

TENTATIVE AGENDA
FOR THE MEETING OF THE
SPECIAL AD HOC COMMITTEE OF THE
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL
FOR THE STUDY OF THE APPLICATION OF
A BOOKMOBILE FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH
BOARD ROOM OF THE MAIN LIBRARY
7711 GOODWOOD BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806
MAY 5, 2009
10:00 A.M.

- I. ROLL CALL
- II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF APRIL 29, 2009
- III. GENERAL DISCUSSION
 - A. EQUIPMENT CHOICES
 - B. INVENTORY SELECTIONS
 - C. SEASONAL VARIATION
 - D. OTHER
- IV. DATE OF NEXT MEETING
- V. ADJOURN

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Revised Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Ad Hoc Committee of the
East Baton Rouge Parish Library Board of Control
for the Study of the Application of a Bookmobile for Community Outreach

May 5, 2009

The second meeting of the Special Ad Hoc Committee of the East Baton Rouge Parish Library Board of Control for the Study of the Application of a Bookmobile for Community Outreach was held in the Board Room of the Main Library on Tuesday, May 5, 2009. Mr. Stanford O. Bardwell, Jr., Chairman of the Committee, called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Members of the Committee present were Ms. Mary Stein, Assistant Library Director of Administration; Ms. Patricia Husband, Assistant Library Director of Branch Services, Mrs. Jenola Duke, Chair of the Education Team for the Children's Coalition of Greater Baton Rouge, and Ms. Patience Travasos, Preschool Resource Coordinator for the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools. Also in attendance were Mr. David Farrar, Library Director; Ms. Pabby Arnold, Library Division Head of Children's Services, and Ms. Liz Zozulin, Executive Assistant to the Library Director. Also present was Mrs. Gayle Smith, a member of the community. Absent from the meeting was Ms. Tanya Freeman, Library Board member.

Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of April 29, 2009

The minutes of the meeting of April 29, 2009 were approved with one correction made; that being, the twelve new Advanced Workstations in Education (AWE) computers for the branches have now been installed and are operational.

Mr. Bardwell asked the committee members if they felt the statement of purpose and the site selection criteria needed any revision. Ms. Travasos said that they could refine these items as the work of the committee progressed. Mr. Bardwell asked the members to advise him if they felt there was a better way to state these items.

General Discussion

A. Equipment Choices

Mr. Bardwell said that he does not want the committee to be premature and assume that one or two bookmobiles will solve the literacy concerns they discussed last week. He added that he wants the committee to make the case that there are places that are not served by schools or libraries. He said they need to address the means to take literacy enhancing materials to areas that are underserved. Ms. Stein said that there are people throughout the parish who are underserved to which Mr. Bardwell replied that not all of the Library Board members agree that there is a need. Ms. Husband said she thinks that all agree that literacy enhancement is needed, but the way in which to do this is in question. Mr. Bardwell asked how do they proactively go out and enhance literacy.

Ms. Husband said she spoke with the staff at the Tulsa, Oklahoma City-County Library. She distributed information and a schedule for Tulsa's outreach program. The bookmobile service visits low income housing developments to circulate library materials to patrons living there. The service begins around 3:30 p.m. and lasts until 8:00 p.m. They begin service after school so they can reach school age children. Tulsa has a separate literacy outreach program that serves pre-schools and day care centers. Mrs. Gayle Smith said they use income as a criterion in determining who they visit. Ms. Husband added that Multnomah County Public Library in Portland, Oregon has a dedicated staff that visits pre-school children. Mr. Bardwell asked if the outreach staff member has a title. He said this would be important when our system is ready to hire someone for literacy outreach.

Mr. Bardwell asked Mrs. Duke how many agencies are associated with the Children's Coalition of Greater Baton Rouge to which Mrs. Duke replied about fifty-five. However, not all of these agencies are focused on literacy issues. Mr. Bardwell said that there are organizations in the community that are interested in literacy. If the committee can contact these groups, they can explore with them where they feel the most productive sites would be for outreach. Ms. Stein noted that they can ask them what the Library can do. She added that the Library always dovetails with what's already being done in the community.

Mr. Bardwell asked Ms. Duke which organizations deal with literacy. She replied that most are institutional organizations such as LINKS. LINKS is an African-American women's service group that is dedicated to providing services to targeted communities such as youth. Ms. Carmen Jones is a member of LINKS and would be a good contact for this committee. She said the bookmobile could serve as a catalyst for other forms of outreach. She said it is important to use a method or service that has been successful.

She said one, two and three year olds need assistance and parental involvement. It was noted that the Head Start program has a parental involvement component. Mrs. Duke added that community involvement is important as are programs during the summer months. Churches have influence in the community and can assist with promoting literacy efforts.

Mr. Bardwell asked Ms. Travasos how she would utilize a 35-foot bookmobile to promote literacy. She said she'd speak to her contact at the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI), and to the Library staff. She would fill the bookmobile with children's and adult materials. She would not install computers for young children. She'd drive the bookmobile to Title I housing and neighborhoods such as Eden Park and the Gardere Lane area. Ms. Travasos asked about the usage of materials in the old Eden Park Library which was located next to the Eden Park Community Center. Both Ms. Stein and Ms. Husband said that even though there was a very dynamic staff at the old Eden Park Branch, circulation statistics were low. Mrs. Duke said that acquiring basic needs such as food is a priority over literacy materials.

Mr. Bardwell concluded that results and success are not automatic, and that this is part of the problem. Ms. Travasos said she'd drive the bookmobile to the schools so that children could see it and become curious about what the bookmobile contains. Ms. Stein said the Library staff does not get discouraged easily and will work toward success on a long-term basis. Mrs. Duke added that this population places a high value on entertainment, so this aspect is important in initially

reaching them. She said outreach staff needs to show respect for these patrons and also show them how to use picture books.

Mr. Bardwell asked how they can do these things. Mr. Bardwell then asked how they could generate the interest in adults. Mrs. Stein replied that the East Baton Rouge Parish Library staff in 1991 created and piloted a humanities-based program for parents and children at risk called *Prime Time*. This pilot program was funded by a grant from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH). This six-week program involves the entire family and engages them in listening to stories and in discussion about what they experienced. Ms. Arnold mentioned that *Prime Time* is now an internationally used program which is held in a variety of places beside libraries.

Ms. Stein explained how this program is organized and how they reach out to these low-income families. She said that they understand that many of the adults fear the government and they do not feel respected. So the staff works to build trust. In the past the *Prime Time* program even provided transportation each week. Food is part of the sessions along with games. They model how to read to children, and each family gets a copy of the books discussed along with other books for them to keep. *Prime Time* also uses a storyteller who asks open-ended questions to encourage critical thinking.

Mr. Bardwell asked that whenever they reach a benchmark, they pause and log what they have discussed. Ms. Husband summarized the discussion about *Prime Time* as follows:

1. Find a community leader who can hold the 6-week program.
2. Since the program focuses on children from the age of 5 to the age of 8, find a babysitter for the younger children in each family.
3. Publicize and advertise the program in the community.
4. Hire a scholar who will ask open-ended questions that generate other questions and develop critical thinking.
5. Choose books that foster this type of discussion and thinking.
6. Obtain books that will be given to the participating families.

Ms. Husband said that transportation is always an issue. In the recent past, the Library held this program at the Baker Branch and the Scotlandville Branch Libraries. These branches are close to sources of public transportation.

Mr. Bardwell said that this program, as the Library has run it, does not address those who do not come to the library. Mrs. Duke replied that what they are trying to do by using this program is to change a culture. Ms. Stein said that in the past, prior to a change in the law, they were able to obtain from counselors a list of the names of families who could benefit from this program. Ms. Stein added that good sources for a list of potential participants are the churches. Mr. Bardwell said that they have made a case in regard to the families in economic need and with time management issues, for not utilizing the library.

Ms. Arnold suggested that they work with neighborhood churches with established programs. These centers should be fully staffed, trained, and have materials. Otherwise, staff are merely

babysitting. A critical part in developing literacy in children is that the child has been read to for 2,500 hours before entering school. She said the Library staff are trained and excel in reading to children. Mr. Bardwell asked how they could use a bookmobile at these churches to which Ms. Arnold said two fully staffed vans would work better than a bookmobile.

Ms. Stein discussed the use of grant money and the City-Parish regulations in this regard. Grants must be approved by the Grants Committee of the Metropolitan Council and then by the Metropolitan Council itself. The grant money can be used to purchase materials such as books, but it cannot be used to pay the salaries of staff.

Ms. Stein opened a discussion about day care centers as their partners in developing literacy. She said that there are different levels of accreditation for day care centers, and that they could possibly work with the agency that licenses the day care facilities. In the past the Library held programs for day care centers and through the Volunteers of America (VOA). Mrs. Duke said that licensed day care centers are ranked using a "star" designation based on the content of their programs. Ms. Stein suggested that possibly the Library could be named as a partnering agency which contributes to the star designation for the day care facility. Ms. Husband suggested that a Library staff member could go to the day care center and teach the staff how to tell stories, similar to what they do with Head Start centers. Mrs. Duke noted the VOA works with day care centers.

Mr. Bardwell asked that they return to the discussion of equipment in regard to going to day care facilities. He asked if there is a case for purchasing a large, eye-appealing vehicle to attract their target audience. Ms. Arnold responded that the bookmobile of the past worked well in an area such as Shenandoah, but that it is not helpful for fostering the value of literacy. Ms. Travasos asked about the width of the Farber Specialty Vehicles wide-body Elf to which Ms. Stein said it is 8½ feet wide. Ms. Stein said this vehicle is attractive and fun at festivals and fairs, but will not attract their target population to which Ms. Arnold agreed. Mr. Bardwell said that it sounds like they need one or two vans. Ms. Husband added that in the *Reading-a-Go-Go* program sponsored by the Gwinnett County, Georgia Public Library, they use a Chrysler PT Cruiser. Ms. Stein cautioned about using this type of vehicle for transporting books because of ergonomic problems which cause staff injuries over time. Mr. Bardwell said he has a better comprehension of how to accomplish their mission. He said it sounds like a smaller vehicle would be helpful.

He then asked if the 37-foot bookmobile can be justified to do something substantive toward their mission. Ms. Arnold replied that it would be useful at events such as Earth Day, and Baby Grand. Ms. Stein added that people could be registered for Library cards at these events, but an awning to provide shade would be crucial. Ms. Husband noted that if the bookmobile could have computers installed for training to increase computer literacy. Possibly a Metropolitan Council member could accompany them in his/her district. Mr. Bardwell thought that local recognizable athletes could draw people to the bookmobile, too. He concluded that he could justify to the Library Board the case for two vans and one Elf bookmobile. Ms. Arnold agreed that these vehicles would help the Library staff to do what they do best.

D. Seasonal Variation

Mrs. Duke suggested they discuss seasonal variations and specifically summer programs. She said beside the year round day care centers, in the summer BREC runs day care camps. The Library could have contact with many children through these programs, but these children would not be able to register for library cards because there would be no adults to sign their applications. Ms. Arnold added that BREC wants to offer an hour of quiet reading at their camps, so the Library could bring a bookmobile to their sites. However, Ms. Arnold said it would be essential to have an air conditioning unit in the bookmobile that can handle the summer heat, and that contains a generator to provide an uninterrupted power supply (UPS). To save energy used to operate the bookmobile, Ms. Travasos pointed out that the bookmobile can be plugged into an electrical outlet at a site similar to a motor home.

Mr. Bardwell asked Mrs. Duke to explore for the next meeting, other agencies with whom the Library can partner. They listed some agencies and groups that came to mind such as the City-Parish Training and Employee Development Department, the Battered Women's Shelter and the Volunteers of America. Mr. Bardwell asked Ms. Stein and Ms. Husband to research the use of a van as an alternative to the Elf bookmobile.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the special ad hoc committee of the Library Board for the Study of the application of a bookmobile for community outreach will be held on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. in the Board Room of the Main Library.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Stanford O. Bardwell, Jr.,
Chairman of Ad Hoc Committee

David Farrar
Library Director