

**Rapides Parish Library
Board of Control
May 19, 2020**

Minutes

The regular meeting of the Rapides Parish Library (RPL) Board of Control was called to order by Board Vice-President Michael Fairbanks at 3:30 p.m., Westside Regional Library, 4616 Provine Place, Alexandria.

Board members present were: Mr. Michael Fairbanks, Mr. Greg Walker and Ms. Celise Reece-Harper.

Board members present by phone were: Ms. June Arrington, Ms. Dana Cox, Ms. Lana Havens, Ms. Le'Anza Jordan, Ms. Linda McMahon and Mr. Ralph Roach.

Mr. Morris Taft Thomas was absent.

Vice-President Michael Fairbanks led the Pledge of Allegiance and led a moment of silence.

Agenda

Mr. Walker made a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Havens seconded, and the motion passed.

Minutes

Mr. Walker made a motion to approve the February minutes. Ms. Jordan seconded, and the motion passed.

2019 Audit

Mr. Fairbanks announced that the 2019 Audit report was postponed until the next meeting.

Boyce Construction Report

Adam Grunzinger of Alliance Design presented plans for the Library Branch in Boyce. The plans were provided to the Board Members prior to the meeting. Mr. Grunzinger reported that the plans were based on the Martin Luther King Jr. and Libuse Branches. He said the site is on a dead end street with no access from Highway 8. The building will face downtown Boyce. There will be limited visibility from Interstate 49.

Public parking will be located on the north side of the building and the south side of the property will be undeveloped to allow for future expansion if needed. There will be twenty-three patron parking spaces and a drive-through. Staff parking will be available at the rear of the building. A sign, similar to the "book sign" at Libuse will be constructed and a flag pole will be installed.

The building will be raised about two foot above the flood level by adding dirt to the site. This building will be the only new building in Boyce in several years. Some architectural aspects of the building are reminiscent of the old high school which has been demolished. The building will be brick and concrete with asphalt shingles.

The floorplan is very similar to Martin Luther King Jr. and Libuse Branches with covered entryway, afterhours access to a meeting room, restrooms, vending, and a display case. There is a vaulted ceiling that will offer a natural divide between the adult area and the teen area. A decorative window bench will provide extra seating in the adult area.

The building is 5,000 square feet with 2,500 square feet of stacks.

Mr. Bill Tudor explained the documents will be presented to the Policy Jury at its first meeting in June and once approved, the bidding process will begin. The estimated construction timeline is seven to eight months; weather permitting the construction could take as little as six months. Construction is expected to begin in late August or early September.

Ms. Reech-Harper said that the public would be kept informed on the progress of the new Library building on local and social media.

Ms. McMahon made a motion to accept the plans submitted by Alliance Construction and submit to the Police Jury at its next meeting. Ms. Arrington seconded, and the motion passed.

Financial Report

Business Manager Jimmy Holsomback presented the financial report for February, March, and April. He reported that revenue is within \$160,000 of the budget for the year. The interest on the checking accounts has fallen to 0.4% and branch income for April was \$50 due to the closure.

Operating expenses were consistent with the regular monthly expenses. Mr. Holsomback noted that Account No. 5100, 5101, and 5102 were expenses related to the Boyce construction which will be reimbursed from the construction account later in the year and will not affect the 2020 budget. There were no questions about the March or April Balance Sheets.

Ms. Havens made a motion to accept the financial report. Mr. Roach seconded, and the motion passed.

Director's Report

Ms. Celise Reech-Harper explained the reopening plan. She said that the Library was closed from March 14 to May 17. Staff were paid according to their set schedules and participated in professional development and community enrichment projects as they were able. The staff assembled over 300 pieces of personal protective equipment (PPE) and 250 replacement shield screens. The 3D Printers are being used as part of PPE for Cenla Project.

Social media training was conducted via Zoom for interested staff. Instagram use rose significantly, and we are approaching 4,000 followers on Facebook. Weekly RPL Team Talks were held and almost 500 virtual cards assigned.

The phased reopening plan is based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and the Louisiana Department of Health. Phase 1 is now in effect:

- Curbside & Drive Through Access Only
- Virtual Cards are being issued.

Phase 2 will not be implemented until there is a significant, sustained reduction in cases. All staff were prepared and eager to return to work. Our reopening plan was used as an example by the State Library of Louisiana when creating their template.

She moderated a panel on best practices for reopening for Library administration staff throughout the state.

Ms. Reech-Harper explained her Fine Free proposed plan.

- **Financial impact**

- Projected total of approximately \$17,000 collected for fines in 2020.
- Fine Free would negate approximately \$14,000.
- Patrons would still be responsible for missing and/or damaged materials.
- All late fines ONLY would be removed.
- No late fines would accrue for the remainder of 2020.

- **Patron benefits**

- Diminish barriers to access.
- Provide positive assurance that library materials are accessible to all.
- Promote return of materials.
- Provide needed relief in a time of economic uncertainty.

Curbside app and text notifications low and no-cost options are being explored. Text alerts would be sent when items were ready for pickup. Patrons nor the Library would be required to download any type of software.

The Library will be receiving a \$6500 grant for Wi-Fi hotspots and service. This money will be distributed by the State Library of Louisiana to parish libraries for use. We are exploring a partnership opportunity with the Alexandria Museum of Art utilizing grants made possible by the CARES funding.

Ms. Reech-Harper reported that the future of RPL service will include:

1. Increased Access
2. Customized Experience
3. Offerings that support all communities
4. Promotion of digital resources and our virtual community

Direct Services

Direct Services Coordinator Lennà Mouton reported that the reopening was going smoothly and patrons were getting the items that they needed. She said that in the past two days since opening that over 5,000 items have been checked in.

Human Resources

Jackie Brown, Human Resources Manager, presented Delivery Clerk Robert Bener for ratification. Ms. Jordan made a motion to approve Robert Bener for ratification. Ms. Havens seconded, and the motion passed.

Outreach and Youth Services

Tammy DiBartolo, Outreach and Youth Services Manager, presented the Outreach and Youth Services Report.

Outreach and Youth Services staff have been working diligently to find viable ways to serve the public. Service to daycares and nursing home facilities has been suspended indefinitely. During the time that the Library was closed, we consulted with our Library Director, co-workers, other libraries and the Louisiana State Library, for guidance. We have a plan that will be safe for both the public and library staff while still offering good patron service.

The Bookmobile staff will be going out to school stops around the parish with a “hotspot”. They will sit for 2 hour shifts so that those without Wi-Fi capability can access the Internet with their device or phone while in the comfort of their vehicle. This will be helpful to those who may need to access messages from school or work as well as those who may need to fill out job applications or apply for services.

Summer Reading will look very different this year as it will be virtual. However, we are going to use this opportunity to make the program simpler for our patrons. This year, children, teens and adults will all count minutes read towards their goal. In prior years, there was an option of counting the number of books or minutes read. Having each group count the same way will make things easier in the long run. Another important change is that all performances for Summer Reading will be virtual. We are working to get the schedule confirmed for this as soon as possible. There are important things to consider such as which social media platform will work best for the performer as well as copyright issues with the performances. We are working through these issues, and Jennifer Hughes will begin the promotion of the programs as soon as all have confirmed.

We have already begun a virtual storytime that takes place on Fridays at 10 am. It can be accessed through our Facebook page.

We are going through uncharted territory, but the library is proving that our services are necessary because we meet the needs of the community as they change.

IT

Systems Administrator Janie Primeaux gave the IT report.

The IT department is adapting to the changing needs of the community during the closure. These are new services that IT is developing.

- Laptop Checkout –21 laptops will be available for the public to checkout and use at home.

- Hotspot Checkout – 30 hotspots have been ordered. Due to shipping delays, expected delivery is the end of August.
- Wi-Fi –we are studying the possibility of adding more access points to improve our Wi-Fi at the branches, including mounting access points outside of the branches.
- AT&T – Internet speed increase will double our current speed. Main Library will have 1GB and the branches will have 100 MB.
- Virtual Library Cards – ILS Administrator Trina Kirk created 499 virtual library cards since we closed. We are looking for a way to set up an online patron registration for the future where Sierra generates a library card number.

Ms. Primeaux noted that the laptop and hotspot check-out time will be for a shorter time.

Public Relations

Public Relations Officer Jennifer Hughes reported that the Public Relations Department has been very busy updating the community about the happenings with the Library since the closure, which included an article in the *Cenla Focus* about the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) effort that the Library has been involved.

Summer Reading Program will be promoted on seven billboards throughout the central Louisiana as well as ads in *Cenla Focus* and other promotions in local media. New social media channels will be available for the Summer Reading Program which will target teen participation.

There has been almost 1,000 new Facebook followers which means that RPL has over 4,000 followers. Instagram engagement is growing rapidly.

Unfinished Business

Ms. Reech-Harper explained that the Women's History Month programs from March cannot be rescheduled at this time due to the presenter's schedule. The event planned for July with Temple Grandin will likely be moved to the fall. Ms. Reech-Harper said that plans are being made for a program focusing on Japanese internment camps in Louisiana during WWII that will be held near the end of the year. This program will recognize women's contributions during the war.

The Sex Offender Policy was presented for renewal without any changes. It was discussed that the policy was based on a policy by the Louisiana Legislature. There were questions about item 1.A. on the policy and the branches there were single rooms. Ms. McMahon made a motion to table the matter until the next meeting, in order to research changes. Ms. Jordan seconded, and the motion passed.

New Business

The waived fee and fines free for 2020 procedural change was explained earlier in the meeting by Ms. Reech-Harper. Ms. Havens made a motion to waive fees and continue fines free until the end of 2020. Ms. McMahon seconded and the motion passed.

Ms. Reech-Harper explained that temporary hour reduction was necessary for the branches during the phased reopening. The temporary hours are as follows:

- Main and Westside Regional: Monday to Friday from 10 am to 6 pm, Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm
- King, Libuse, Martin and Robertson: Monday to Friday from 10 am to 6 pm
- Boyce, Hineston and McDonald: Tuesday and Thursday from 10 am to 6 pm, Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm
- Johnson: Tuesday and Thursday from 10 am to 5 pm, Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm

Ms. McMahon made a motion to change the hours as suggested. Mr. Roach seconded, and the motion passed.

Due to the changes in the responsibilities of staff during this time, Ms. Reech-Harper asked that the dress code temporarily be relaxed during the reopening phases. All materials are being sanitized and areas where items are kept are being cleaned regularly. She asked that staff be allowed to wear jeans or other casual pants in good repair and t-shirts with no advertising, political views, obscenities, etc. Athletic footwear will be allowed. Ms. Reech-Harper noted that most staff are wearing RPL t-shirts and sneakers. Ms. McMahon made a motion to relax the dress code for staff. Ms. Havens seconded, and the motion passed.

The Library's reopening plan had been sent to board members before the meeting for review. The plan is based on recommendations by the CDC and the LDH. Ms. Reech-Harper noted that the plan was fluid and changes were being made as needed. Board members can access the plan by the link sent earlier. Mr. Roach made a motion to accept the reopening plan. Ms. Havens seconded, and the motion passed.

Ms. Reech-Harper explained that there are mandated changes related to FMLA due to COVID-19. She presented the Families First Coronavirus Response Act Policy (FFCRA). The policy's effective dates are May 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. The policy is to ensure that the Library is in compliance with FMLA laws and to ensure the safety of the staff. Ms. Havens made a motion to accept the policy. Mr. Roach seconded, and the motion passed.

Mr. Fairbanks announced that the next meeting will be on June 16th at the Westside Regional Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Celise Reech-Harper
Secretary

Michael Fairbanks
Vice- President