



Livingston Parish Library Board of Control
Regular Meeting, May 21, 2024

Minutes

The Livingston Parish Board of Control met in a regular session on May 21, 2024. The meeting took place at the Main Branch, located at 20390 Iowa Street, Livingston, LA 70754.

1. Call to Order

Board President, Ronnie Bencaz called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. Moment of Silence

Board President, Ronnie Bencaz called for a moment of silence.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance is said by those in attendance.

4. Roll Call

Present: Ronnie Bencaz, Ivy Graham, Kathy DeGeneres, Melissa Anderson, Larry Davis, Wendi Neal, Francine Smith, Abby Crosby, and Steve Bernard

Absent:

Also Present: Michelle Parrish (Director), Dustin Cotton (Assistant Director of Branch Services, David Gray (Public Information Officer)

5. Approval of Minutes

Motion to accept minutes from the last meeting made by Francine Smith, seconded by Abby Crosby

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, DeGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith, Crosby, Bernard

Nays:
Absent:
Abstain:

The motion carried.

6. Public Comments on Agenda Items

David Gray, Public Information Officer, explained the new color-coded comment card system procedure. If there are agenda items that you wish to speak or not speak on, you fill out a comment card. He goes on to say that the green card is in favor of an agenda item, red card is in opposition of an agenda item, and the yellow card is for providing objective neutral information of an agenda item. Also, you may fill out a “do not wish to speak” and state if you support or oppose an item listed.

More detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.

7. Director’s Report – presented by Michelle Parrish, Director

a. Financial Update

- i. Michelle Parrish, Director, informed the board of the original budget adopted and the actual year-to-date budget and stated that there is no need to amend or adjust the budget at this time. She stated that the budget may need to be adjusted in July.

b. Staff Changes

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board of some changes to the management staff, including the relocation of former Denham Springs-Walker branch manager Scott Kleinpeter to the Main Branch in Livingston and the addition of Alex Juan as the new Denham Springs-Walker branch manager.

c. Administration Building Roof Replacement Update

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board that the A&A roofing company completed the project in two days with no issues listed.

d. Laser Engraver Update

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board that the laser engraver housed at the Admin office has now been moved to the Denham Springs-Walker branch. Due to its hours of operation and easier accessibility by patrons and staff, it will be more

easily accessible at this branch. Staff are working on future programs using this equipment.

e. Calendar and Room Booking Software Change

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board that the current calendar and booking software must be changed due to the software company's lack of backup capabilities. The new software will be launched after Summer Reading is over in August.

f. Summer Reading Program

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board that more than 300 programs are slated for the summer geared toward all ages. She mentioned the kick-off day on May 28th, when you will receive an incentive prize for attending this event.

g. Reminder about Strategic Planning Committee Public Meetings

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board of the upcoming community meetings, with the first one being on Thursday June 13th at the Denham Springs-Walker Branch. She then stated that the other meetings were on June 27, July 3, July 9, July 23, and August 5.

More detailed information on the Director's Report may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.

8. New Business

- a. Discussion & Approval: Contract Bids for Banking
 - 1. Presented by Michelle Parrish, Director

Ms. Parrish informed the board that bids were received regarding changing who we bank with. Only two responded with bids: Hancock Whitney and First Guaranty. She stated that both banks were fairly equal, with the only difference being First Guaranty had a better interest rate. However, the library does not take out loans, so this did not affect the decision. She stated that the library would like to stay with Hancock Whitney. **More detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Motion to continue to use Hancock Whitney made by Kathy DeGeneres, seconded by Melissa Anderson

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, DeGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith, Crosby, Bernard

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

8. New Business

- b. Discussion & Resolution: Request a representative from the Parish Attorney's office to attend all Livingston Parish Library Board of Control Meetings
 - i. Presented by Michelle Parrish, Director

Public comment cards were submitted on this agenda item; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Motion to accept the Director's recommendation made by Larry Davis, seconded by Abby Crosby

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, DeGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith, Crosby, Bernard

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

8. New Business

- c. Discussion & Resolution: Request an opinion from the Parish Attorney regarding the legality and relocation of books containing subjects of sexuality, gender, ideology, gender dysphoria, and sexual orientation from preschool fiction, juvenile fiction, juvenile nonfiction, and young adult nonfiction collections to a new Parenting Assistance collection to be shelved with the adult nonfiction
 - i. Presented by Larry Davis, Board Member

Public comment cards were submitted on this agenda item and various audience members spoke on this; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Assistant District Attorney Brad Cascio, responded to a question regarding the case of *Sund v. City of Wichita Falls* by reading the outcome that states that taking an item out

of one particular area violates the “*plaintiff's constitutional right to receive information*” and goes on to state that “*it is undisputed that loss of First Amendment freedoms, even for a minimal period of time, constitutes irreparable injury.*” It doesn’t necessarily state, in this case, if it was taken off the shelves altogether, only that it was removed from a section of the library.

A board member, Larry Davis, states that “*the policy change is to create a new section with the listed categories are moved to a new section so there’s no censoring, there is no removal of the book; it’s creation of a new section. So that Supreme Court opinion from Wichita doesn’t even detail creation of a new section in the library.*”

Other public comments were made regarding moving items from where they were intended to make it harder for those who needed them to find them; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Mr. Davis reiterates that this is not to discriminate but to allow the creation of a brand-new section in the library with detailed classifications written inside.

Further discussion was made amongst those who submitted comment cards and by board members and Mr. Cascio; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Ms. Parrish then states that the point of this discussion is to request an attorney's opinion to ensure that we wouldn’t be breaking any laws. Mr. Cascio then stated that he would look further into the matter.

Motion to get an opinion from parish attorney on this matter made by Wendi Neal, seconded by Larry Davis

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, DeGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith, Crosby, Bernard

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

8. New Business

d. Discussion of Resolution: Hiring law enforcement to be present at all Livingston Parish Library Board of Control meetings

i. Presented by Larry Davis, Board Member

Public comment cards were submitted on this agenda item and various audience members spoke on this; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Motion to have law enforcement to be present made by Abby Crosby, seconded by Larry Davis

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, DeGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith, Crosby, Bernard

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

8. New Business

e. Discussion: Creation of a Social Services Department

i. Presented by Larry Davis, Board Member

Public comment cards were submitted on this agenda item, and various audience members spoke on this; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Mr. Davis informed the board and those in attendance that the Social Services Department would allow Michelle Parrish, Director, to have the power to hire a child psychologist. A part-time child psychologist would be hired to help decide which items would benefit child development.

Ms. Parrish states that she would have to research this, as she is unaware of any other library system with this capability. She states that there are library systems that have a social worker on staff; however, these are mainly in urban areas that deal with homelessness. She then states that she would need to speak with the legislative auditor, as she is unaware if the library could spend money on this, as it's not something that is in the library's purview.

Mr. Davis then states that *"it would allow the librarians to have an add tether to say, you know what, to the public, to everybody involved, we've resourced everybody, we've resourced the library board of control, we talked to administration. It's just another*

resource cos the world is changing.” He goes on to say that “our case is not homelessness, it’s a matter of what is appropriate, what is not, what is going to help a child in its future, what’s going to help its brain develop properly and so, we need to get somebody who has a degree in that facet.”

Ivy Graham, board vice-president, then states, *“That’s outside of the library’s scope,”* regarding Mr. Davis’ statement.

Board members then asked Mr. Davis what this person would be doing, to which Mr. Davis responded, *“They would be involved in the day-to-day ordering of children’s books.”* He states they would be a contracted consultant who helps order children’s books.

Ms. Parrish then states that the person or whomever is hired must follow the same criteria librarians use when placing books in particular categories. She says that *“there are guidelines and there are policies and procedures that they will still have to follow also.”* She mentions that it’s a slippery slope either way and that it’s up to the board to decide if she needs to pursue it further.

Public comment cards were submitted on this agenda item, and various audience members spoke on this; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Melissa Anderson, a board member, asked Ms. Parrish if a link would be readily available for patrons to access social services provided by the library’s databases. Ms. Parrish responds that there is a page dedicated on the website to social services, providing information on food stamps, energy bill help, and anything else that would be needed regarding this. Ms. Anderson then asks Ms. Parrish if a patron comes in, they could ask, and the librarian could send them to the link on the website, to which Ms. Parrish agrees.

Mr. Davis clarifies, *“The child psychologist is not here to provide services. So you could not bring your child here to have a child psychologist talk to them. That’s not what this was for. This was, once again, an added resource for our librarians to use to bounce ideas off of. So this is not you bring your child to the library for therapy. It’s none of that.”*

Mr. Davis asked Ms. Parrish if she could provide more details in a future meeting about the cost, the psychologist practice act, ethics, and the job description.

8. New Business

f. Policy Changes for Approval: Amendments

i. Code: 1-105 – Organization of the Library

i. Code: 4-404 – Minors/Children in the Library

ii. 5-501 – Employment at the Library

1. Presented by Larry Davis, Board Member

Public comment cards were submitted on this agenda item, and various audience members spoke on this; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Discussion was held regarding the ages of minors/children in the library. If a teen can obtain a job and license in Louisiana at 16, why wouldn't they be allowed unsupervised in the library?

Dustin Cotton, Assistant Director of Branch Services, states that Code 5-501 needed to be included alongside Code 4-404 because it would prohibit the employment of 16-year-olds if Code 4-404 were to pass.

Mr. Davis then stated that what was discussed was those under the age of 17 would still have access to the library, but a parent would have to sign a card stating that they are allowed in the library without their attention. *"It also removes liability off of our librarians for an unattended minor that may be in this library."*

The board then discussed a card that parents could sign stating that their child under 17 could be in the library without their presence. That way, the librarians would not be responsible for anything that could happen to the child while unattended.

Francine Smith, a board member, then discusses with Ms. Parrish the clarification of Code 1-105 Organization of the Library. Ms. Parrish then states, "the policy now is that the director has control over hiring everyone underneath her. This would add, *"In an open meeting, the library board of control shall approve the permanent hiring of administrative librarian staff for the assistant director of branch services and the assistant director of support services."*

Those who submitted cards on these items made additional lengthy comments; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

At this time, the board discussed with Ms. Parrish the policies concerning Mr. Davis's addition, requesting that those under 17 not be allowed in the library unattended without parental consent.

Kristen L., a patron who filled out a comment card, then asked, “*Where do you want your kids to go after school, if not to a library? What are the options?*” She went on to state that at 16, her children were tutored at the library and could drive themselves, which was a huge help to her and her family. However, if the 17 and under policy were made, her child would be unable to do this.

Board President Ronnie Bencaz, calls a short recess at 7:23 pm.

The meeting resumes at 7:27 pm.

Those who submitted cards on these items made additional lengthy comments; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Motion to accept all policy changes together made by Larry Davis, seconded by Abby Crosby

Yeas: Davis, Crosby

Nays: Bencaz, Graham, DeGeneres, Anderson, Neal, Smith, Bernard

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion failed.

8. New Business

g. Policy Changes for Approval: Amendments

i. Code 3-315 – Circulation Services

Mr. Cotton brings the proposed amendment from the library administration to the board: that specific culture passes offered by the Livingston Parish Library only allow a single person free admission. The administration is asking for a policy change to increase the changes for adult, staff, senior citizen, and educator card types from 1 to 4. This would allow cardholders to check out up to 4 passes at a time for their families, allowing spouses and more children to get into these places for free.

ii. Code 5- 539 – Scheduling/Schedule Changes

Mr. Cotton brings the proposed amendment from the library administration to the board: that the branch manager, department head, administrator, or other designated supervisor shall prepare bi-weekly time schedules and daily duty schedules for all employees who directly report to them. All bi-weekly schedules shall be logged into the appropriate time-keeping software and available for review by the Director and the Human Resources Manager. Staff may request general schedule changes to their direct supervisor as long as the library's needs are fulfilled; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Jordan Gonzalez, a patron who filled out a comment card, spoke to support the cultural passes and how they benefit his family.

The board discussed the cost of the cultural passes and the process of obtaining them.

1. Presented by Dustin Cotton, Assistant Director of Branch Services

Motion to accept the two policy changes as read by Francine Smith, seconded by Wendi Neal

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, DeGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith, Crosby, Bernard

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

8. New Business

h. Discussion & Approval: Surplus Items for Disposal

i. Presented by Dustin Cotton, Assistant Director of Branch Services

Mr. Cotton brings to the board a list of items to surplus and auction; **more detailed information may be found by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Motion to surplus the items or sell them made by Francine Smith, seconded by Melissa Anderson

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, DeGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith, Crosby, Bernard

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

Ms. Parrish and Mr. Cotton clarified a previously asked question by board member Abby Crosby regarding purchasing and bids on calendar software.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Bencaz adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m.