

**Rapides Parish Library
Board of Control
August 18, 2020**

Minutes

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

Board members present were Mr. Michael Fairbanks, Ms. Linda McMahon, Ms. Le'Anza Jordan, Mr. Ralph Roach, Mr. Greg Walker, and Ms. Celise Reech-Harper.

Board members present by phone were Ms. June Arrington and Mr. Morris Taft Thomas.

Ms. Dana Cox and Ms. Lana Havens were absent.

President Linda McMahon led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

Ms. Jordan made a motion to approve the June minutes. Mr. Fairbanks seconded, and the motion passed.

Financial Report

Business Manager Jimmy Holsomback presented the financial report for June and July. He said that the collections were light; however, he noted that collection of ad valorem taxes for this year was \$100,000 more than July 2019.

Mr. Holsomback reported that the expenses were the normal monthly expenses and within the budgeted amounts. The auditor fee of \$19,500 was paid. Account No. 5010 for Library Materials is one of the largest expenses and is within the budget. Account numbers of the Boyce project were added at the end of the report. These expenses will be paid from the Library account and reimbursed from the contingency fund at the end of the year. Sixteen thousand dollars has been paid on the worker's compensation expense, Account No. 4020 for the year and more is expected to be paid later in the year, but he expects the account to stay within the budget.

The Balance Sheets indicates a strong cash position.

Mr. Holsomback announced that this meeting will be his last. He will be retiring September 30, 2020 and will be on vacation at the time of the September board meeting. He said that his service with the Rapides Parish Library began in 2003 and he planned to work two or three years. He said that when he realized that the Library offered important services to the community with ten branches and many free programs, he decided to stay longer. During his tenure, two successful tax elections allowed the construction or remodeling of six locations. The funding for these projects was borrowed through state revenue and the Rapides Parish Library will be debt free by 2023. The Boyce project will be paid from the contingency fund and will have no debt when completed. He

said that the administrative staff helps create a sound budget yearly and are conscience to stay within the budget. He said that the Library has been a great part of his life and he has enjoyed working with everyone. The Board congratulated Mr. Holsomback on his retirement.

Director's Report

Ms. Celise Reech-Harper reported about the following services.

- **Curbside Services**

Curbside services continue to be popular at all branches. Numerous patrons have expressed their appreciation for the convenient option.

- **Virtual card expansion**

We will soon have an online form on our website which will make acquiring a virtual card as simple as filling out a brief application.

- **Partnerships**

Sankofa Cultural Collective

We are currently partnering to host the annual art camps via a virtual space and using our branch locations as materials dispersal locations.

Healthy Blue

Healthy Blue again sponsored our annual Back to School Supply Giveaway in downtown Alexandria. We distributed 500 packs of school supplies safely via a drive through at the Main Branch.

Hope for CenLa

We are collaborating with Central Louisiana Human Services District to create a unique one-day virtual summit on substance abuse prevention and local resources. Featured speakers will include Dan Schneider and Miss America Camille Schrier.

- **History Preservation Project**

The staff at our Main branch are working diligently to preserve the Library's history by digitizing a wealth of articles, photographs and other memorabilia that had been sitting in files.

- **Boyce Project**

We are currently working out the details of the contract due to the bids coming in over the desired budget. We have made significant headway in getting to a cost that is closer to being in alignment with our original projections.

- **Staff Satisfaction Survey**

In the last several years, the staff at all branches have participated in a staff satisfaction survey. This year, we have expanded the scope to include all staff members, include more questions about professional development and growth, and make the surveys truly anonymous. The results of the survey should be ready for our September meeting.

- **Social Worker**

Given the changing roles of libraries in our communities and the public need for low cost, widely available professional assistance, the Library will be creating a position for a traveling social worker. We are currently seeking funding and partnerships for this opportunity.

Direct Services

Direct Services Coordinator Lennà Mouton reported that branches continue to offer curbside service, copy and fax service, and meeting the needs of the community. She said that staff is taking advantage of training, webinars and on-line classes to prepare for the upcoming months.

One of the needs that she is focusing on is financial education for the community. Ms. McMahon mentioned that Red River Bank is working with the Strong Neighborhood initiative for adults and teens.

Outreach and Youth Services

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

Since school has begun, we are no longer offering the “hotspots” stops in the community. This will allow us to increase the number of homebound patrons who are not able to access a library location. The deliveries to homebound patrons will be a no contact, safe delivery for all.

Youth Services, along with some of the branch staff, has been doing virtual storytimes and programs. This has been really exciting and fun as each storytime has been unique. The number of views of each program is growing.

The King Branch Library will once again partner with Sankofa who will facilitate a virtual art instruction for children in the community. We appreciate this partnership and plan to do more with the group in the future.

On August 22, the Martin, Libuse, Robertson and Johnson Branches will host a drive-through school supply give away event at Pineville Elementary School. The event will take place from 9:00 am until 11:00 am. The children will have to be present in the car to receive the school supplies.

On September 18, as part of National Recovery Month, the Library will partner with Central Louisiana Human Services District and the Extra Mile to host a virtual substance use disorder, overdose, and recovery symposium. Guest speakers will include the current Miss America Camille Shrier and Dan Schneider from the Netflix docuseries “The Pharmacist” as well as several state health officials. It will be a very informative event, and we hope that you share the information with others.

IT

Janie Primeaux, Systems Administrator, reported that the Library started checking out twenty-one laptops and thirty hotspots at the end June. They check out for seven days. The circulation numbers are 56 for the laptops and 94 for the hotspots.

The ILS team held a Sierra training for new substitute clerks in July. We will have another training at the end of this month. We are offering the training as a refresher for our circulation staff.

We have been working with AT&T to increase our internet speed. Main Library will be upgraded to 1GB and the branches to 100 MB. AT&T will install the upgrades on Friday, August 21st.

We are creating virtual cards every day. We are creating on an online patron registration in which Sierra will generate a library card number and plan to have this in place by the beginning of next month.

Ms. Primeaux reported that patrons are using the Wi-Fi at the branches regularly. She reminded the board that Wi-Fi was expanded to be accessible in the parking lots of the branches.

Public Relations

Public Relations Officer Jennifer Hughes reported that this month's promotions include the Back to School Bash on August 22, Library Card Sign-up Month in September and the upcoming Hope for CenLA event on September 18.

Every new patron who signs up for a library card in September will be eligible for a drawing of a gift card to a local coffee shop. There are ten cards to give away.

Since there are no event guides or flyers, Ms. Hughes sends a weekly email blast to about 11,000 individuals about upcoming events. A monthly events calendar is provided to the branches that is include in the bags for curbside pickup. New books are featured on the website.

There are 200 new followers on social media and the engagement has been huge.

New Business

Adam Grunzinger from Alliance Design provided an update on the Boyce project. Mr. Grunzinger reported that Descant Construction had the lowest bid for the project at \$992,000. This bid was over the amount that was expected for the project. He has been working with Descant Construction to find more savings and was able to reduce the bid by changing specifications for plumbing and electrical distribution for the building. These changes will not affect the visual or functionality of the facility. Mr. Grunzinger recommended accepting the adjusted bid of \$971,500 and sending the contract to the Police Jury for approval.

Mr. Fairbanks made a motion to accept the adjusted bid and forward to the Police Jury for the next meeting in September. Mr. Roach seconded and the motion passed.

The projected groundbreaking will be about one month from the Police Jury approval which will be early October.

Executive Session

Mr. Walker made a motion to enter into executive session. Mr. Fairbanks seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Ms. McMahon announced that the executive session had ended. Mr. Walker reported that the Personnel Committee met on July 24, 2020 to review the performance of the director. The committee found that she exceeded expectations in every area. In addition to the regular duties of

the director, during this time, she handled the matters associated with COVID-19 very well. In fact, some of the ideas that were implemented at the Rapides Parish Library were copied and used by the State Library of Louisiana and other parish libraries. The committee also reviewed the pay scale of the director based on the Library's current pay scale and recommended that she have a salary not only to be more in line with the pay scale adopted by the Board of Control but also based on her evaluation. The committee passed a motion at its meeting to present to the board to approve the ratification of Celise Reech-Harper and that her salary be increased to \$92,581.

Ms. McMahon seconded the motion and the motion passed. Ms. Reech-Harper commented that she appreciated the salary increase but more so the faith in her during such a trying time.

Ms. Le'Anza Jordan's term was renewed for her second term. Mr. Walker made a motion to renew Ms. Jordan's term. Mr. Fairbanks seconded and the motion passed. Ms. Jordan read and signed the oath of office.

Ms. Reech-Harper explained that the Long Range Plan is a departmental plan for the future. She suggests that a Strategic Plan that will consider planning for the next five years be created. She would like to form a committee that includes staff and at least two board members. She reminded the group that a tax election will be held in about two years. Ms. Reech-Harper suggested that the plans be in place for the organization with a more forward focus. The Long Range Plan will continue for annual goals, and the new committee would address a five to ten year Strategic Plan. The new Staff Satisfaction Survey is the beginning of this process.

Human Resource Manager Jackie Brown recommended Director Celise Reech-Harper for ratification. Mr. Fairbanks made a motion to approve Ms. Reech-Harper for ratification and Mr. Roach seconded and the motion passed.

Ms. Reech-Harper presented the Customer Privacy Policy for renewal without changes. Mr. Walker made a motion to approve the policy as presented. Ms. McMahon seconded and the motion passed.

Ms. McMahon announced that the next meeting will be on September 15th at the Westside Regional Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Celise Reech-Harper
Secretary

Linda McMahon
President