

Minutes of the Meeting of the
Lafayette Public Library Board of Control

November 21, 2022

The regular meeting of the Lafayette Public Library Board of Control was held in the meeting room on the 2nd floor of the Main Library at 301 West Congress Street on November 21, 2022. Robert Judge, President of the Board, called the meeting to order at 5:17 PM.

I. Roll Call and Invocation

Board Members Present: Robert Judge, Board President; James Thomas, Board Vice – President; Joan Wingate; Stephanie Armbruster; Shane Landers; David Pitre; Erasto Padron

Board Members Absent: Daniel Kelly

Other Staff Present: Danny Gillane, Library Director; Sarah Monroe; Assistant Director; Larry Angelle, Library Operations Manager; Danielle Breaux, Director’s Executive Secretary

Members of the Public: Paige Beyt, Oats & Marino; Melanie Brevis; Lynette Mejia; Corey Grimley; Greg Ardoin; Seth Roy; Jeremiah Friddell; Jeff Heimbold; Roch Judice; Robert Voitier, Jr.; Hannah Guillory; Wayne Colvin; Aaron Foley-Chance; Claire Delcambre

The invocation was led by Robert Judge.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Robert Judge led the board in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

A brief synopsis of Board members’ educational and professional backgrounds was presented (and will be available on the Library website).

III. New Business

Approval of Minutes

Stephanie Armbruster asked that the last page of the October minutes be changed to read:

Stephanie Armbruster stated that at the September meeting, an excerpt was read from a complaint letter sent to the board in a prior year during public comment. The member of the public reading the excerpt stated that the letter was regarding the LEH Grant. In order to correct the record, Armbruster noted that the complaint letter referenced by the member of the public was in regard to the book selection for the Beyond Black History Month Book Club, not the LEH grant.

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2022 Regular Board Meeting with the changes suggested by Stephanie Armbruster was made by Stephanie Armbruster and seconded by Joan Wingate.

Melanie Brevis asked that the minutes be changed to state that the letter referenced was not only mentioned during the Book Club discussion, but also brought into the LEH Grant discussion. Brevis also asked that Section VIII. expand upon the statement that the issue with employee Cara Chance was moved from the Board to being handled by Library Administration. Brevis stated this was not a voluntary move but a forced one, and asked for clarification.

Yeas: Judge, Thomas, Wingate, Armbruster, Landers, Pitre, Padron

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Kelly

IV. Comments from the Library Board

On November 1, 2022, Lafayette hosted a world renowned, best-selling children's author book tour featuring Jeff Kinney of *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series fame. This national book tour featured two stops in Louisiana, New Orleans and Lafayette. The Lafayette audience was a sold-out, action-packed event held in the Lafayette Middle School auditorium. This audience was purported by event sponsors as the "most animated and interactive". A concerted effort on the part of the Lafayette Public Library Association, Beausoleil Books, "Love our Schools"/Schumacher Group working with the Jeff Kinney *Diper Överlöde* tour management brought this to fruition.

The Friends of the Library is planning a mini niche book sale sometime after the new year.

V. Director's Report and Comments

The Director provided a year-end report to the Board.

The beginning of the year brought the first challenges to library materials in over a decade. Two books and one DVD were challenged. All three titles remain in the collection. These challenges generated national news, but also highlighted issues within the community with regard to what the community expects from the library.

From those who believe the library has a special responsibility to protect children, there has been a lot of talk about access to age-appropriate content. These concerns are valid. The library responded to these concerns by moving some items away from the children's collection. Close to 1,100 were moved into the adult collection. This represents .2 percent of books in the library. A similar, albeit smaller, moving of books occurred under the previous director in 2018.

From those who believe the library has a responsibility to represent all views, there has been talk that the library was censoring the collection. Also, valid concerns. Materials were moved, not removed. The library removed exactly zero items from the collection for reasons of content or because of public complaints about subject matter. All materials remain on easy-to-find open shelves available to all. These materials were moved as a compromise, an attempt to take everyone's views into consideration.

One incorrect and unsubstantiated theme that continues to come up in Board meetings and that needs to be addressed is the idea that the library has pornography in its collection and that it employs staff who are trying to groom children. The library staff does not endeavor to purchase or maintain pornographic materials in the library's collection. The library collection does not contain any materials that are pornographic. However, if any library patron believes that an item in our collection is pornographic, they may request that such an item be reconsidered through our reconsideration process. Additionally, all library employees are classified as civil service and undergo rigorous hiring and review processes. If anyone experiences conduct from a librarian that they believe to be inappropriate, the Director asks that they report this conduct to library administration so that it may be investigated.

Not everyone who works in the library is a member of the ALA. The ALA does not dictate to this library. It is a professional association. While it represents and espouses certain values regarding the free access to information, specifically in books, it does not have any legislative or administrative authority over this library.

For the first time in three years, the library celebrated Summer Reading with a proper kickoff event. Lafayette Library patrons read over 2 million words last summer.

Faced with a projected \$600,000 deficit which would have to be made up by dipping into fund balance, the library took a hard look at its staffing and services. Without laying off or furloughing staff, the library trimmed its workforce by another eight positions last year. The decision was made to close on Sundays. Departments were reorganized. Positions were modified. The library will be moving close to \$400,000 into fund balance.

After years of calls to build a library on the other side of the Evangeline Thruway, the library put all options onto the table and moved forward with the project.

The library has begun major upgrades to the South and North Regional libraries and is replacing the roof on the Main library.

Statistics were reported to the Board.

The property for the Northeast Library will be reappraised under the correct zoning.

VI. Assistant Director's Report and Comments

Staff changes were reported to the Board.

Approximately half of library staff in management or supervisory positions have been placed in those roles in the last 12 months, including the Assistant Director. Some of these staff are brand new to management while others have had supervisory or management roles within the library but have been promoted to higher positions with increased responsibilities and more direct reports. Plans are in the works to offer management and supervisory training as well as a thorough review of LPL and LCG policies and procedures to these staff. The library has lost a lot of system knowledge in the past year through retirements, some resignations, and unfortunately, one death. The goal for the next year is to work with staff to create manuals and procedures to help retain system knowledge and cut down on the learning curve for newly promoted employees. Overall goals are to give staff the right skills and experience needed to promote within the library, improve employee retention, and create a consistent management style across our 9 branches.

Current vacancies include: Children's Librarian II (Main), Children's Librarian I (Main and East), LA II (West), and an LTA III (South).

October featured some very popular and successful programs across the system.

West Regional's Second Chance Costumes program had 60 patrons attend with 40 costumes being distributed at the program. Staff have already begun to collect donated costumes for next year's program.

South Regional's Homesteading in Acadiana series continues to be buzzworthy with 59 patrons attending last month's installment on Beekeeping.

East Regional had a decrease in programs for the month of October due to early voting, but a bonus is that the branch saw many new patrons who signed up for library cards and downloaded the library mobile app.

The Main Library had 14 teens attend an After Hours Clue program.

The bookmobile stopped at approximately 60 regular bookmobile stops in the community serving almost 1,000 patrons. The Outreach Services Department continues to successfully reach those who can't reach the library, with many positive comments including one from a patron who says this is the best library system of any of the places she's lived.

Assistant Director attended the monthly Friends of the Library and Foundation board meetings.

Assistant Director attended the Library Marketing and Communications Conference in Indianapolis.

VII. Facilities Update & Financial Report

Four contractors submitted bids for the Main Library Roof Replacement Project. Bids were opened on October 27, 2022. The apparent low bidder was JPP Construction but their bid was rejected per the recommendation of the Purchasing Department, due to the contractor not holding the contractor's license required for the project. The bidder also made errors in their calculations and planned to withdraw their bid.

Clarification questions were asked by the Architect on the South Regional Upgrades and addressed by Library Administration.

The low responsible bidder winning the project is Partin Roofing LLC. The cost of the project, assuming no issues are identified during the project, will be \$612,900.

The Purchasing Department is obtaining all necessary paperwork (insurance, performance and payment bonds, contract documents, etc.) to start the contract execution process through LCG's administration.

Once the contract documents are in place, a preconstruction meeting will occur and a notice to proceed can then be issued to officially start the project.

The estimate for this project presented to the Library Board of Control was \$690,836.00. The library is under budget for this project.

A section of windows is leaking in the Director's office. The library previously had all caulking and stucco finishes inspected and touched up above the window system to help narrow down the cause of the leak. The library will now have the window system inspected.

The report for Fiscal Year 2022, ending on 10/31/22, is not yet finalized or audited as the accrual process is still in process and the last month of interest on investments has not yet been posted. Audited numbers are expected in mid-April 2023.

The library collected \$11,248,814 and spent \$10,758,641 in the 21/22 Fiscal Year. Grants/Election/MERS Expenses cost \$61,402. Estimated Surplus of \$428,772.02 will be added to Fund Balance.

In FY 22/23, the library has collected \$36 and has spent \$31,724.

Revenues will lag behind expenses until about January/February 2023 when property tax payments are collected.

VIII. New Business

A. Policy Change

It was asked that the Collection Development Policy be changed to codify a current practice.

Robert Judge asked that under Section I. The Policy of the Collection Development Policy, the fourth paragraph now read:

The Lafayette Public Library provides free access to materials in a number of formats (print, non-print) to all users. Library patrons make their own choices as to what they will use based on individual interests and concerns. The library supports the right of each family to decide which items are appropriate for use by their children. Responsibility for a child's use of library materials lies with his or her parent or guardian. *To assist parents in this regard, the library restricts R and NC-17 classified DVDs/movies to check out to those patrons 17 years of age or older.* The library adheres to the principles of intellectual freedom, adopted by the American Library Association. The library endorses the following American Library Association documents: the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement, and the Freedom to View Statement. (See appendix).

Shane Landers asked for clarification. Director stated a patron 17 or older can check out an R rated movie and a patron 18 or older can check out an NC-17 rated movie.

Landers asked if a Circulation Policy was in place.

David Pitre suggested that to keep the language consistent, the proposed inserted language read instead *to assist parents or guardians.*

A motion to accept the change as presented with the correction made by David Pitre was made by Shane Landers and seconded by Joan Wingate.

Melanie Brevis asked that this policy be implemented in the least intrusive way possible. Brevis asked that adult cards automatically be opted out of this policy, and asked that parents be allowed the option to opt their children out. She asked for more transparency as to why it was on the agenda after being implemented.

Lynette Mejia questioned the policy change 60 days after the practice had been implemented. Mejia asked that an opt-out policy be put in place.

Corey Grimley spoke in favor of the motion. Grimley asked that if good value judgments were made regarding policies, the library make good value judgments regarding the content of material held in the library.

Seth Roy asked who should make the value judgment on what is appropriate for all the diverse people of Lafayette Parish. Roy stated that Patron Behavior Policy states that the library does not act in loco parentis, and that this change would place the library in loco parentis.

Jeremiah Friddell spoke in support of the motion.

Jeff Heimbold signed in to support this motion but did not wish to speak.

Yeas: Judge, Thomas, Wingate, Armbruster, Landers, Pitre, Padron
Nays: None
Abstained: None
Absent: Kelly

B. Library Calendar

A motion to accept the 2023 Library Calendar as presented was made by James Thomas and seconded by David Pitre.

Yeas: Judge, Thomas, Wingate, Armbruster, Landers, Pitre, Padron
Nays: None
Abstained: None
Absent: Kelly

C. Library Book Discards September - November

A motion for the library to discard 11,394 books having been out of use for over a year due to the books being superseded, obsolete, unused, or otherwise unnecessary was made by Joan Wingate and seconded by James Thomas.

Yeas: Judge, Thomas, Wingate, Armbruster, Landers, Pitre, Padron
Nays: None
Abstained: None
Absent: Kelly

IX. Announcements

Seth Roy was recognized by the Board for going above and beyond his job duties.

Seth Roy spoke after receiving the award, and concluded with asking everyone to consider love, because without love, everything we do is just a symbol.

- A. Reminder that the next Library Board meeting will be Monday, January 9, 2023.
- B. Reminder that yearly ethics training and sexual harassment training must be completed before December 31, 2022.
- C. Ad-Hoc Committee search for a new Director.

David Pitre will chair the ad-hoc committee in the search for a new Director. Other members of the committee will be named over the next month.

X. Comments from the public on any other matter not on this agenda

Melanie Brevis spoke of hateful ideas and actions expressed by Board members and members of the community.

Lynette Mejia protested against the rules regarding public comment recently put in place. Mejia asked that the security be asked to stand at the back of the room, that members of the public once again be allowed to mention Board members' names in comments, and that the signs referencing Louisiana Revised Statute 14:103 be taken down.

Corey Grimley asked that two professional historians be asked give the LEH Who Gets to Vote program.

Roch Judice thanked the Board and the Director for their service. Judice was thankful for the order and civility of the meeting.

Robert Voitier, Jr. suggested that those who speak of the Board or the Director get to know them personally. Voitier commended the Board and Director and expressed his appreciation for the service given to the community.

Greg Ardoin thanked the Director for his service. He asked that everyone treat one another with respect.

Hannah Guillory held a moment of silence for the victims of the Club Q shooting. Guillory stated that the Board was actively perpetuating violence, and that decisions made at meetings directly affect the safety of marginalized communities.

Wayne Colvin informed the Board that the library will soon not carry any national newspapers in print. Colvin questioned Sunday closures.

Aaron Foley-Chance spoke of appreciation of public libraries. Foley-Chance stated that public libraries allow opinions to circulate and be freely expressed without fear of censorship, regulation, or coercion.

Claire Delcambre stressed the importance of ethics training to the Board. Delcambre stated that personal beliefs should be separated from duties.

XI. Closing Prayer, Adjournment

Shane Landers led the Board in a closing prayer.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:56 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danny Gillane, Secretary