

**St. Tammany Parish Library
Board of Control Meeting
May 30, 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: Carmen Butler, Bill McHugh, Anthony Parr, Ann Shaw, Becky Taylor
Absent: None

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

B. Taylor explained the rules for public comment. A three-minute time limit is established for each member of the public wishing to speak (for or against) an item on the Agenda.

1. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Library Board of Control (LBOC) that was held on April 22, 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 of the April 22, 2024 LBOC meeting. It was seconded by A. Shaw. All were in favor, none were opposed, and none were absent. Motion carried.

2. NEW BUSINESS

A. Presentation of the Audit – John Murray, LaPorte

Discussion:

John Murray with the LaPorte CPA firm reviewed the audit report for 2023. All board members were provided with a copy of the audit report and the report was included in the board packet posted on the website. J. Murray stated that the accompanying financial statements present fairly in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America and provided an unmodified, clean opinion on the financial statements. J. Murray reviewed the Statement of Net Position, Balance Sheet for the Governmental Fund, Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, Changes in Fund Balance, and the Budget and Actual Statement for the General Fund. There was a favorable variance in revenues that totaled \$356,745 and an unfavorable variance for expenditures that totaled \$328,954. The unfavorable variance was within the 5% threshold allowed by Louisiana state law.

J. Murray reported that no deficiencies in internal controls and no instances of non-compliance with Louisiana state law were identified. J. Murray reported that there were no exceptions identified in the audit of the 14 different Statewide Agreed-Upon Procedures. J. Murray thanked K. LaRocca, B. Geiger, and D. Cuevas for their help in making the audit an easy process.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: A. Parr moved to approve the 2023 Audit Report. It was seconded by C. Butler. All were in favor, none were opposed, and none were absent. Motion carried.

B. Financial Reports – April 2024

Discussion:

K. LaRocca reviewed the April 2024 financial reports. The total Ad Valorem taxes received so far this year is \$12,046,278.69. The total State Revenue Sharing received this year is \$176,200.94. The budget percentage for this point in the year should be 33%. Revenues are at 33.28% and expenditures are at 34.29%. Most of the lines that are over or under budget are due to expenses being due early or late in the year. K. LaRocca gave explanations for variances in other lines and stated that they will be addressed in the budget amendment.

The Publication of Legal Notices line is below budget due to fewer board meetings and minutes for publication so far this year. The Signage line will be in balance as various signage is updated later this year. The Printing line will be in balance once the payment for the Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) brochures is made in June. The Promotional Production line is above budget due to promoting the SRC. Under Utilities, the Gas line is above budget due to the colder months early in the year. The Postage line is under budget, but will be in balance as the postage meters are refilled throughout the year. The Maintenance Supplies line is above budget due to working on repairs to the South Slidell Branch following the recent tornado damage.

The Fuel & Lube and Vehicle Repair lines are under budget due to one less vehicle in use following the retirement of one of our maintenance staff members. The Insurance and Claims lines are over budget due to paying for property and flood insurance. K. LaRocca explained that the Parish owns the buildings and holds the property and flood insurance policies. She noted that the costs of property and flood insurance have increased significantly. The Vehicle Insurance line will be in balance by the end of the year. The Computer/Printer Supplies line is over budget due to the rising costs of ink and toner cartridges. The PC Network line is over budget due to purchasing computers, as they are on a five-year replacement cycle. The Lease/Purchase Books and Microfilm lines are expended for the year.

A. Parr asked about the repairs to the Slidell Branch's A/C enclosure that was damaged in a car accident earlier in the year. K. LaRocca explained that those repairs are not reflected in the financial statements because the Parish will be reimbursed by the driver's insurance. A. Shaw asked about the landscape additions line. K. LaRocca explained that the funds will be used to refresh the landscaping at the Covington Branch, as well as the usual seasonal refresh of landscaping at other branches.

B. McHugh thanked K. LaRocca for the clarity and transparency of the financial reports. He stated that Parish Council members have told him that they are the best financial reports they receive from any

agency that they oversee. B. McHugh thanked K. LaRocca for her conscientious stewardship over the funds allocated for the library. He acknowledged that K. LaRocca has received some unfounded criticism on that topic. B. McHugh reiterated that K. LaRocca has been an outstanding steward of the public funds meant for running the library. A. Parr agreed with B. McHugh's comments.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to approve the April 2024 Financial Reports. It was seconded by A. Parr. All were in favor, none were opposed, and none were absent. Motion carried.

C. Director's Report

K. LaRocca reported that the windows that were damaged at the South Slidell Branch due to the recent storm were replaced, the stucco was repaired, and the HVAC system was inspected and preventative maintenance was done. The Maintenance Department repaired planter beds for the Master Gardeners at the Slidell Branch and they are working with Parish Facilities for repairs to the chiller fence at the Slidell Branch. The I.T. Department completed the migration of the new phone system through RingCentral. Public computers at the Mandeville Branch and staff computers at the Bush and Abita Springs Branches were replaced as per the five-year replacement schedule. Network and phone cabling was installed at the new Outreach building.

Staff offered outreach services at the following locations or events: COAST Lacombe Activity Center, COAST Bush, Cultural Arts Day at Pontchartrain Elementary, the Children's Museum of St. Tammany, Florida Elementary, Tiny Tumblers Preschool, Touch-A-Truck in Folsom, Kiwanis Club of Folsom, St. Margaret Mary school. Staff led tours for field trips from Lakeside Christian Academy and Bonne Ecole Elementary. Staff attended Tech Fest at the State Library and learned about network security, emerging technology, and digital signage. Metro Centers for Community Advocacy held table talks at several branches to inform patrons about Sexual Assault Awareness Month. There were art shows at the South Slidell and Slidell branches. K. LaRocca thanked the Friends of the Slidell Library for purchasing artwork that will be displayed at the South Slidell Branch. The Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) kickoff parties were held at the Slidell and Madisonville branches. This year's theme is "Adventure Begins at Your Library." The SRC programming and events continue until July 27th.

K. LaRocca reviewed contract renewals. There have been no new public records requests since the last board meeting. There has been one new Statement of Concern (SOC) received since the last board meeting. There are 41 active SOCs on 37 titles. K. LaRocca reviewed the progress made on strategic planning goals. K. LaRocca noted that the bids for the book hauler came in higher than expected.

K. LaRocca gave an update on the transition of materials from the list of rescinded SOCs and materials that were brought to Administration's attention. There were seven titles that were reviewed and determined to contain sexual conduct, therefore those titles will be moved to the New Adult Fiction collection. There were 10 titles reviewed and determined to not contain sexual conduct. Those titles will remain in Teen Fiction. There are two titles still under review. The full review of the current Young Adult (YA) collection will begin after the SRC ends in July.

K. LaRocca reviewed the April 2024 and year-to-date statistics. The April statistics showed that total circulation was 78,914, computer usage was 6,970, door count was 43,168, wireless internet inside was 7,177, and wireless internet outside was 6,620. There were 781 new patrons who registered for library cards in April. The year-to-date total circulation was 310,774, computer usage was 28,018, door count was 180,262, wireless internet inside was 28,202, and wireless internet outside was 26,496. There were 2,680 new patrons registered for library cards so far this year. K. LaRocca noted that June and July are the busiest months of the year. A. Parr asked for a status update on the elevator at the Annex/Technical Services building. K. LaRocca stated that it should be introduced at the Parish Council's June meeting and then should be on their July meeting agenda for approval. The project will move forward at that point.

D. Summer Reading Presentation

The promotional video for the 2024 Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) was shown to the Board and the public. The programming coordinators highlighted the events and activities offered for each age group this summer. Children, teens, and adults earn prizes by reading for 12 hours (720 minutes) or by participating in BINGO. There are registration prizes, completion prizes, BINGO games, and prize drawings. There were 1,400 people in attendance at the SRC kickoff party at the Slidell Branch and 985 people in attendance at the kickoff party at the Madisonville Branch.

Children's programs include: Storytimes, play dates, crafts, special guests, music programs, and family drop-in events. Teen programs include: Art and cooking workshops, music programs, American Sign Language workshops, and STREAM workshops (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, and Math). The Teen Department has trained 68 teen volunteers to help at library branches throughout the summer. The Teen Coordinator thanked the West St. Tammany Friends of the Library and the Friends of the Slidell Library for donating coupons for free books as completion prizes. Adult programs include: Travel and adventure related crafts, 3-D pen crafts, "A Study of Southern Women's Magazines" by Dr. Bruce Craft, Scherenschnitte (German for "scissor cutting") where they will make elaborate Easter eggs out of paper. All programs and events are listed in the Summer Reading Guidebook that patrons can get at each library branch. The guidebook is also available on the library's website.

E. Report on the status of the graphic novel review

Discussion:

K. LaRocca reported on the status of the graphic novel (GN) review process. She referenced the resolution dated February 28, 2023, where the LBOC directed library staff to review all graphic novels for depictions of sexual conduct as defined by the then-Louisiana Attorney General and as similarly defined in LA R.S. 14:106. Any graphic novels found to contain depictions of such sexual conduct were to be placed behind the circulation desk. Several titles that Library Administration were aware of as having sexual content were reviewed first and, once confirmed, were placed behind the circulation desk. All items (individual books) that are placed behind the desk and have a restricted status are given a call number prefix GNR so that it is clear in the catalog that the books are located behind the circulation desk.

K. LaRocca summarized the multi-step methodical review process that is necessary for staff to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the materials. At this time, the Juvenile Graphic Novel review is complete

and zero out of 2,030 titles are restricted behind the circulation desk. The Adult Graphic Novel review is 81% complete and 66 out of 512 titles are restricted behind the circulation desk. The Teen/YA Graphic Novel review is 64% complete and 3 out of 1,191 titles are restricted behind the circulation desk. The total GN review is 86% complete and 69 out of 3,733 titles are restricted behind the circulation desk.

A. Parr thanked K. LaRocca for providing a thorough report. He asked if the new card system restrictions that are in place enables these items to meet the criteria to be shelved in the Adult section instead of behind the circulation desk. K. LaRocca explained that she has recently received conflicting legal advice on that topic and cannot answer that question at this time. B. McHugh stated that no graphic novels in the children's collection were found to contain sexual conduct. He reiterated the statistics of the number of titles to be reviewed and the restriction status of completed titles. He stated that less than 2% of the titles have been restricted.

A. Parr asked K. LaRocca if she is seeking legal counsel from E. Couvillon to clarify the conflicting legal advice. A member of the public asked what type of legal advice is needed. K. LaRocca explained that A. Parr asked if the items that are restricted behind the circulation desk could be moved to the Adult section. K. LaRocca stated that she does not know if that is possible because she has received conflicting legal advice on that topic.

E. Couvillon explained that when this matter first arose, the then-District Attorney (DA) Warren Montgomery recused himself from providing legal advice to the LBOC related to criminal matters, such as matters related to LA R.S. 14:91.11. The LBOC retained outside legal counsel and was given advice regarding the application of that statute in the materials review process. However, the new DA has indicated that he may interpret that statute differently. E. Couvillon stated the point at issue is under review as it relates to certain titles currently in the graphic novel restricted area. A. Parr asked who the attorney was who provided the initial outside legal advice and E. Couvillon answered that it was the law firm of Smith and Fawer.

Public Comment:

Dee Betz – Covington, LA. Spoke of the effort to ban books as not being true. Stated there are lots of books not available, such as *The Joy of Smoking*. Spoke of books with sexual content being associated with a rise in HPV infections among young people and a rise in throat and neck cancers because of oral sex. Stated that oral sex is encouraged in these books, and it promotes dangerous sexual behavior among adolescents. Spoke of the rise of pornography on the internet. Stated that the public library is not a place that should sanction this type of material and the library is not the Library of Congress.

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. Stated that he is struggling to understand the logic of the graphic novel resolution after reading the resolution and state law. Asked the Board to rescind the resolution. Stated that none of these novels are obscene according to the Miller Test, which is the U.S. Supreme Court's test to determine obscenity. Referenced the book *The Story of Art* and a stack of other books and noted that they contain naked illustrations of people of all ages. Stated that the books are not behind the circulation desk because they are considered works of art. Asked why graphic novels are not considered works of art. Spoke of the resolution violating First Amendment rights.

Roxanne Newman – Mandeville, LA. Thanked the Board and K. LaRocca for all the work they do. Appreciates that the Board and K. LaRocca have been proactive about the concerns. Stated that STPL

has complied with the law and has acted as a model for LA R.S. 25:225. Stated that she is concerned that the GN policy has gone beyond what is required by law and has ventured into self-censorship. The LA R.S. 25:225 does not require the materials to be placed behind the circulation desk. It requires the library to have a card system that allows a minor's parent to choose restrictions and permissions. Spoke of censorship and red flagging.

Ruth Terry-Sipos – Abita Springs, LA. Spoke from the aspect of a special educator and stated that in her experience, the majority of middle school students who read GNs were reluctant readers and noted that there are also adult reluctant readers. Spoke of GNs being targeted. Stated that the Board is working hard to appease the unappeasable. Stated that it is unbelievable that materials that are considered okay for adults cannot be in adult section. Stated it is disturbing to see the restriction of appropriate materials. Spoke favorably about the New Adult section.

Sonnet Ireland – Slidell, LA. Stated that there is no connection between porn and HPV, and there is no pornography in the library. Stated that GNs are not pornography and stated that the word "graphic" means "drawn," not as in "graphic television." Stated that children are not reading these GNs because they are not meant for children. Noted that most of the people who have complained do not have young children, and many of them have children who are adults. She suspects that some do not like how their adult children are raising their grandchildren. Thanked the Board for the work over the last two years. Stated there is a lot of work ahead for incoming board members.

B. McHugh noted that the Board has previously reversed a policy regarding challenged books being restricted behind the circulation desk and agrees that the GN resolution should be reversed as well. He addressed the earlier comment from D. Betz who stated that the library should not sanction this material. B. McHugh stated that if the word "sanction" was meant to infer approving or promoting, the library does not sanction, approve, or promote any particular book. He stated that libraries make the material available for the entire public so that everyone can access the material using their own judgement. He stated that the public library is a neutral organization and sanctioning material is not the role of a library.

Vote: A vote was listed on the agenda, but there was no action to vote on.

F. Summer Budget Amendment

Discussion:

K. LaRocca gave an explanation of the differences in revenue and expenditure forecasts between the 2024 Spring Project Budget Amendment and the 2024 Summer Amendment. An additional \$121,380 in Ad Valorem revenue is expected due to more taxable properties. K. LaRocca gave explanations for each line that was adjusted.

K. LaRocca noted that the Improvement to Physical Plant line is decreased and the funds are directed to a new line called Disaster Recovery Costs. K. LaRocca explained that the costs for repairs to the Mandeville and South Slidell branches after weather-related damages were originally coming out of the Maintenance lines. It was decided that it was important to set aside those funds in a separate line to better track the costs of disaster recovery.

K. LaRocca reported an update to the Planned Usage of Savings. She explained that the original budget amendment did not include any changes to that section, but bids for the book hauler vehicle were opened after the amendment was prepared for Board review. There will need to be an amendment to the Summer Budget Amendment. K. LaRocca explained that the lowest bid received was \$187,220 and we had originally budgeted \$160,000. She stated that the consultant explained that the difference in cost is due to the increased cost of steel. K. LaRocca noted that this is a major part of the strategic plan and we promised the public that we would provide this service. She is asking the Board to increase the dedicated amount for the overall project.

A. Shaw asked if the other bidders offered the same options. K. LaRocca explained that all bidders were provided with a list of specifications, which was posted on our website and in the St. Tammany Farmer newspaper. K. LaRocca stated that they did offer what we asked for and this was the lowest bid. T. DiMaggio stated that the other bids were over \$200,000. The company is based in Houston, Texas, and specializes in converting Ford and Mercedes vans. The consultant has experience working with the company and has been happy with their work.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to amend the 2024 Summer Budget Amendment. It was seconded by A. Parr. All were in favor, none were opposed, and none were absent. Motion carried.

B. McHugh noted the property and flood insurance increases and K. LaRocca confirmed that the increases are correct and she inadvertently missed highlighting them.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to adopt the 2024 Summer Budget Amendment, as amended. It was seconded by A. Shaw.

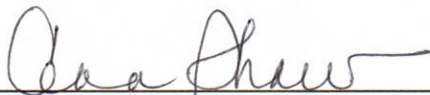
Roll call vote: Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

A. Parr asked to add to the next agenda that the Board will discuss E. Couvillon's findings regarding the previously mentioned conflicting legal advice. E. Couvillon advised that the discussion should occur in executive session for legal advice and should be noted as such on the agenda.

3. Adjournment

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



Ann Shaw, Vice-President