

TENTATIVE AGENDA
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
January 16, 2025
4:12 P.M.

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER – Candace Temple, Board President (4:12 p.m.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Donald Luther, Jr., Board Member (4:14 p.m.)

I. ROLL CALL – Antoinette Y. Poland, Executive Assistant to the Library Director (4:14 p.m.)

Candace Temple, Board President – Present

Donald Luther, Jr., President – Vice President

Kathy Wascom, Treasurer - Present

Nicole Allmon-Learson, Board Member – Present

Delores Watts, Board Member – Absent

Darryl Hurst, Board Member – Present

Ronnie Pierce, Board Member – Present

A quorum was present.

OTHERS PRESENT: Katrina Stokes, Library Director; Mary Stein, Assistant Library Director; Lori Juge, Assistant Library Director; Rhonda Pinsonat, Library Business Manager; Rosana Sotile, Assistant to the Library Deputy Director; Antoinette Poland, Executive Assistant to the Library Director; Daniel Dearing, Computer Services; Tameka Purnell, Outreach; Louis Castenell, Outreach; Leila Reilly, Branch Services Coordinator; Brandon Reilly, Outreach/Special Projects/Adult Community Programming Coordinator; Mr. Eric B. Lewis of Baton Rouge Stem; Deputy Blair Nicholson, EBRPSO.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF November 21, 2024 – A motion to approve was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Nicole Allmon-Learson. ***The motion was carried unanimously (4:14 p.m.)***

III. SPECIAL ORDERS- There were no Special Orders.

IV. REPORTS BY THE DIRECTOR (4:14 p.m.)

A. FINANCIAL REPORTS – Mrs. Rhonda Pinsonat

- 2024 operating expenditures through December 31st are 83.65% of the operating budget.
- Through December, we should have spent no more than 100% of the budget.
- Expenditures such as retirement contributions and fourth quarter interest earnings will change over the next couple of months.
- Next month's capital Projects statement will include additional amounts allocated in the 2025 Budget with a negative balance due to the Scotlandville Branch budget.
- Cash collections from Property Taxes for 2024 remain ahead of those collected in 2023; approximately 7.13% ahead of the same last year; totals will change in a couple of months once the fourth quarter interest earnings are posted.

Ronnie Pierce inquired about the overages for cleaning supplies and janitorial services and asked about contract rebids and if the prices increased.

Rhonda Pinsonat explains that the main library contract was a rebid, and the new labor-only contract includes higher costs due to increased labor expenses. Although the bids have increased, the service is better.

Rhonda Pinsonat asked for additional questions. There were no additional questions from the board.

B. SYSTEM REPORTS – Ms. Mary Stein

“Around the Parish” - Mary Stein discusses slideshows and descriptions of Library programs.

- Discussed the launch of the new website that went live on December 10, 2024, with positive feedback.
- Highlighted challenges with the website, a punch list of items to be corrected and updated; including an increase in newsletter signups.
- Mentioned the search experience being less cluttered for the library books, DVDs, and other materials that have not been updated yet, which she called Phase 2 of the project.
- Highlighted that the RFP, a book return system, for the ILS has not been released; yet the library system is working closely with the City Parish Purchasing Department to finalize everything.
- City Parish is working on the RFID and then the RFP system to replace the ILS from 2009.
- The library included new online resources, such as Code Combat, Mometrix, a new exam testing system; Fiero Code, which teaches coding; Ferguson Financial Fit, and The Mailbox Plus, which offers over 54,000 ideas and activities for PreK to Grade 6. For more information visit www.ebrpl.com
- Based on the Maker Faire theme, the library launched a physical collection for Ukelele and a floor piano to be circulated. For more information, please contact Circulation at 225-231-3740 or visit www.ebrpl.com
- In early 2025, the Library will launch Red Stick Rhythms, a digital resource platform dedicated to streaming music by local music producers to highlight their musical talents. For more information on the upcoming launch visit www.ebrpl.com
- On Saturday, January 11, the pilot project for the Garden Discoveries Seed Library at Greenwell Springs Branch was well received and included Master Gardeners and naturalist with an increase in engagement with programming expanding to Central, Jones Creek, Zachary, and Scotlandville branches.
- Mary Stein discussed 2024 Library by the Numbers, highlighting patron engagement across all the branch libraries; the statistics of the value of the physical materials checked out, which came to over \$26, 000,000 dollars, with another 18,000,000 for eBooks downloaded.
- In addition, she highlighted the library’s value proposition, which is a return on investment due to free resources offered at the library that cost money per household, such as language learning like Duo-Lingo for \$120 or Rosetta Stone for \$240; and business research with Data Axle would cost \$5,000; and a Genealogist starting cost is \$150 dollars an hour.
- Discussed the Career Center impact highlighting statistics, such as time spent in hours, such as over 2,000 in One-On-One conferences; almost 1,000 staff appointments scheduled; almost 10, 000 staff references, and information questions answered; patron attendance; outreach visits, videos produced and posted; and Career Center YouTube videos viewed and watch time in hours.
- With help from his Sunday School Class, stained glass artist Steve Wilson donated his time, creativity, and glass to rework and re-install a stained glass as a gift to the Main

Library at Goodwood, which featured books from classics. For viewing visit the Main Library on Goodwood at 7711 Goodwood Boulevard, Baton Rouge. LA. 70806.

- The library highlighted the success of new programming for the Winter Food Drive and the Sock It to Me Sock Drive, which collected over 100,000 socks.
- The library has partnered with the Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) to introduce a new television series called “Carl the Collector, an animated series for ages 4-8, with an autistic child as the star of the series. For more information visit www.ebrpl.com
- On January 15th, the Library's Special Collections featured a program on Louisiana Music: North, South, East, West, which featured author and former sales promotion manager Barbara Sims, who discussed Louisiana Music.
- On January 25th, the Main library at Goodwood partnered with the LSU College of Science Department, Stem & Stories, which featured stem topics, stories, and direct activities at several branches.
- The library continued programming from January 11th – 13th, with Lincoln at the Library, who performed three presentations at Jones Creek Branch Library, Central Branch Library, and the Main Library at Goodwood.
- The library introduced new programming on January 29th, called Break-a-Nib with Pratima Pinnepalli, for 20-something comics who want to write comics and produce their own scenes. For mor information on monthly workshops visit www.ebrpl.com
- On February 8th, the Main Library at Goodwood hosted the 2025 Mid City Micro-Con, with special guest author Alex Jennings, featured workshops, arts and comics market, and cosplay show and tell, etc.
- On February 14th from 5 p.m.-7 p.m., the Main Library featured, Movies on the Plaza, Gelatines edition, with a nail bar, friendship bracelet, furry friends, and sweet treats.
- On February 6th - 7th, the library hosted a music series from West African musician, Sean Gaskell, who will introduce and entertain audiences with the KORA, a 21-stringed West African harp.
- On January 18th, the Main Library partnered with LPB to premiere a sneak peak of The Independent Film Project Presents: The Public Library, a preview on the impact of public libraries in the country.
- On February 16th at 3 p.m., the main Library with LPB also premiered The Independent Film Project: Bike Vessel by filmmaker Eric D. Seals shared a sneak peek on health response and a family's connection, followed with a panel discussion.
- The library programming continued with Libraries Change Lives mentioning the Dulcimer Classes that teach individuals to play the ukelele and Crafting for a Cause, a club formed to crochet items for those in need. For more information visit the Main library at 7711 Goodwood Boulevard or www.ebrpl.com
- Programming continues with the Virtual Author Talk series featuring Literary Agent, Seth Fishman for those who are interested in publishing. For more information visit www.ebrpl.com
- Programming also continued with Strictly Business webcast featuring Jude Melville of b1BANK.
- Mention the Read and Go put together by Brandon Reilly and the expectation to fill them out.
- Reminder of the library’s value proposition and the benefit of simply using your library card to help boost your bottom line.

Nicole Allmon-Learson inquired about this event for couples being replaced from the previous year.

Mary Stein replied yes.

Nicole Allmon-Learson inquired about the physical value being placed on books.

Mary Stein responded that the library has been adding physical value to books for three years.

Nicole Allmon-Learson inquired about an author for February, suggesting

Dr. Press Robinson.

Mary Stein responded that Mr. Press Robinson premiered his book at the library, and the library is trying to get him to participate in The Authors Row at the Louisiana Library Association in March; acknowledged Mr. Press Robinson as a great speaker.

Candace Temple commented on the importance of social media and how the library needs to utilize it more often for the best benefit.

Mary Stein highlighted and explained how the library will use distinct types of social media for programming and for the best impact.

Kathy Wascom inquired about outreach programming and if we have interacted with Head Start and other organizations that can benefit from library programming.

Donald Luther Jr. acknowledged and suggested author and Ex Chancellor of the Law Center, Judge Freddie Pitcher. In addition, Mr. Luther discussed value points from using his library card after saving money by accessing the library resources.

Kathy Wascom highlighted the 200th Anniversary for St. Joseph Cemetery in relation to the Baton Rouge Room archives regarding cemetery's then and now.

Mary Stein replied, the library has a former staff member who is currently in the library microfilm room creating an obituary database; he started in the eighties and is to 1939.

Mentioned statistics for the Baton Rouge Room Database use up to 100,000 visits.

Candace Temple asked for additional comments by the board, and additional comments under System Reports. There were no additional comments by the board.

C. OTHER REPORTS

1. MAINTENANCE AND ADDITIONAL CAPITAL PROJECTS – Ms. Lori Juge

Maintenance Report for December

Eden Park Branch: The interior doors are having mechanical issues; a vendor will be out later in the week to do an assessment.

Main: Water leak reported in November in the front parking lot near the handicap parking spaces were due to a broken pipe that has been replaced and repaired.

Facilities staff discovered that an isolation control valve on the cooling tower was faulty. They are waiting for a vendor quote for repairs; in addition, they are waiting for parts That were ordered for repairs for the hot deck for both cooling towers at the Main Library.

Facilities staff are repairing HVAC equipment at all locations in preparation for the winter weather next week.

Miscellaneous Improvement Projects

- Outreach

- a. Waiting for the submission of close-out documents and anticipating final acceptance shortly after.
- Multibranch Projects
 - a. Work is completed at all branches except for Delmont Gardens.
 - b. Architectural Services has added additional items to the punch list at that location and we are waiting for the completion of those items before proceeding to final acceptance
- Roofing Project
 - a. There is nothing new to report.
- Boilers for Eden Park and Greenwell Springs Branch Libraries
 - a. The design development phase has been completed. The scope of the project under the advice of the Mechanical Engineer and Facilities Manager has changed to allow for redundancy at Greenwell Springs, we plan to increase from one boiler to two and from two pumps to four pumps.
 - b. At the Eden Park Branch they will not be able to add redundancy to the system due to a lack of space, therefore, the boiler will be replaced with the remaining two pumps.
 - c. The next phase is the construction document phase which will begin shortly, after the construction document phases the project will go out for public bid and then the construction phase will begin.
- Bluebonnet Branch Library Renovation
 - a. We are waiting to meet with Architectural Services and the Architect to discuss the design.
- Chiller Project
 - a. Punch list items remain to be completed for Carver, Zachary, Central and Pride Branch.
 - b. Installation of the chiller at the Baker Branch Library will start the week of January 12th and work is expected to be completed by mid-February.
 - c. All punch list and final acceptance for the chiller project are expected by mid-March.
- Baker Branch Renovations
 - a. The request for qualifications to select an Architect was submitted to Architectural Services for review.

Lori Juge asked questions.

Kath Wascom inquired about how each agency handles preparation for weather events. whether it is managed internally or by City Parish.

Lori Juge replied that she can only speak for the Library System that our facilities handle preparation without assistance from City Parish.

Nicole Allmon-Learson inquired about the library's role as a warming center during cold events and is their preparation for opening for the community as a warming center.

Lori Juge replied to the library has been contacted to serve as a warming center.

Candace Temple asked for additional questions by the board. There were no additional comments from the board.

Candace Temple asked for additional comments from the public. There were no additional comments from the public.

2. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS – Ms. Katrina Stokes

- Discussed the submission of a proposition to the council for a campaign at 10.5 mills in October.
- The library steering committee held a kickoff meeting with Aaron Babcock and Jason Sooter, the project architects, on January 7, 2025, at the Main Library.
- Tours of the main library and all branch facilities were conducted with the architects, with concept plans expected in February 2025 and final reports in April 2025.
- The final report will include Mr. Carson Blocks' Technology Report and be presented to the Community Advisory Committee and the Library Board of Control.
- Response to Mrs. Allmon-Learson's question about virtual, in-person hybrid meetings: Per Council Administrator Ashley Beck, while board members is allowed to attend in-person board meetings, virtual attendance does not count as attendance and board members are not allowed to speak nor cast a vote on any issue.
- In the news, the East Baton Rouge Parish Housing Authority received \$2 million in grants to develop the Earl K. Long site, which is planned for low-income housing and a starter library.

a. INTRODUCTION OF LIBRARY COORDINATORS

1. MS. LEILA REILLY, LIBRARIAN IV, BRANCH SERVICES COORDINATOR

- Leila Riley shared her 20-year career with the library system, starting in 2005 at the Carver Branch Library during Hurricane Katrina.
- Mrs. Reilly highlighted her work at several branches as Branch Manager for the regional branches including Eden Park, Fairwood and Jones Creek Branches.
- She mentioned her role as the regional managers, managing branch managers and working on construction projects, utilizing her semi-background in engineering.
- Highlighted the impact Ms. Lori Juge and Mrs. Patricia Husband have on her career at the library.

Leilla Reilly asked for questions.

Candace Temple thanked Leilla Reilly for her commitment to the system.

2. MR. BRANDON REILLY, LIBRARIAN IV, OUTREACH/SPECIAL PROJECTS/ADULT COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING COORDINATOR

- Brandon Riley talks about his career with the library starting part-time in 1999; his family's love for literacy and his role in the Carver summer reading camp, a partnership with LSU providing one-on-one reading instruction.
- Discussed the culture, importance, and the impact literacy has on his oldest son, children, and patrons.
- He mentioned leaving the system for a few years, then he returned and got a master's degree in librarianship and started working at Caver Branch Library.
- He mentions his work at other branches, including Fairwood and Greenwell Springs Road, and is currently at the Main Library on Goodwood Boulevard where he coordinates adult and community programming.

Mr. Reilly asked for questions.

Kathy Wascom asked about the Carver Reading Program.

Brandon Reilly responded, the program has continued every summer since 2014.

Kathy Wascom inquired about the program's partnership with LSU.

Brandon Reilly responded that the program coordinates with LSU through The Department of Education, serving children in the Terrace neighborhood.

LSU graduate school students are a part of a supervised internship where they apply their knowledge and education from their curriculum for 3-4 hours a day for 2 weeks.

Kathy Wascom commented about the same programming at other branches.

Brandon explains the limitations of the Carver summer reading camp due to the limited number of graduate students available for supervision.

Kathy Wascom commented about contacting Southern University to partner and participate in programming for other branches.

Candace Temple commented about Mr. Reilly's work at the Carver Branch and admired his handling of the children and noise in the library.

Brandon Reilly commented on a columnist's positive experience at Carver, highlighting columnist's notice that the noise was a sign of learning and interaction among the children.

b. DIRECTOR'S FIRST YEAR SELF EVALUATION – Ms. Katrina Stokes reviewed her first year as director.

- Reflected on the completion of phase1 of the Scotlandville project, with new archive annex serving as a temporary library.
- The near completion of the new south Branch with construction finished and shelving and furniture installation in progress.
- Expressed excitement about being part of building a new library and recalling childhood visits to the library.
- Announced that the new library website has been launched, and Facilities Master Plan is near completion, including one with Volunteers of America, have been renewed.
- Discussed her challenges and achievements such as difficulties filling vacant positions with restrictions on posting multiple positions lifted, hiring freeze was a challenge but progress is being made.
- Discussed the need for a Deputy Director position to reclassify it as an Assistant Director, but after careful consideration decided to leave the position as is.
- Highlighted her progress towards understanding the library, its organization, and staff is still in the preliminary stages; revised employee handbook; approved a new training checklist for the staff.
- Highlighted she has been working with staff and local groups such as the South Baton Rouge Rotary Club, Ollie, and the Library Club to discuss library operations and challenges.
- Highlighted a short-term goal to first prioritize a millage campaign and develop a public speaking schedule for the summer and fall to share millage information with local community groups and organizations.
- Discussed her long-term goals of getting certification for the state library directors test and searching for a new Integrated Library System (ILS); launching projects for Baker, Central and Zachary library branches; completing a memorandum for understanding for the Earl K. Long site and adjacent land; expressed gratitude to Mary Stein, Lori Juge and Patricia Husband for their assistance.

Candace Temple asked for board comments.

Donald Luther Jr. thanked the director for her efforts, insights, and confidence in her team.

Ronnie Pierce inquired about the new Integrated Library System (ILS) as an open source. versus propriety systems.

Katrina Stokes responded that it has been taken in consideration, and she is willing to acknowledge pros and cons for an open-source system versus proprietary systems but she would like to gather information from other library directors.

Candace Temple, Board President asked for additional comments from the board under Miscellaneous Reports.

Candace Temple asked for additional public comments under Miscellaneous Reports
There were no additional board or public comments under Miscellaneous Reports.

V. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES – There were no Reports of Committees (5:24 p.m.)

VI. NEW BUSINESS – Candace Temple requested a motion to move Section VII New Business above Section VI. Unfinished Business. A motion was made by Ronnie Pierce and seconded by Donald Luther, Jr. *The motion was carried unanimously.* (5:24 p.m.)

A. VOTE TO ELECT OFFICERS FOR THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL FOR 2025 –
Ms. Candace Temple requested a motion to elect officers for the Library Board of Control for 2025.

A motion to re-nominate officers Candace Temple as President and Donald Luther, Jr. as Vice President was made by Kathy Wascom and seconded by Ronnie Pierce. A motion to re-nominate officer Kathy Wascom as Treasurer was made by Darryl Hurst and seconded by Donald Luther, Jr.

B. REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE 10 YEAR TAX MILLAGE PROPOSAL OF 10.5 MILLAGES – Ms. Katrina Stokes, Ms. Mary Stein, and Mrs. Rhonda Pinsonat

- The meeting focused on the 10-year tax millage proposal of 10.5 mills, a reduction from the previous 11.1 mills.
- The budget request is based on historical funding since 1995 and includes maintenance costs for completed capital projects like the main library and river central branch.
- The proposal plans for two rollbacks, projecting inflation and growth to manage at 10.5 mills.
- The fund balance is clarified as the funds saved for designated projects, not a surplus.
- Concerns about redirecting funds to other projects, such as public safety and juvenile detention, were discussed.
- The importance of maintaining library services and employee livable wages was emphasized.
- Discussed attending the Metro Council meeting on February 12th to present the 10.5 mills proposition.
- Highlighted providing additional data points on household impact, such as higher home value ranges, to help illustrate the cost to taxpayers.
- Darryl Hurst emphasized the library's role in crime prevention and workforce development, and how it correlates with literacy rates and the impact the Library, Council on Aging and Mosquito and Abatement has had on the community.
- Mary Stein commented on the value proposition return on investment, building up civic engagement; population loss due to crime; and the best ways to prevent crime is through education, career opportunities; counseling diversion and the best uses for the fund balance.
- Kathy Wascom inquired about the starter branch libraries.
- Mary Stein said those are designated projects, Earl K. Long is funded, and Gardere Lane shows as in progress.
- Kathy Wascom inquired about Central, Delmont and Zachary Branches.
- Mary Stein responded that those projects are designated projects that the library intends to work on; that the library is committed, but not fully appropriated due to inflation.

C. DISCUSSION OF LITERACY PILOT PROJECT – Mr. Darryl Hurst

Candace Temple requested a motion to defer termination of the Pilot Literacy Contract with Geaux Learn, allowing it to run until May 23, 2025. A motion was made by Ronnie Pierce and seconded by Donald Luther, Jr. (6:10 p.m.)

- The meeting focused on the literacy pilot project, emphasizing its importance in addressing low literacy rates and crime in underserved communities.
- Highlighted the need for systemic change, particularly targeting children and parents in high-crime areas.
- The project aimed to stop recidivism and improve literacy through collaborative efforts with local organizations.
- Highlighted the concerns about the program's effectiveness and the contractor's responsiveness.
- The board decided to defer termination of the contract, allowing it to run until May 23, and emphasized the need for proper vetting and communication in future contracts.
- Review the current contract and performance of the existing contractor.
- The board agrees to revisit the issue after further investigation and vetting of the new contractor.
- Board President Candace Temple excused herself from the meeting at 6:11 p.m. under the leadership of Board Vice-President Donald Luther, Jr.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS – (6:42 p.m.)

A. UPDATE ON SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY – Ms. Lori Juge and Ms. Mary Stein

South Branch Library Update

For the past 2 months, the contractor has completed the following work:

They installed interior and exterior signage.

Exterior lighting has been installed.

Window shades have been installed.

Mechanical wall partitions were installed in the meeting rooms; however, they are waiting for parts for one of the partitions and they expect delivery very soon.

Handrails were installed at the South courtyard steps.

The exterior book-return and the signage for it were installed.

We are waiting for the completion of the punch list and final acceptance. We tentatively expect Final Acceptance to go before the Council on January 29th or February 12th, 2025.

We receive furniture daily. We expect all furniture deliveries to be received by Mid-February.

In addition, shelving is currently being set up throughout the building.

Book and AV deliveries have been scheduled for the end of January.

We have staff from Collection Development, Branch Services, Technical Processing, South Branch, and other select Main staff who will be onsite to receive and shelve items.

IT staff are also working hard to ensure the branch is ready for opening. The server equipment has been installed. Staff and patron computers, and telephones will be set up after the furniture installation is completed.

Computer Service staff are setting up wireless access points (WAPS).

We are very thankful for our hardworking staff.

Later this month, we also expect vendors to be on site to set up AV equipment in the meeting rooms, study rooms, and other areas of the building.

Branch Services staff, along with Patrick Abadie, the Branch Manager, are slowly hiring and training staff. We still have key positions to fill, but we hope to complete the hiring process by next month.

Currently, we do not have an opening date, but we should know more by the next board meeting.

B. UPDATE ON SCOTLANDVILLE BRANCH LIBRARY – Ms. Lori Juge

Scotlandville Branch Library Update – January 2025

A pre-bid meeting was held on January 7, 2025, for Phase 2 of the Scotlandville Branch Library Renovations. Architectural Services informed us that the bid opening is scheduled for, Thursday, January 23, 2025.

The tentative timeline for this project is 280 days (about 9 months). Facilities anticipate construction to begin in March 2025.

Lori Juge asked for questions.

Donald Luther Jr. asked for additional comments and questions from the board, there were no comments and questions from the board.

VIII. COMMENTS BY THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL – (6:49 p.m.)

- Ronnie Pierce asked about the potential liability if patrons visit the library during law enforcement advisories.
- Katrina Stokes and Mary Stein acknowledged the concern and note it for future consideration.
- Donald Luther Jr. asked for additional comments from the board.
- Donald Luther Jr. thanked the Reilly's for their participation and contributions to the meeting.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – (6:51 p.m.) Mr. Donald Luther Jr. requested a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Ronnie Pierce and seconded by Kathy Wascom. ***The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m. by a unanimous vote.***