

RAPIDES PARISH LIBRARY
BOARD OF CONTROL
December 17, 2013
Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the Rapides Parish Library (RPL) Board of Control was called to order by President Susie Smith at 3:30 p.m. in the meeting room of the Huie-Dellmon House, located at 530 Saint James Avenue, Alexandria, Louisiana.

Board members present were: Mrs. Ann Heath, Mrs. Linda McMahon, Mrs. Susie Smith, Mr. Gregory Walker, Mrs. Le'Anza Jordan, Mr. Eddy Boddie, Mr. Glenn Rechs, and Mr. Michael Fairbanks. Mrs. Pat Barber was absent.

Mrs. Smith called the meeting to order, led the Pledge of Allegiance, and asked for a moment of silence. The agenda was voted on and unanimously approved. Mrs. Smith asked if anyone had comments on any agenda item. No one responded, so the meeting moved forward. Mrs. McMahon moved to approve the minutes from the November Board meeting, Mr. Rechs seconded, and the motion passed.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Jimmy Holsomback gave the financial report for November. Mr. Holsomback said the expenses are in line with the budget, and the Library is in overall good shape. He said the projected budget for the new MLK Branch is one million dollars, and they should stay well within the budget. Mr. Rechs moved to approve the financial report, Mrs. McMahon seconded, and the motion passed.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Steve Rogge introduced Sheila Fontenot as the new Administrative Assistant and PR Specialist.

Mr. Rogge gave the statistics report and stated there had been a slight increase this year in the numbers, even though the King Branch is currently closed.

He also updated the Board on the Boyce lease. Contracts have been sent off for signatures for the two year lease with no increase in rent.

Mr. Rogge gave an update on the MLK Branch construction. He stated when he had driven by there the previous day, the slab had been laid, one wall of studs was up, and work on the driveway had begun. He said there have been no financial issues and everything is going well.

Mr. Rogge informed the Board of the Huie-Dellmon Trust grant for \$12,700.00 that was received. He said the grant pays for yard services and any repairs required for keeping the Huie-Dellmon House and grounds in good shape.

Mr. Rogge informed the Board a female customer slipped and fell at the Robertson Branch. The customer submitted the medical bill to her insurance, which refused to cover the bill. She then

forwarded it to the Library. The bill for \$800.00 was submitted to the Library's liability insurance company. The sloping sidewalk, which may have contributed to the problem, has since been painted with a slip-proof paint.

DIRECT SERVICES

Ms. Ayres said people can view pictures of the MLK Branch construction on the Library's MLK blog. She also informed the Board the Library's website is in the process of being revised, so viewing the pictures and other information may be slow.

Ms. Ayres said ten new computer desks have been installed in the Johnson Branch, along with a new circulation desk. She said Mrs. Lisa Salard ordered the computer desks, Mr. Les Guidry built and coordinated the installation of the circulation desk, and the IT Department installed the technological equipment.

Ms. Ayres informed the Board both the Boyce Branch and the McDonald Branch will participate in their respective Christmas parades. She also mentioned the Pineville Christmas parade had been rescheduled from Saturday, December 14, to Monday, December 17, which caused the Martin Branch to change their hours of operation from the normal time of 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

Mrs. Carolyn Colwell recommended the ratification of Mr. Brandon Beckham, Westside Regional Library manager. Mr. Rechs made a motion to ratify Mr. Beckham, Mrs. McMahon seconded, and the motion was approved.

Mrs. Colwell said the Library has hired four new part time substitute clerks, and one full time Administrative Assistant.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. Rogge said he met with the LHS, Inc. Board on December 5, 2013, concerning the Johnson Branch lease renewal. Mr. Rogge felt the lease proposal of \$1150.00 per month, plus an annual increase based on the cost of living index, was too high. He said even though the lease proposal was too high, the Library still needs to be in Lecompte. Mr. Holsomback informed the Board that in 2003 the Library signed a ten year lease for \$650.00 per month. In either 2007 or 2008, the LHS, Inc. Board asked for an increase and the rent went to \$950.00 per month. Their initial proposal this fall was to increase the monthly payment to \$1300.00. Mrs. Smith asked if it would help the Library's cause to talk with the city council or mayor. Mr. Rogge said he has heard the opinion of the city council is about the same as the opinion of the LHS, Inc. Board. Mr. Rechs suggested if the public was made aware of the possibility of the Library's closure, they might be able to convince their city councilmen to intervene. Mrs. Ann Heath asked what would happen if the Library refused to increase the monthly rent payment. Mr. Rogge stated without a renewal, the Library would continue to pay the current amount of \$950.00 per month, until the issue can be resolved. Mr. Holsomback said he checked with a realtor in Alexandria about the cost of leases in both the Alexandria and Lecompte areas. According to what Mr. Holsomback was told, office space in the Alexandria area rents from \$10.00-\$14.00 per square

foot. The cost for rental space in the Lecompte area is closer to \$4.00 per square foot. Mr. Rogge said the LHS, Inc. Board measured the area the Library rents and came up with a different measurement than what the Library actually measured. Mr. Rogge suggested that he continue negotiating with the LHS, Inc. Board. Mrs. Smith said Mr. Rogge has the Board's permission to continue negotiations with the LHS, Inc. Board to keep the monthly rent around \$1150.00.

Mr. Holsomback said in the November Board meeting the 2014 budget was reviewed and accepted. The information has been advertised in the Alexandria Town Talk, and he asked for a motion to approve the 2014 budget. Mrs. McMahon made the motion, Mr. Rechs seconded the motion, and the budget was approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Smith said the business of nominating new officers will be taken care of at the January 21, Board meeting. Mr. Rogge suggested volunteers offer to form a nominating committee. Mrs. Smith asked for three volunteers. Mr. Rechs, Mrs. Heath, and Mr. Fairbanks volunteered.

Grievance from Starla Jones

Ms. Jones introduced herself as branch manager of the MLK Branch. She said when she met with Mr. Rogge and Ms. Ayres, she was told if she wished to continue as branch manager when the new branch opened, she would have to become a full time employee instead of keeping her current status as a part time employee. She said she does not feel that the MLK Branch is busy enough to be opened on a full time basis. She feels hurt and insulted that after working for the Library for eleven and half years, she was presented with this option. She stated the only way for her to continue to work for the Library is to remain part time since she has another job, which is full time. She said she feels that after having been closed for a year during construction, it will be hard for the community to start frequenting the Library again, and it will not be necessary for the Library to operate full time. She said she was not asked how many hours she could work; instead she was told if she stayed at her current hours, she would become a clerk and no longer a manager. She said no one asked the branch employees what their opinions were regarding the hours the branch would be opened. She said this bothered her most; that no one bothered to ask what the MLK Branch employees thought, or how they felt.

Mr. Rogge responded by reminding Ms. Jones she has been consulted in the process, and it had not been said that everyone on the staff at the MLK Branch who is part time will be required to become a full time employee. The Administration does feel that a large operation such as this calls for a full time manager. Mr. Rogge stated he felt Ms. Jones was mistaken about the Library having to build up their customer level again, once the branch opens. He said the building will be larger and the neighborhood has the potential to absorb what the Library will offer as a full time branch. He said the MLK Branch needs to have the things the other larger branches have, such as more staffing.

Ms. Jones said she did not have a problem with the branch needing to be full time. She felt the branch had not outgrown the space in the previous location. She said their greatest increase of customers was in the evenings. She also stated the new location will not be near as many homes as the previous location was.

Ms. Ayres said they were thinking of the hours from 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. for the MLK Branch, but that time was not set in stone. She told Ms. Jones they were not saying exactly which hours the branch should be open, and that she had thought Ms. Jones liked those hours. She told Ms.

Jones if those hours were not what she wanted, they could talk about changing them. Mr. Rogge said they were aware the later hours were working and that was not a problem. He told Ms. Jones they have listened to what she has had to say, but that doesn't mean they will agree with everything. He pointed out the old building had problems and needed to be replaced. Mrs. Smith agreed the Library does need someone that can be there on a full time basis. Ms. Ayres said they could talk about the hours with Ms. Jones. If Ms. Jones feels like the Library needs to be opened on Sunday, then it can be. Ms. Ayres wondered what the community would think if the Library does not give them the same opportunities the other branches have. Ms. Jones agreed the MLK is a neighborhood library, but the Library needs to see what type of response the community will give before the hours are increased. Mrs. McMahan said she rarely considered going to the branch because of its lack of space and ventilation. She mentioned another reason she would not frequent the old MLK Branch was because she could never remember when it was going to be open. She said when she needed to hold meetings, instead of using the MLK Branch, she would go to businesses in town that were larger. She said she didn't use the MLK Branch because it did not meet her needs. Mrs. McMahan said she feels Ms. Jones is underestimating how much the Library will be used. Ms. Jones replied that Mrs. McMahan was talking about meeting places, while she, (Ms. Jones) was referring to circulation. Mr. Rechts stated one thing that has disturbed him through the years was how dangerous the location of the old MLK Branch was. He expressed concern for the children that would have to cross the busy street to go into the Library. There have also been accidents in which automobiles have crashed into the Library building. He said he voted for the new MLK Branch to be built because he wanted to see the community grow rather than remain stagnant. Ms. McMahan said she is not clear as to what Ms. Jones wants. Ms. Jones said she wants the branch to be given a chance to succeed; and if the Library wants to increase, fine, but it should be a gradual increase. Mrs. Le'Anza Jordan said the Board appreciated the information Ms. Jones gave to them. She asked Ms. Jones if she had questioned the community as to what their preference was in regard to the hours of operation. Mrs. Jordan stated she felt cutting hours with a new branch was not good for the community, and Ms. Jones and her staff need to let the community know they are available for the community. Mrs. Jordan asked Ms. Jones what she would like the Board to do. Ms. Jones replied she wanted to know if the new MLK Branch would be full time regardless. Mrs. Jordan replied, "Yes ma'am". Mrs. Jordan asked if the Library had talked with the community about the hours of operation for the new branch. Mr. Rogge stated the Library is making a huge commitment and you can't predict the future totally, but polling the community is a great way to remind them that the Library will be back. Mrs. Jordan asked Ms. Jones if the Board had addressed her issues and Ms. Jones answered "yes".

The next regular meeting of the Rapides Parish Library Board of Control is scheduled for Tuesday, January 21, 2014, at 3:30 p.m., at the Huie-Dellmon House.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Steve Rogge
Secretary

Susie Smith
President

December 2013