROUGE, LA 70806**  
**March 17, 2022**  
**4:00 P.M.**

**AGENDA**

CALL TO ORDER – Jason Jacob, Board President (4:05 p.m.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Candace Temple, Board Vice President

ROLL CALL – Rosana Sotile, Assistant to the Deputy Library Director

Jason Jacob, Board President – Present

Candace Temple, Board Vice President – Present

Martha Guarisco, Board Treasurer – Present

Delores Watts – Present (4:15 p.m.)

Donald Luther, Jr. – Present

Kathy Wascom – Present

Nicole Allmon-Learson – Absent

*A quorum was present*

STAFF PRESENT – Spencer Watts, Library Director; Kristen Edson, Deputy Library Director; Mary Stein, Assistant Library Director; Rhonda Pinsonat, Library Business Manager; Ronnie Pierce, Library Assistant Business Manager; Rosana Sotile, Assistant to the Deputy Library Director; Autumn Rice, Library Technician I; Noelle Allison, Network Technician I; Micki Talbot, Public Relations Coordinator; Steven Holbrook, Librarian II.

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 17, 2022 – A motion to approve was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

II. SPECIAL ORDERS – There were no items to cover under Special Orders.

III. REPORTS BY THE DIRECTOR

A. FINANCIAL REPORT – Rhonda Pinsonat (4:06 p.m.)

- With 2021 expenditures expected to close across the City-Parish tomorrow, March 18th, Library operating expenditures are currently at 88.32% of the operating budget.
- For 2022, as of February 28th, expenditures are 9.92% of the operating budget. Through February, we should have spent no more than 17% of the operating budget.
- Cash collections from Property Taxes for 2022 are slightly ahead of those collected last year, as we are approximately 1.67% ahead of 2021.

B. SYSTEM REPORTS – Mary Stein (4:08 p.m.)

- “Around the Parish” slideshow and descriptions of Library programs.
- The One Book One Community kick-off party was held March 5, 2022 at the Main Library at Goodwood; live music was performed by RJ & Kreole Smoove; alligator boudin was sampled and other local food dishes were served; guest organizations included LPB, Red Stick Farmers Market, and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; LPB programmed a screening of the Atchafalaya Houseboat documentary with a live interview stream of the author, Gwen Roland; other OBOC programs at the Main Library have included programs and exhibits about birds, whooping cranes and brown pelicans, including author Danny Heitman with Summer of Birds.
- The Pride-Chaneyville Branch Library will host its 12<sup>th</sup> annual community history festival on April 2, 2022; the theme is “Grandma’s House”.
- Author/illustrator Will Hillendbrand was the guest speaker for the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program celebration; he attended story-walks at several library locations.

- Special guests for the African American Read-in included Mayor Sharon Weston Broome, Constable Terrica Williams, and school board member Dadrius Linus of 100 Black Men of Metro Baton Rouge.
- The Library has been featuring MetroMorphosis's new project that is collecting stories and quilt fabric that highlight African American life and history in Baton Rouge; information can be found in the Library's Source newsletter and online.
- Steve Beauchamp, CEO of Paylocity, was March's guest speaker for the Business Forum's live online interview; next month's guest will be Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, CEO of Feeding America.
- The Edible Book Festival will be held at the Main Library at Goodwood, Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>; will feature puns of book titles presented in food format.
- The Main Library will also host the Baton Rouge Concert Band performance, Legends & Heroes, on April 3<sup>rd</sup>; Open Air Fair will be held March 26<sup>th</sup>, as well as Rock the Plaza, featuring music by Press 1 for English; the Civic Orchestra of Baton Rouge will perform April 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Professor Stuart Tully will speak about Roots of Music on the Atchafalaya on April 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Newspaper articles were shown to the Board that featured library programs, as well as an article on Board member Candace Temple's daughter in the Business section.

### C. OTHER REPORTS

#### 1. MAINTENANCE AND ADDITIONAL CAPITAL PROJECTS – Kristen Edson (4:20 p.m.)

- Basic lighting was replaced at all library locations; still waiting on parts for the exterior lights at Pride-Chaneyville Branch Library.
- Quarterly cooling tower cleaning and air handling unit preventative maintenance is ongoing and will be completed by end of month.
- A new lighting control panel was ordered for River Center Branch Library to replace the current faulty one; will be under warranty for parts; the branch's boilers went offline on March 10<sup>th</sup> for maintenance and were back online the next day; a false fire alarm at the branch went off due to a faulty smoke detector sensor, which eventually was replaced.
- The vendor for shampooing the carpet at Main cancelled the work but will reschedule; Main's air handling unit #2 also received maintenance; issues continue with the server room air conditioning after the power went out six weeks ago; the vendor and project engineer continue to investigate the issues with the manufacturer; the drainage project at the rear of Main's building is near completion and will now include a portion of the sidewalk.
- Pressure washing of Fairwood Branch Library is scheduled for next week.
- A punch-out meeting was held today for the Carver Branch Library roof replacement project; meeting room flooring was installed on March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.
- A pre-bid meeting has been scheduled for March 29<sup>th</sup> for the roofing and exterior restorations of Jones Creek and Bluebonnet Regional Libraries, and Zachary and Delmont Gardens Branch Libraries.
- Main Library's boiler project is nearing completion; awaiting receipt of manuals and close-out documents.

#### 2. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS – Mary Stein, Spencer Watts and Kristen Edson (4:26 p.m.)

- Mary Stein introduced Micki Talbot, the Library's new Public Relations Coordinator, to the Board; she has worked previously at the Library in other positions; she spoke to the Board about her experience.
- Mary Stein also presented to the Board a new training software solution, Skilltype, that the Library has acquired for staff development; the company, which is a local company, will assist in curating content for individual staff for training and enrichment; will also assist with succession planning.
- Spencer Watts reported that the Library has submitted a carryforward request; a portion of the funds represent some complex projects that are carried over a year or two; in other cases, a project becomes stalled by circumstances beyond our control.
- The Library has been able to exercise its option to extend its current telecom services for an additional year; allows for future filing for the E-Rate reimbursement and gives the Library time to explore its options for Dark Fiber.
- Kristen Edson and Steven Holbrook reported to the Board updates on the Library's mobile Wi-Fi hot-spots:

- An order was placed for the correctly sized cases to circulate the hot-spots; cover art has been designed; should know by next week when the Library will receive the cases to begin packaging the devices.
  - The devices will have a 3-week check-out period, with 3 renewals allowed; 500 devices will be available throughout 5 library locations, including the Main Library; late fines will be \$.50 per day, with a maximum of \$5; devices will be remotely turned off by the second overdue day and a hold will be placed; by the 14<sup>th</sup> overdue day, the patron's account will be billed \$90.
  - By allowing patrons up to 12 weeks of use, it provides help to students, job seekers and others who have specific needs for free access to the internet.
  - Periodic renewals also keep borrowers mindful of their responsibility for the devices; the Library will also attempt to minimize the potential loss rate of the devices.
  - The devices will help bring connectivity to areas with only 15%-22% percent of residents with broadband internet access, or within income levels that qualify for reduced or free school lunches; one study showed that 58% of the total population of East Baton Rouge Parish residents do not have sufficient broadband internet access at home.
  - Kathy Wascom asked if the school system has produced any data showing the percentage of its students that don't have internet at home; Kristen Edson responded that the Chromebooks that are issued to students are Wi-Fi enabled because they are equipped with a cellular chip.
  - A mock-up of the case and cover art was shared with the Board members; technical user issues will be handled by the vendor; a hotline number for patrons to call will be printed in several places on the cases and devices.
  - Candace Temple commented on her appreciation of library staff using data and statistics in deciding which locations should circulate the devices.
- The Library will be subscribing to new meeting room reservation software, which will be an upgrade from the current system; will have an option for the public to make reservations; staff will also be able to better manage data on the rooms and their use; also has the potential to take the place of the Facilitize software for maintenance work management in terms of filtering and information sharing.
  - Library staffing vacancy levels are still atypical, around 20%; however, quarantining numbers and time off work for testing have significantly decreased; staffing vacancy remains high throughout the City-Parish as a whole, mostly due to the low compensation rates that are non-competitive; Library staff dissatisfied with the City-Parish's work week impact on the Library's individual scheduling; auditors have conducted a study and should have data results with possible resolution ideas by the end of the month.
  - Question from Martha Guarisco regarding an explanation of the Library's work week; Spencer Watts responded that the Library has a 7-day work week, which now starts on a Saturday; due to City-Parish payroll scheduling, some staff end up working seven or eight days in a row in order to balance their time within the 14-day work period; the Library would prefer to return to its original schedule of having the work week begin on a Sunday.
  - Due to the decline in Covid-19 infection rates, the Library is considering restoring service hours at the Main Library until 9:30 p.m.; may also reduce the building fogging schedule to fewer times per month; also considering opening the Main Library at 8:30 a.m.
  - Question from Donald Luther, Jr. regarding the low compensation rate and bringing it to the attention of other City-Parish department heads; Spencer Watts responded that he's been in contact with other City-Parish officials and addressed the Board that they are welcome to reach out as well; other departments are also suffering with high vacancies; a normal rate of turnover for most organizations is 4%-5% in one year, yet it's not unusual for the Library to temporarily experience a rate of 7% but not for an extended period of time.
  - Computer Services update: VDI continues to be implemented in branches, with Scotlandville Branch and Jones Creek Regional added this past month; Library staff met with a vendor for the assistive listening loop service earlier this month; new improvements were made on the Hub with the budget app, and work is underway for the programming app and purchase request app; the Library's ILS upgrades have been completed, with some minor issues and patches; self-check-out use is around 25%; may investigate a new vendor for the self-check kiosks due to ongoing issues.
  - The end panels at Bluebonnet Regional Library were finally installed after a three-year long project.
  - Spencer Watts commented on the excellence of Danny Heitman's program; he also clarified a discussion from last month's Board meeting regarding the Library's intent to purchase several

generators and move them around according to need; it's also the Library's goal to ensure that the generators are able to run all vital systems for the buildings so that they are habitable and useful.

Board President Jason Jacob asked for public comments. No public comments were made.

IV. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES – There were no reports of committees.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. UPDATE ON SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY – Spencer Watts (5:11 p.m.)

- Library staff met with the architects, Architectural Services, the technology consultant, and the interior designer on March 4<sup>th</sup>; discussion included the following items:
  - Work on the construction documents is proceeding and may be ready for review by end of May; usually takes four weeks to review construction documents, perhaps longer due to the number of corrections and questions.
  - The originally specified roofing membrane may not be available, possibly due to supply chain issues; architects are investigating alternatives in case they are needed.
  - Sun studies are being conducted to determine potential shade materials and placement.
  - Interior signage needs were reviewed, including fonts, styles, materials, placement, and special features; also reviewed signs required by code, nomenclature, and way-finding.
  - Reviewed furniture options for the Adult Services area, including lounge seating, tables, computers, task seating, powered tables, and courtyard furniture; another meeting in the near future will include a furniture review for Teen and Children Services.
- A proposal was received for the required survey to complete the exchange of property for the site tracts; proposal from the vendor will cost \$1,375; the Library has approved the proposal after reviewing it with Architectural Services.
- The technology consultant met with library staff at the Main Library and the River Center Branch Library to review technology and AV; also assessed what currently works and what needs addressing.

B. UPDATE ON SCOTLANDVILLE BRANCH LIBRARY – Spencer Watts (5:17 p.m.)

- On March 10<sup>th</sup>, Library staff met with the architects and Architectural Services; new directions to explore included the following:
  - Concerns regarding the porte-cochere at the building entrance and how to improve that area; currently creates a dark and damp area; would prefer a less massive covering and a more translucent covering material.
  - Architects also proposed exterior elements with symmetry to echo other architectural elements of the building; also use different materials, such as masonry or stone cladding, to provide relief.
  - The architects were asked to redesign the Archive Building to provide more elements that echo the main building's style; also to possibly include a covered walk-way connecting the two buildings.
  - Architectural Services provided guidance on keeping elements and materials symmetrical.
  - Work on construction documents continues; architects will provide the concept upgrades within the next two weeks.
  - Also discussed the preservation of the courtyard lights; reviewed the placement of the hot water heaters, which will be on the ground level and not above the ceiling as originally drawn.

Board President Jason Jacob asked for public comments. No public comments were made.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. VOTE TO ACCEPT EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY FUND STATEMENT FOR THE LIBRARY'S INTERNET ACCESS POLICY – Kristen Edson (5:22 p.m.)

- As a condition for receiving ECF funding, the Library is required to include the following statement in its public internet access policy: "The library has received funding from the federal Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) to purchase Wi-Fi hotspots. Any ECF supported equipment and services can only be provided to patrons who declare they do not have access to the equipment or services sufficient to access the internet. This statement expires when the ECF program expires."

- Question from Donald Luther, Jr. regarding if any funds will be matched; Kristen Edson responded that the funding is 100% reimbursable; funds will go directly from the federal government to the vendor of our choice.
- Question from Donald Luther, Jr. regarding if patrons will have to sign a form to prevent criminal activity and if it will be something from the federal government or a library document; Kristen Edson responded that patrons will have to sign an internal library document that contains language provided from the federal CARES Act and the ECF itself; will have to keep the documents for 10 years; Spencer Watts commented that there may be auditing of the record keeping, but he thinks it would be highly unusual for there to be actual investigation into those who signed the statements to determine if they have access to internet at home; the Library will follow whatever guidelines the legislation indicates.
- Donald Luther, Jr. made a motion to accept the ECF statement for the Library's internet access policy, and Delores Watts seconded. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

B. APPOINTMENT OF PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – Jason Jacob (5:27 p.m.)

- Jason Jacob commented that the Board will need to appoint a committee to begin work on selecting the next library director; he asked the Board if any members would like to assist; Donald Luther, Jr. and Kathy Wascom agreed to assist him.
- Spencer Watts commented that the three members can begin preparations of working with staff and consultants without having to hold a public meeting; as the process advances, more Board members will be involved and public meetings will be held.
- Jason Jacob thanked the Board for its help.

Board President Jason Jacob asked for public comments. No public comments were made.

VII. COMMENTS BY THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL – No comments were made.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT – Board President Jason Jacob requested a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The meeting was adjourned at 5:29 p.m. by unanimous vote.**

---

Mr. Jason Jacob, President

---

Mr. Spencer Watts, Library Director