



Livingston Parish Library Board of Control
Special Meeting December 17, 2024

Minutes

The Livingston Parish Library Board of Control met in a special session on December 17, 2024. The meeting took place at the Denham Springs-Walker Branch, located at 8101 US Highway 190, Denham Springs, LA 70726.

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

Those in attendance said the pledge of allegiance.

4. Roll Call

Present: Ronnie Bencaz, Tori Hymel, Larry Davis, Abby Crosby, Steve Bernard, Summer Smith

Absent: Kathy deGeneres, Dewanna Christian

Also Present: Michelle Parrish (Director), Dustin Cotton (Assistant Director of Branch Services)

5. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Cathleen Hyde asks for clarification on who the officers are, based upon the previous December 4th meeting. Mr. Ronnie Bencaz states that he is presiding tonight.

6. Old Business

- a. Discussion & Approval: To approve the adjusted FY 2025 Operating and Capital Outlay/Projects Budgets
 - i. Presented by Larry Davis, Board Member

Marla Elsea questions whether this is based on the original or amended budget, which Mr. Larry Davis states is the amended budget.

Mr. Bencaz states that public comment usually precedes the discussion, and Mr. Davis replies that public comment can happen first. Mr. Bencaz then asked if there was public comment and whether comments could happen before or after the discussion.

32 comment cards were submitted on this agenda item, 27 in opposition, 4 in support, and 1 neutral.

17 in opposition and would like to speak: Joshua Ebarb, Kathi Logan, Gail DeLee, Karen Pourciau, Jordan Gonzalez, Amanda Jones, Layne Johnson, Meghan Mayer, Mandy Jo Pickering, Lori Callais, Marla Elsea, Francine Smith, Wade McCallister, Cathleen Hyde, Jessica Legathe [sic], Hunter Pearson, and Oreda Hogue

9 in opposition and would not like to speak: Barbara Walker, Ryan Westmoreland, Nikki Thornton, Toni McKee, Marianne Foil, Tim Elsea, Catlin Roberts, Loxley Doolittle, and Vicki Turner [sic]

1 in opposition and will provide information if requested: Misty Bentley

3 in support and would like to speak: Trey Cowell, Amanda Robert, Bridgette Gilbert

1 in support but would not like to speak: Anthony Vance

1 neutral and would like to speak to provide unbiased information: Cathleen Hyde

Mr. Davis presented an amended budget to the board. Mr. Davis states that one proposed solution is to *“reallocate the funds from line items that are either redundant or not necessary.”* Mr. Davis goes on to state that they saw some redundancies in the budget, so funds were reallocated. He states that *“it may*

look like things are zeroed out or doesn't exist, well, some of those line items were reduced and reallocated into the funding so that we are not using taxpayer dollars in multiple ways."

He also stated that the Administration reiterated, *"It is a best practice that the Legislative Auditor told them that even if they don't utilize the funding on those line items, that they still need to put those numbers there."* He says they went ahead and were proactive and decided to assign them somewhere else. Another point in the presentation stated that they wanted to revise the funding for activities and events that *"do not function within the library's goal or core mandate."* He states that the proposed budget was created within two weeks and can be amended up or down when necessary.

He stated, *"Some line items are reduced to an appropriate measure, and if they need to be amended up at any time, the library administration or staff is welcome to present that to the board, and we will make a decision then."* Mr. Davis stated that they also wanted to utilize surplus funding to increase employees' salaries and benefits. He also said, *"In the wider scheme of things, you have to look at the hierarchy of needs. The library is on the bottom tier of that as far as needs and the impact it has on communities."*

Mr. Davis then expands on the proposed reductions and reallocations regarding advertising and maintenance/repairs. He states that the decrease in maintenance/repairs will allow a building and maintenance employee to be hired rather than a contracted company. He also states a reduction in the professional development line item. He states, *"Administration should be tasked with the creation, solicitation, and the education of your staff. We do not need to contract out people to come and teach your staff what you went to school to do because that's your job."* Mr. Davis states that they would like to have the resources to *"create, to amend, and to educate your staff."*

Mr. Davis also informs the board of proposed reductions to collections, stating, *"That's another contracted-out situation. So, a lot of these may seem like the line item may say collections, and you're thinking it's books, and half of the time it's not books, it's another company, a middle man, we're paying in to come in, and do the job that our librarians were hired to do."*

Mr. Davis finished his presentation by stating that the budget could be amended at any time and that this proposed budget would put it back into the hands of the board to increase or decrease as deemed necessary.

Mr. Ronnie Bencaz, Board President, opens up the floor for public comment.

Due to the length of public comment, **the comments and board discussion may be found by listening to the posted audio recording or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Mr. Ronnie Bencaz reads agenda item 6a to the board. He states that it has been discussed, and a motion is made.

MOTION to accept the 2025 budget with amendments made by Larry Davis, seconded by Abby Crosby

Before voting, Ms. Tori Hymel asks the board if some of the line items, such as contracts, can be revisited and adjusted. She states, *"I've noticed some issues that I'd like to readdress. If I could get everybody's agreement, we could in the future readdress those issues that we have. We said several times over that we can adjust things throughout the year next year."* She reiterates that there would be no budget for 2025 without a vote tonight. She then states that she is voting based on the understanding that it can be tweaked in the future based on received information.

Mr. Bencaz calls for the vote.

Yeas: Hymel, Davis, Crosby, Smith

Nays: Bencaz, Bernard

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

- b. Discussion & Approval: Dedicate funds to Capital Projects
 - i. Presented by Larry Davis, Board Member

Mr. Davis asked Ms. Michelle Parrish, Director, to present this agenda item. Ms. Parrish states that a vote is needed on anything up to \$500,000 left over from this year's budget and will go into Capital Outlay.

MOTION to move all monies over at the end of the year into Capital Outlay

Yeas: Bencaz, Hymel, Davis, Crosby, Bernard, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

Mr. Bencaz stated that he spoke to the board, and they agreed to consolidate and, in one MOTION, move all the books to the library's Adult section.

The floor is open for public comment

7. New Business

- a. Discussion & Resolution: Whether “Damsel” by Elana Arnold meets the criteria outlined in LA RS 25:225C(2)(d)(ii) and the definition provided in LA RS 25:225B(4) as claimed by a complainant who submitted a Citizen’s Request for Reconsideration of Library Material Form (3-309a), and whether to move this material to another collection based on this challenge.
 - i. Presented by Tori Hymel, Board Member

13 comment cards were submitted on this agenda item

4 in opposition and would like to speak: Oreda Hogue, Jordan Gonzalez, Mandy Jo Pickering, and Caitlin Roberts

7 in opposition and do not wish to speak: Niki Thornton, Marla Elsea, Tim Elsea, Loxley Doolittle, Marianne Foil, and Amanda Jones

1 in opposition and will provide information if requested: Julia Cooper

1 neutral that is present and would like to speak: Jessica Egath [sic]

- b. Discussion & Resolution: Whether “Thirteen Reasons Why” by Jay Asher meets the criteria outlined in LA RS 25:225C(2)(d)(ii) and the definition provided in LA RS 25:225B(4) as claimed by a complainant who submitted a Citizen’s Request for Reconsideration of Library Material Form (3-309a), and whether to move this material to another collection based on this challenge.
 - i. Presented by Ronnie Bencaz, Board President

13 comment cards were submitted on this agenda item

4 present and would like to speak: Oreda Hogue, Jordan Gonzalez, Mandy Jo Pickering, Caitlin Roberts

7 present and do not wish to speak: Cathleen Hyde, Niki Thornton, Marla Elsea, Tim Elsea, Loxley Doolittle, Marianne Foil, and Amanda Jones

1 in opposition and will provide information if requested: Julia Cooper

1 neutral that is present and would like to speak: Jessica Egath [sic]

- c. Discussion & Resolution: Whether “The Haters” by Jesse Andrews meets the criteria outlined in LA RS 25:225C(2)(d)(ii) and the definition provided in LA RS 25:225B(4) as claimed by a complainant who submitted a Citizen’s Request for Reconsideration of Library Material Form (3-309a), and whether to move this material to another collection based on this challenge.
 - i. Presented by Ronnie Bencaz, Board President

13 comment cards were submitted on this agenda item

4 in opposition and would like to speak: Oreda Hogue, Jordan Gonzalez, Mandy Jo Pickering, and Caitlin Roberts

7 in opposition and do not wish to speak: Niki Thornton, Marla Elsea, Tim Elsea, Loxley Doolittle, Marianne Foil, and Amanda Jones

1 in opposition and will provide information if requested: Julia Cooper

1 neutral that is present and would like to speak: Jessica Egath [sic]

- d. Discussion & Resolution: Whether “Fade” by Lisa McMann meets the criteria outlined in LA RS 25:225C(2)(d)(ii) and the definition provided in LA RS 25:225B(4) as claimed by a complainant who submitted a Citizen’s Request for Reconsideration of Library Material Form (3-309a), and whether to move this material to another collection based on this challenge.
 - i. Presented by Dewanna Christian, Board Member

13 comment cards were submitted on this agenda item

4 in opposition and would like to speak: Oreda Hogue, Jordan Gonzalez, Mandy Jo Pickering, and Caitlin Roberts

7 in opposition and do not wish to speak: Niki Thornton, Marla Elsea, Tim Elsea, Loxley Doolittle, Marianne Foil, and Amanda Jones

1 in opposition and will provide information if requested: Julia Cooper

1 neutral that is present and would like to speak: Jessica Egath [sic]

- e. Discussion & Resolution: Whether “Tricks” by Ellen Hopkins meets the criteria outlined in LA RS 25:225C(2)(d)(ii) and the definition provided in LA RS 25:225B(4) as claimed by a complainant who submitted a Citizen’s Request for Reconsideration of Library Material Form (3-309a), and whether to move this material to another collection based on this challenge.
 - i. Presented by Ronnie Bencaz, Board President

13 comment cards were submitted on this agenda item

4 in opposition and would like to speak: Oreda Hogue, Jordan Gonzalez, Mandy Jo Pickering, and Caitlin Roberts

7 in opposition and do not wish to speak: Niki Thornton, Marla Elsea, Tim Elsea, Loxley Doolittle, Marianne Foil, and Amanda Jones

1 in opposition and will provide information if requested: Julia Cooper

1 neutral that is present and would like to speak: Jessica Egath [sic]

MOTION to make a judgment on all the books at one time made by Summer Smith, seconded by Abby Crosby

The board discusses whether all books can be moved to the Adult section simultaneously. Mr. Bencaz said it had been done before, and the board agreed.

Mr. Bencaz calls for the vote.

Yeas: Bencaz, Hymel, Davis, Crosby, Bernard, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

- f. Discussion & Approval: Surplus Items for Disposal
 - i. Presented by Dustin Cotton, Assistant Director of Branch Services

Mr. Cotton informs the board of one item for disposal.

3 comment cards were submitted on this agenda item.

3 in support and do not wish to speak: Toni McKee, Amanda Jones, and Niki Thornton

MOTION to remove the surplus items made by Larry Davis, seconded by Summer Smith

Yeas: Bencaz, Hymel, Davis, Crosby, Bernard, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Ronnie asks for a vote to adjourn the meeting.

Yeas: Bencaz, Hymel, Davis, Crosby, Bernard, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.