

**St. Tammany Parish Library  
Board of Control Meeting  
March 25, 2024  
St. Tammany Parish Council Chambers  
21490 Koop Dr.  
Mandeville, LA 70471  
6:30 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order by Rebecca (Becky) Taylor, President. Kelly LaRocca, Director, called the roll and declared that a quorum was present.

**Present:** Bill McHugh, Anthony Parr, Ann Shaw, Becky Taylor  
**Absent:** Carmen Butler

James Bolner with the Civil Division of the District Attorney's Office was also present as legal counsel for the library.

**1. Recognition and thanks for years of service to the Library Board of Control – Mary Reneau**

B. Taylor stated that Mary Reneau could not attend the meeting and accepted a recognition plaque on her behalf. M. Reneau served on the LBOC for 14 years from 2009 to 2023, and served as Secretary for several of those years. B. Taylor thanked M. Reneau for her years of service.

**2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Library Board of Control that was held on February 26, 2024**

**Discussion:** There were no suggested corrections to the minutes.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Vote:** B. McHugh moved to approve the minutes with no corrections. It was seconded by A. Shaw. All were in favor, none were opposed, and one was absent. Motion carried.

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Financial Reports – February 2024**

**Discussion:**

K. LaRocca reported that no additional Ad Valorem revenue or State Revenue Sharing has been received since February. More Ad Valorem is expected in early April and two more equal payments of State Revenue Sharing are expected throughout the year. The budget percentage for this point in the year should be 16%. Revenues are at 16.33% and expenditures are at 17.90%. K. LaRocca gave explanations

for lines that were over or under budget. Some lines are over budget due to replenishing supplies early in the year. The Gas line is over budget due to the cool weather early in the year. The Polaris Maintenance line is expended early in the year. The Consultants line is over budget due to the salary study by Gallagher Consultants. The Vehicle Insurance line is over budget due to paying the premiums in large portions throughout the year. The Computer/Printer Supplies line is over budget due to paying for toner cartridges early in the year. The Vehicles line is expended due to purchasing the new library vehicle. The Audio/Visual Equipment line is over budget due to purchasing replacement projectors. The Lease/Purchase books line has been expended for the year. The Microfilm line is over budget, but half of the funds will be moved to the Periodicals line.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Vote:** A. Parr moved to approve the February 2024 Financial Reports. It was seconded by A. Shaw. All were in favor, none were opposed, and one was absent. Motion carried.

### **B. Director's Report**

K. LaRocca reported updates to Facilities. Chiller coils were replaced on the outside of the HVAC unit at the Slidell Branch. The brick wall surrounding the HVAC unit is still waiting to be repaired after the accident that occurred. The sales agreement was signed to purchase the parcel of land in Lacombe that will be the home of a new Lacombe Branch.

K. LaRocca reported on Marketing and Outreach efforts. Staff performed storytime at St. Margaret Mary, Appletree, Read Cross Abney, Pearl River Regina Coeli Headstart, Lacombe-Mandeville Headstart, A-Z Preschool, Chahta-Ima Elementary, 1<sup>st</sup> Class Academy Daycare, Mayfield Elementary, and 1<sup>st</sup> Academy and Learning Center. Staff offered outreach services to Bayou Woods Elementary STEM Night, Kiwanis Club, Women's Business Meeting at Giddy Up Coffee Shop, St. Tammany Parish School Librarian Meeting, and St. Anthony's Gardens. Staff promoted the library at the Honey Island Literacy Night and The Lake and The Highway radio stations.

K. LaRocca reported on Professional Development attendance. Staff attended the St. Tammany Commission on Families meeting, Louisiana Library Association Annual Conference, and the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Center for Local Government Excellence "Rules of Procurement" webinar training.

The Covington Branch hosted the Annual Garden Fest with the St. Tammany Master Gardeners. K. LaRocca referenced contract renewals. The 2008 Ford F-250 that the Library Board of Control (LBOC) deemed surplus at the last board meeting was sold at auction in March for \$5,200. The library's yearly audit began the day of the Board meeting. B. McHugh asked who performs the audit. K. LaRocca answered that Laporte is the CPA firm who performs the audit.

Four new Public Records Requests (PRR) have been received since the last board meeting. They were fairly simple to answer and one request is currently open. A large PRR that dates from August 2023 with over 100,000 results is in the hands of the District Attorney's Office (DA) for review and redaction, but the request was put on hold by the requestor. There are 42 active Statements of Concern (SOC) on 38 titles. Two more titles will be decided next month.



K. LaRocca reviewed strategic planning updates. T. DiMaggio spoke about the art show at the South Slidell Branch. The art was featured by Northshore High School Talented Art students. The opening reception was a success with at least 100 people in attendance.

Nine more teen fiction titles that had a rescinded SOC were read and screened for sexual conduct as defined by LA R.S. 25:225. As a result, *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher was moved to Adult Fiction. Fifteen more titles are under review.

K. LaRocca reviewed the service statistics from February 2024 and the year-to-date (YTD) statistics. In February, total circulation was 74,525, door count was 45,795, wireless internet inside was 7,199, and wireless internet outside was 6,758. There were 555 new card registrations in February. The total circulation figure for the Slidell Branch was inadvertently left off of the YTD statistics and will be corrected. The YTD door count was 88,963, wireless internet inside was 13,929, and wireless internet outside was 13,209. There were 1,297 new card registrations so far this year.

In reference to the transition of materials, B. McHugh stated that it is important for people to understand why this is being done and asked K. LaRocca to clarify whether or not this is required by law or an attempt to get ahead of the curve. K. LaRocca explained that the law requires libraries to have a card system in place to restrict minors from checking out materials with sexual conduct as defined by LA R.S. 25:225. K. LaRocca explained that the library is undergoing this review process because library policy states that we will move items that we become aware of that contain sexual conduct as defined by LA R.S. 25:225. Since the SOCs on the rescinded titles are no longer under Board review, library staff will need to review them since we have become aware of possible sexual conduct as defined by LA R.S. 25:225.

B. McHugh asked if it would be accurate to say that none of what K. LaRocca has described is required by law, but we are doing this to be responsive to community concerns. K. LaRocca stated that is true based on her understanding of the law, and we are trying to err on the side of caution.

A. Shaw asked if there is a timeframe as to when the salary study will be complete. K. LaRocca stated that it should be done within the next month. A. Shaw asked for K. LaRocca to explain more about the PRR that the DA is still reviewing, but has been put on hold by the requester. K. LaRocca explained that the library collected the data and turned it over to the DA's Office for redaction. The requester was informed by the DA's Office that it would take a significant amount of time to complete. When the requester was informed that the DA's Office was performing the work and not the library, they asked for the PRR to be put on hold. A. Parr asked if the monthly Book Club boxes will be integrated into the outreach service. K. LaRocca confirmed that as correct.

### **C. Resolution to extend time to allow for procedural due process of undecided Statements of Concern**

#### **Discussion:**

K. LaRocca explained that the time previously granted by the LBOC for reviewing pending SOCs has expired. She is asking for a 120-day extension to review the 38 remaining titles.

**Public Comment:**

Devin McGee – Stated the Board is doing the right thing in extending the time limit on reviewing the challenged materials. Stated that everything is working as intended and asked the Board to stay vigilant.

A. Parr asked about an estimated timeframe for completing the review of the remaining titles. K. LaRocca stated that a total of 24 titles were reviewed last year. She stated that we can probably fit more of the shorter Children’s books into one meeting. T. DiMaggio estimated that there are approximately six Non-Fiction Children’s books left to review. T. DiMaggio read the resolution aloud.

**Vote:** B. McHugh moved to adopt the resolution to extend time for the review of undecided SOCs. It was seconded by A. Shaw. Roll call vote:

Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

**D. Discussion and resolution regarding investigating an update to the Rules and Regulations of the Library Board of Control *Section 209. Limits of Library Use***

**Discussion:**

K. LaRocca stated that Section 209 contains the library’s card policy. The policy states that the materials in the Children’s Collections shall not contain sexually explicit material as defined by LA R.S. 25:225. Materials in the Young Adult (YA) Fiction and YA Non-Fiction collections shall not contain material that has been deemed sexually explicit by the Library Board of Control as defined by LA R.S. 25:225. K. LaRocca stated that the language in the policy is a little confusing to people in regard to whether or not the YA Collection contains sexual conduct as defined by LA R.S. 25:225.

K. LaRocca stated that the library and the Parish Council continue to receive emails voicing concern about certain YA titles. In order to have a productive conversation on how to address the issue, the Board needs to have an understanding of what it will take to accomplish such a large-scale review of materials. There are approximately 4,400 titles in the YA Collection. Some titles are more easily discernible than others.

A. Parr asked if there could be a disclaimer that pops up when checking out these materials. K. LaRocca explained that patrons do not see the staff’s computer screen while checking out items. K. LaRocca stated that she wants to do her best to be very clear about how the collection is being organized. She clarified that the resolution that is up for discussion is not directing library staff to begin this project. The resolution is for staff to figure out what it will take to accomplish this undertaking. K. LaRocca noted that some YA literature is 400 pages long.

B. McHugh asked how many titles are available in electronic format so that staff could search for the terms used in LA R.S. 25:225. K. LaRocca stated that they do not have an answer as to how many yet, but staff will be researching this option.

**Public Comment:**

Lisa Rustemeyer – Mandeville, LA. Stated that she appreciates the work the staff and Board are doing. Stated that she is concerned that restricting and moving items will make it hard for others to have



access to materials. Spoke about the right to access information. Suggested putting a sign with a disclaimer in the YA section. Stated she would like to see time spent on something else besides this, such as strategic planning and other positive things. Asked for the Board to consider alternatives to this proposal.

Roxanne Newman – Mandeville, LA. Stated that she understands the strain that this has put on the library and the Board and commends their efforts. Stated that the library has complied with the law and has gone above and beyond what is required. She is concerned that this process could be considered self-censorship. She is not in favor of moving the books from the YA section. Asked for the Board to use the least restrictive means to comply with the law.

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. Stated that the language in the policy is ambiguous. Stated that the Board is censoring the books while trying to make angry people happy. Spoke of censorship throughout history. Noted that most of the titles are LGBTQIA-focused and censoring them sends a message to LGBTQIA teens that “they” are not appropriate. Suggested that the Board perform a study into changing the policy, rather than adopting the proposed resolution.

Barbara Hargrove – Abita Springs, LA. Complimented the art show at the South Slidell Branch. Stated that it is good to take a look at things and try to do better. Stated that the library has a card system in place now and it provides parental oversight. Believes that kids should be allowed to read books from the YA section.

Jeff Corbin – St. Tammany Parish Councilman, District 13. Stated that the library has been proactive in addressing community concerns and he sees this resolution as a positive step. Stated that this is an opportunity to have both a YA and a Juvenile section that does not contain sexually explicit material. Stated that he does not believe it is a restriction, censorship, or a First Amendment issue due to the unrestricted library cards being available. Any teen between 12-17 years of age can get an unrestricted card with their parents’ consent. He stated that he believes that the responsibility lies with parents and it is not the library’s job to adjudicate for parents. The library has provided the tools for parents to make their decisions. Stated that this is a positive opportunity to move forward in a proactive fashion. He acknowledged that it is beyond what is required by LA R.S. 25:225, but it is a way for the library to respond to community concerns.

B. McHugh stated that J. Corbin has been a voice of reason since being elected to the Parish Council. B. McHugh asked J. Corbin what effect or response does he think the “opposition” will have as a result of this process. J. Corbin stated that he cannot speak for them, as they did not attend the community meeting concerning the library that he and other councilmembers held the previous week. He stated that he is still receiving emails referencing certain books in the YA section and thinks this is a simple compromise. He noted that there is a big difference between a 12-year-old and a 17-year-old and there should be a difference in what materials they have access to. He noted that the card system is the tool that allows them that access.

B. McHugh explained that the “opposition” has adamantly demanded that the books should be restricted to an area where minors cannot enter or access without parental permission. He stated that he does not see where this effort would satisfy that demand. J. Corbin stated that the library has a process available with the card system that will allow us to eliminate the conflict without putting anyone

at a great disadvantage. He stated that it is a reasonable idea and encouraged the LBOC to approve the resolution so that staff can assess the feasibility of the process. He complimented the art exhibit at the South Slidell Branch.

Rebecca Bohm – Mandeville, LA. Opposes the resolution and does not feel that the books need to be evaluated or moved. Stated that the Board has gone above and beyond to appease everyone, but they are not going to make everyone in each group happy. Stated that she feels some of the books about puberty and sex education that have been relocated do not contain sexually explicit material. Asked if staff members often ask minors if they need help if they notice them perusing the Adult section. K. LaRocca confirmed that staff are out in the stacks shelving and shelf-reading and they ask everyone if they need help finding something as part of their normal, everyday library service.

B. McHugh stated that he is voting in favor of the resolution just to get the homework done on this process. He spoke about what the term “access” means and noted that the Attorney General defines “access” as checking out the material on a library card.

A. Shaw asked for clarification on the resolution as it relates to coming up with a plan of how to assess the collection. K. LaRocca explained that the resolution would direct staff to determine what it will take to assess the collection. K. LaRocca stated that it is important to be transparent and that the public should know that we are looking into this issue. Details such as how much time and money this will cost will also be considered.

A. Shaw stated that it is incumbent upon the Board and the library to know what is in the collection. K. LaRocca explained that according to the way our policy is currently written, there can be items with sexual conduct in the YA Collection and we need to figure out a way to know which books have such content. We are only guaranteeing that the Juvenile Collection does not have items containing sexual conduct. The current policy was written with the idea that the challenge process would be followed and the Board would make a decision on YA titles that were challenged.

K. LaRocca clarified that the resolution is for staff to investigate and explore options so that Library Administration can present their findings and data to the Board. B. McHugh suggested enlisting help from the public to review the books and K. LaRocca stated that idea has been mentioned in preliminary discussions.

T. DiMaggio read the resolution aloud.

**Vote:** B. McHugh moved to adopt the resolution directing library staff to investigate what would be necessary to assess the YA Collection. It was seconded by A. Shaw. Roll call vote:

Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.



## E. Rules and Regulations - Disaster Recovery Policy Update

### Discussion:

T. DiMaggio stated that the Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity policy, part B, number 5, must be updated to comply with state law. Each employee and each board member that holds a STPL email account shall complete a Cybersecurity Training course administered by the Louisiana Department of State Civil Service. The statute does not mandate a specific period of time for additional or recurring training, but we will continue providing short reminders throughout the year focusing on password security and phishing emails.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Vote:** B. McHugh moved to approve the update to the Disaster Recovery Policy. It was seconded by A. Parr. All were in favor, none were opposed, and one was absent. Motion carried.

## F. Designation of Capital Funds - Elevator

### Discussion:

K. LaRocca reported that the Parish has selected an architect (KVS Architecture) to design and manage the construction and installation of the elevator for the Technical Services building. Due to the updated cost of construction, \$59,000 will need to be added to the budget. The original amount budgeted was \$166,000 and was based on costs from two years ago. K. LaRocca explained that it is essential to have an elevator for this building so that the second floor can be utilized and the building will be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. K. LaRocca referenced a letter from the architect detailing the project and reviewed the Capital Projects spreadsheet.

T. DiMaggio read the resolution aloud.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Vote:** A. Parr moved to adopt the resolution to designate an additional \$59,000 in capital funds for the Technical Services and Maintenance Building elevator. It was seconded by A. Shaw. Roll call vote:

Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

## G. Spring Project Budget Amendment

### Discussion:

K. LaRocca explained that the 2024 budget was produced in July of 2023 and it was amended in February 2024. The proposed 2024 Spring Project Amendment is based on updated information received on project costs for the year. All increases in individual budget lines are due to these activities. The Landscaping Additions line was increased to cover the cost of the Covington Branch Landscaping project that cannot be covered by Parish Capital Project money. The Telephones and Telephone System line is increased to match the cost of our new telephone system installation, which will be significantly less expensive and more functional to operate than our current system. The Audio-Visual Equipment

line is increased to cover the cost of a projector and screen for Covington's meeting room, to replace all portable projectors, and to upgrade the wall plate to include HDMI in the Slidell Branch meeting room.

Other projects include carpet and furniture for the Causeway Branch and acoustical work for the Storytime Room in the Covington Branch. K. LaRocca spoke of switching the Reference Section and the public computers at the Covington Branch. She spoke of acquiring an office pod, which is an enclosed soundproof booth, for the Covington Branch. The idea is to use it as a study room while piloting a calming room in one of the current study rooms. If the calming room is a success, then we have gained a community resource. If it does not work out, then we have gained an additional study space. K. LaRocca referenced the Fund Balance and Dedications spreadsheet. There was favorable discussion about the office pod. A 4-person pod is approximately \$20,000.

T. DiMaggio read the resolution aloud.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Vote:** A. Parr moved to adopt the Spring Project Budget Amendment. It was seconded by B. McHugh. Roll call vote:

Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

**H. Executive Session for the Annual Evaluation of the Director pursuant to La R.S. 42:17(1)  
\*2/3 majority vote of members present required to go into executive session**

A. Parr motioned for the Board to enter into Executive Session. It was seconded by A. Shaw.

Roll call vote:

Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried. The Board left the room and went into Executive Session.

The Board returned to the room. A. Parr motioned for the Board to exit out of Executive Session. It was seconded by B. McHugh.

Roll call vote:

Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

**Discussion:**

B. Taylor stated that K. LaRocca is a superlative Director and has been since 2019 when she was hired as Library Director. She stated that K. LaRocca has done more within that span of time than her predecessors have ever done, and under both wonderful and not-so-wonderful conditions. B. Taylor



stated that K. LaRocca has provided great leadership and has formed a wonderful team to support her, which has helped make the accomplishments possible over the years.

**Public Comment:**

Lawrence de Quay – Slidell, LA. Stated he supports the Board’s positive assessment of K. LaRocca. Stated that K. LaRocca’s presentation to the Parish Council members at the community meeting was outstanding. Stated that she clearly identified all the issues and answered all questions. Stated that after the presentation, there were comments made by some Parish Council members that implied that people from both sides of the library issue threatened to get board members fired and to reject the upcoming millage renewal. He stated that those threats have been from one side, in his opinion, and not from library supporters. He stated that a Parish Council member stated that we need to protect the children. L. de Quay noted that every child needs to be protected and the statement should apply to all children. Stated that he is against encouraging and inciting bullying against LGBTQ individuals.

Barbara Hargrove – Abita Springs, LA. Stated that she echoes what the Board has said about K. LaRocca. Stated that K. LaRocca is doing a fantastic job. Stated that the library staff that she has interacted with have been wonderful. Thanked the Board for being here and sticking through this rough time.

Ruth Terry-Sipos – Abita Springs, LA. Stated that K. LaRocca exemplifies leadership and that is evident in her strong staff across all the library branches. Stated that K. LaRocca is unflappable in public and keeps her eye on the ball. Noted that more than one Parish Council member has remarked at how impressive K. LaRocca’s financial presentations are and how they wish other Parish entities would prepare similar presentations. Stated that the Board presenting a united front in support of libraries is very potent.

A. Parr stated that the comprehensive salary and benefits study for all library staff is currently being prepared by Gallagher Consulting. He stated that a raise for K. LaRocca is merited and well-earned. He noted that K. LaRocca has exceeded all goals set for her under very trying circumstances. He explained that it is prudent to wait until the salary and benefits study results are available. He stated that the Board will consider and study the recommendations when the salary and benefits study is complete.

**Vote:** A. Shaw moved to table the question under discussion until the Board receives the results of the salary and benefits study. It was seconded by A. Parr. Roll call vote:

Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

**4. Adjournment**

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by B. McHugh and was seconded by A. Shaw. All were in favor, none were opposed, and one was absent. Motion carried.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Anthony Parr, Secretary