

**Rapides Parish Library
Board of Control
January 19, 2021**

Minutes

The regular meeting of the Rapides Parish Library (RPL) Board of Control was called to order by Board Vice President Michael Fairbanks at 3:35 p.m. at the Westside Regional Library, 4616 Provine Place, Alexandria.

Board members physically present were Mr. Fairbanks, Mr. Greg Walker, Ms. June Arrington, Mr. Ralph Roach, Mr. Morris Taft Thomas, Ms. Lana Havens, and Director Celise Reech-Harper.

Board President Linda McMahon, Ms. Le'Anza Jordan, and Ms. Dana Cox were present by phone.

Mr. Fairbanks led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda

Mr. Thomas moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Arrington seconded, and the motion passed on unanimous vote.

Minutes

Ms. Havens moved to approve the December minutes. Mr. Thomas seconded, and the motion passed on unanimous vote.

Financial Report

Business Manager Stacy Dubrock presented reports for October and November; December bills are still being received and processed. The Library is maintaining its budget with some overspending on COVID supplies being balanced by decreased expenditures in other areas due to branch closures.

The first payments on the Boyce construction project have been made, and regular payments will continue in future months as planned.

Mr. Fairbanks requested a motion to approve the financial report. Ms. Dana Cox so moved, and Mr. Thomas seconded the motion. The financial report was unanimously approved.

Director's Report

Ms. Celise Reech-Harper informed the board of the following:

- Johnson, King, Libuse, Hineston, and Westside branches were all briefly closed due to policy-mandated quarantine after staff exposure to COVID-19. At this time, all branches are open again for curbside service. There was also a Library-wide closure on Monday, January 11 due to expected severe weather.
- The Library will remain open at curbside service level in order to continue protecting staff and the community. RPL has been placed on a waiting list with our vaccine provider (Walgreens) for a staff COVID-19 vaccination drive.
- The forms are up on the new Boyce branch and a progress blog is available on the RPL website.
- Many staff members have shown interest in joining the Strategic Planning Committee. The committee will be formed by the end of January, and a timeline and goals will be set in

February. The Director will be enlisting feedback from not only board members and library staff but also community members and patrons. The Board will receive monthly updates.

Direct Services

Direct Services Coordinator Lenná Mouton reported by phone that all RPL branches are currently open for curbside service with some branches using creative and informative window displays to better engage with the community.

Human Resources

Human Resources Manager Jackie Brown had no report to make but reminded the Board of the Director's evaluation later in the meeting.

Outreach and Youth Services

Outreach Services Coordinator Tammy DiBartolo announced that the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities has awarded the Library a grant to offer a virtual book discussion series. The series is intended to promote learning and discussion of the history of voting and vote suppression in the United States. Applications have also been sent in to the Rapides Foundation for more Storywalk grants.

Ms. DiBartolo was recently trained by My Community Cares to facilitate a virtual Parent Café, which is a virtual space in which parents in the community can come for discussions via Zoom.

IT

Systems Manager Janie Primeaux explained that this year's Innovative Users Group conference will be virtual, allowing more staff members than usual to attend. The conference will take place in March.

Basic equipment purchases have begun for the new Boyce branch, including laptops and large display screen for the meeting room.

It was recently realized that a firewall purchased for the server room will allow internet routers at each branch to be eliminated – branches can route through the firewall instead. Since it had been the plan to replace all branch routers in 2021, this is a welcome cost saving discovery.

Public Relations

Public Relations Officers Jennifer Hughes reported that, after reaching 102 subscribers, the Library now has a custom YouTube URL. This will make it easier to search for and find RPL on YouTube, which ideally will lead to more growth. Planning is currently underway to include closed captioning on all virtual programming videos to increase accessibility to the hearing impaired.

Every RPL location is now verified on Google's My Business, which is another way to provide updates and information about the Library to the community. The Library newsletter email, which is now sent weekly, has almost 10,000 subscribers. The current click-through rate is 2%, which Ms. Hughes plans to work toward increasing to the industry average of 3%.

Old Business

Ms. Jordan thanked the staff who prepared the 2020 RPL Year End Review booklet. She found it informative and enjoyable and stated that she hopes copies are available in all branches. Ms. Reech-Harper explained the booklets were not originally intended for public consumption, but copies could certainly be made available to the community.

New Business

Chairman Michael Fairbanks of the Nominating Committee presented the proposed slate of officers for 2021:

- President – Michael Fairbanks
- Vice President – Greg Walker
- Treasurer – Le’Anza Jordan

With no questions or comments forthcoming, Mr. Fairbanks called for a motion to approve the officers. Ms. McMahon so moved, seconded by Mr. Thomas, and the motion was approved on unanimous vote.

Upon reviewing the proposed 2021 Board of Control Committee assignments, it was deemed necessary to replace Mr. Fairbanks - who as President will serve on all committees – on the Personnel Committee with Ms. June Arrington, who volunteered her service. Mr. Fairbanks called for a motion to accept the revised committees. Ms. Cox so moved, Ms. McMahon seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Dates for the regular Board of Control meetings in 2021 were reviewed. Ms. Jordan moved to accept them; Ms. McMahon seconded the motion. The dates were adopted on unanimous vote.

Ms. Reech-Harper asked all Board members to be sure to turn in their Conflict of Interest documents and contact information forms as soon as possible.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) expired on December 31, 2020 with no extension. Based on local COVID-19 case rates and in order to protect the public as well as library staff, Ms. Reech-Harper urged an extension of the RPL policy granting sick leave for staff who test positive as well as quarantine time for those awaiting results. Based on projected vaccine availability in 2021, she recommended extending the policy expiration to June 30, 2021. While there is hope of a federal policy extension in the near future, Ms. Reech-Harper’s intention is to ensure that RPL staff and the Library as an entity remain covered until such a time.

Ms. Havens moved to approve the FFCRA policy date extension. Ms. Arrington seconded, and the motion passed on unanimous vote.

Chairman Greg Walker of the Personnel Committee then presented the Director’s evaluation to the board. The Director’s scores fell firmly in the “Exceeds Expectations” scoring category:

- 92.56 from the Board of Control
- 89.80 from Library staff
- 91.18 average of both Board and Library staff

Mr. Walker called for questions or comments on the evaluation results. With none forthcoming, he concluded his report.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Celise Reech-Harper
Secretary

Linda McMahon
President