

**Rapides Parish Library  
Board of Control  
September 21, 2021**

**Minutes**

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

Board members present were Mr. Fairbanks, Mr. Greg Walker, Ms. Le’Anza Jordan, Ms. Irene Hobbs, Ms. Lana Havens, Mr. Ralph Roach, and Ms. Dana Cox. Also present were Director Celise Reech-Harper and nine members of staff. Mr. Morris Taft Thomas and Ms. June Arrington were absent.

Mr. Fairbanks led the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

**Agenda**

Ms. Reech-Harper proposed adding to the agenda a discussion of the Boyce branch sewage treatment plan. Mr. Fairbanks suggested the additional item appear under New Business. Mr. Walker moved that the item be added, seconded by Ms. Havens. On unanimous vote, the agenda was amended.

Mr. Fairbanks then called for the approval of the amended agenda. The motion was made by Ms. Cox and seconded by Mr. Roach; on unanimous vote, the agenda was approved.

**Minutes**

Mr. Fairbanks called for a motion to approve the August minutes. Ms. Cox so moved, seconded by Ms. Jordan, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

**Financial Report**

Business Manager Stacy Dubrock first presented the July financial report. She warned that reports in this half of the year will show little income growth because the year’s taxes and e-rate have already been received and branch incomes are now at a minimum due to policy changes. In regards to expenses, the budget for hot spots has been exceeded. This is a new budget item for the Library, and a learning curve was expected. Budgeting for these items should be more on target next year, and e-rate for hot spots are still in negotiations.

Ms. Dubrock next presented the August financial report. Some small refunds and reimbursements were received under worker’s compensation, internet, and insurance. HVAC maintenance is over budget for the year due to ongoing necessary repairs throughout the system.

Regarding the Boyce branch construction project, Ms. Dubrock reported that, due to increased costs in supplies and services over the last two years, building costs and architect fees will be over budget.

Mr. Fairbanks called for a motion to approve the financial report. Ms. Jordan so moved, seconded by Ms. Cox, and the report was unanimously approved.

**Director’s Report**

Director Celise Reech-Harper reported the following:

- The entryway display case for the new Boyce branch library is scheduled for delivery this week, to be followed by shelving, furniture and materials. The tentative date for the grand opening is now November 12.
- The Board training that was to be held in September will be moved to the spring of 2022. State Librarian Rebecca Hamilton has agreed to lead the training.
- The Library plans to resume in-house programming in November at the earliest.
- The 2023-2028 Strategic Plan is being created from the data collected through the Strategic Planning Committee community surveys. Brochures describing the plan will be distributed to the public at the end of this year.

Ms. Reech-Harper then discussed a future proposal for changes to RPL's bereavement and sick leave policies. The proposed changes would include annual paperwork by each staff member regarding a Compassionate Familial Leave List. The list would enumerate twenty-five individuals for whom five days of bereavement leave would be paid and for whose care an employee's sick leave could be used. The purpose of this change would be to bring Library policies in line with modern relationship dynamics and to provide equitable treatment of employees with non-nuclear family loved ones under their care.

Ms. Jordan and Mr. Walker expressed concerns that keeping non-staff names on file would violate the privacy of the named individuals. Ms. Reech-Harper stated that the names would be held in a file with other sensitive information such as insurance information and would not be accessible to the public or staff other than Human Resources. She has submitted the proposal for legal review and will update the Board when that review is complete. In order to provide ample time for review and further Board consideration, the vote to adopt the suggested changes will be held at the October meeting.

Staff Training Day will be held on October 11, 2021. Guest speakers will cover topics including mental health first aid, information literacy, and the offerings of the State Library. Many of our local partners and community agencies will be on hand to speak with attendees, and a vaccine clinic will be available. Board members are invited to attend.

#### **Direct Services**

Ms. Reech-Harper invited Board members to visit the Martin Branch Library in Pineville to view their new photography display of black and white images of area landmarks taken by local photographers.

#### **Outreach and Youth Services**

Outreach Services Coordinator Tammy DiBartolo reported that there has been positive response to the virtual early literacy lessons she has been presenting alongside Youth Programming Manager Karla Kirby. The videos can be accessed through RPL's Facebook page.

Tales Along the Bayou is scheduled for October 29 at Kent Plantation House. The program will be divided into an early session geared toward younger children and a later, scarier session for older kids. An intermission will be held between sessions.

Outreach staff will be at the Annual Night Out Against Crime on October 5, in partnership with local law enforcement and community groups. This year, the event is being held at the Alexandria Zoo.

## **IT**

Systems Manager Janie Primeaux announced that the Sierra system will be upgraded at the end of the month. She will report the changes at the October meeting. She also acknowledged that the Library's internet service has been notably slow, and that staff and patrons have expressed frustration. A map of our network has been sent to the State Library for review in hopes of improvement suggestions. It may be necessary to outsource the issue to a technology company for evaluation.

## **Public Relations**

Public Relations Officer Jennifer Smarr was happy to report 300 new followers on social media. She is promoting Library Card Sign-up Month and strategic planning surveys this month, and has begun work on October promotions for Tales Along the Bayou and Lawyers in Libraries, which will feature a presentation by Board member Greg Walker. A virtual class on financial literacy and investing will also be available at the end of this month.

## **New Business**

Ms. Irene Hobbs was invited to read aloud her Oath of Office, after which she was welcomed to the Board with a round of applause.

Ms. Reech-Harper reminded the Board that the Boyce branch site does not have sewage and water connections through the City of Boyce. The branch will remain connected to the Rapides Island Water System, but the Library will need to install its own wastewater treatment system.

Ms. Cox motioned to go forward with plans to install the onsite wastewater treatment system at the new Boyce branch. Ms. Havens seconded, and the motion unanimously passed.

The next meeting will be on October 19, 2021 at the Westside Regional Library.

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

Respectfully submitted by

Celise Reech-Harper  
Secretary

Michael Fairbanks  
President