



Livingston Parish Library Board of Control  
Regular Meeting, September 20, 2022

## Minutes

The Livingston Parish Board of Control met in a regular session on September 20, 2022. 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 5:00 p.m.

### 2. Roll Call

Present: Ronnie Bencaz, Kathy DeGeneres, Ivy Graham, Debbie Henson, Stephen Link, Erin Sandefur

Absent: Melissa Anderson, Layton Ricks (non-voting member), Giovanni Tairov (Director)

Also Present: Jennifer Seneca (Assistant Library Director), Chris Moody (Livingston Parish attorney)

### 3. Approve Minutes of July 19, 2022 meeting

Motion to table minutes to next board meeting by Erin Sandefur, seconded by Kathy DeGeneres due to lack of time to review minutes by Ms. Sandefur.

### 4. Public Comments

Lori Callais, Livingston Parish resident, read the statement provided by Amanda Jones in response to the Resolution from Layton Ricks to Parish Council.

Board member Erin Sandefur asked for a point of order and stated no one is banning books.

Robert Poole, Denham Springs City Councilman, made arguments concerning the differences of banning and restriction of materials. He stated that decisions need to be made on behalf of the children.

Clark Forrest, a Livingston Parish resident, stated he didn't support restricting access to books since the purpose of books is to be educated. He asked the library board to continue the library's current Collection Development and selection process.

Brian Clemmons, Livingston Parish resident, stated that he wanted the Board of Control to do their job and exercise control.

## **5. Unfinished business: None**

## **6. New Business**

### **a. Resolution presented by Livingston Parish President Layton Ricks and Livingston Parish Council – Erin Sandefur**

Erin Sandefur read Livingston Parish President Layton Ricks' letter to the Library Board of Control, Parish Council Resolution #22314, into the record. After, Ms. Sandefur asked the board to discuss the resolution.

Ivy Graham stated that the library board could not ignore its own policies or skip steps outlined by policy. She referenced library board policies 3-306 Challenged Materials, 3-308 Citizens Request Form for Reconsideration of Library Materials, 3-309 Registration of User Complaint, the Library Bill of Rights policy (3-312), and the Freedom to Read statement (3-312).

Stephen Link stated that some of the items in question may now become an issue and what would be the procedure if someone does submit a form.

Ms. Graham stated that a submitted reconsideration form goes to a committee and explained the various considerations when reviewing a book. Ms. Graham stated several books have been submitted since the last meeting and have gone through the process.

Mr. Link asked if it was already going through the process right now. Ms. Graham stated to her knowledge she wasn't sure if anyone filed a complaint on any of the books from the list previously submitted.

Ms. Sandefur stated she read the policy quite a few times, doesn't understand the procedure, and that the policy is very broad. She stated concern about how books came through the policy and procedures. She stated she doesn't know who is on the selection committees and is responsible for the decisions they make.

Ms. Graham stated that as a board member or public citizen the policy is the same and should be followed for review.

Ms. Sandefur stated while that was true the books were in the collection.

Ms. Henson asked why the books were not submitted following the reconsideration policy.

Ms. Sandefur stated she went to the library director for a meeting and wanted to include the board, but that the director didn't feel it was necessary.

Ms. Henson asked if that was because we have a policy and procedure in place for reconsideration.

Ms. Sandefur replied she was told the library doesn't censor or ban books. She stated she is not trying to do either of these things.

Ms. Henson asked again if the books were ever submitted for reconsideration.

Ms. Sandefur stated she brought books to the director for review but she didn't hear back on those materials.

Ms. Graham stated the director isn't the committee. Ms. Sandefur replied she asked to bring it to the board. Ms. Henson and Ms. Graham stated it doesn't go to the board. A reconsideration goes to the committee.

Ms. Sandefur stated she wasn't initially told that. She asked how and why the books are coming into the library.

Ms. Graham stated the current issue before them per the resolution was the library needs to have a system in place for the reclassification of materials. Ms. Graham stated they are trying to educate everyone that there is already a system in place.

Ms. Sandefur stated she didn't have clarity on the collection review process and asked if the rest of the board did.

Ms. deGeneres stated it was clear to her.

Ms. Sandefur stated we had a lot of books that the resolution addresses and simply filling out a form wouldn't fulfill the resolution.

Ms. Sandefur made a motion to address the parish president's letter and the council's resolution by establishing a three-person committee consisting of Library Board of Control members to discuss the collection review committee, the collection review process, the policy, its criteria, and content of books in our libraries containing sex guidance and instruction, sex illustration, pornography, sexual obscenity and sexual self-mutilation that are in the children's and young adult sections of the Livingston Parish Libraries.

The motion is seconded by Stephen Link. The motion failed with a 4 against and 2 for the motion.

Yeas: Sandefur, Link

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Nays: Bencaz, Graham, Henson, DeGeneres

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Absent: Anderson

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Abstain: 0

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Debbie Henson moved that the Board of Control for the Livingston Parish Library to express appreciation to the Parish President for sharing his perspective in his recent letter; and affirm the library board's current Challenged Materials Policy (3-306), Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials Form (3-309), Registration of User Complaint Form (3-308), Library Bill of Rights Policy (3-312) and the Freedom to Read Statement within that policy as appropriate and adequate; and the Board of Control directs professional staff to begin to display all the above-mentioned policies in each branch and continue to make policies available on paper in each branch and prominently linked to on the Livingston Parish Library website.

The motion was seconded by Kathy DeGeneres. The motion carried.

Yeas: Bencaz, deGeneres, Graham, Henson, Link, Sandefur

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Nays: 0

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Absent: Anderson

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Abstain: 0

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**b. Discussion of a board resolution commending the hard work and dedication of the Livingston Parish Library staff- Debbie Henson.**

Debbie Henson moved to make the following resolution.

*Whereas* the staff and administration of Livingston Parish Libraries have performed their duties faithfully and professionally and

*Whereas* the staff reconsideration committee performed a thorough, professional review of the recent requests for reconsideration and the disposition of that material

Be it resolved that the Board of Control of Livingston Parish Library recognizes the dedication, hard work, and commitment of the library staff and administration and commends them for their faithful service to our community.

Ivy Graham seconded the motion.

Erin Sandefur asked to comment before a vote was taken. She asked about executive session because she had personnel concerns she wanted to address before she could

vote on the agenda item. Ms. Sandefur agreed the library had a great staff and appreciated their passion and dedication. She stated she could not vote without having a personnel discussion in executive session.

Chris Moody, parish attorney, explained entering executive session can only be done for limited reasons. First, it would have to be listed as an agenda item and reminded to add something to an agenda must be brought by unanimous vote. The board would also have to designate the appropriate reason for the session and that a general personnel discussion is not a sufficient reason. The board would need to enumerate the reasons for the session, and Mr. Moody gave examples of such. He reminded the board that if the reason for the executive session pertains to the character and competence of an employee, there are stipulations that must be met prior to the board meeting before the item can be added to the agenda.

Ms. Sandefur stated there were personnel issues regarding character and competence she would need to discuss before voting on the agenda item.

Mr. Bencaz reminded the board they had a motion and second on the floor. Ms. Sandefur made a motion to table agenda item 6B to the next meeting when they could add an executive session to the agenda. No second to the motion was made. The motion died.

The motion carried with five votes in favor and one abstain.

Yeas: Bencaz, DeGeneres, Graham, Henson, Link

Nays: 0

Absent: Anderson

Abstain: Sandefur

### **c. Approve Change Order #3 – Jennifer Seneca**

Assistant Director, Jennifer Seneca, presented change order #3 related to the construction project at the Administrative Offices. The change order included adding gutters, catch basin, and drainage pipe to the south side to address runoff issues as well as wheel stops around the dumpster to prevent trucks and large vehicles from driving over the grass and gravel in the expanded parking area. Kathy DeGeneres made a motion to approve Change Order #3. Debbie Henson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Yeas: Bencaz, deGeneres, Graham, Henson, Link, Sandefur

Nays: 0

Absent: Anderson

Abstain: 0

Ronnie Bencaz asked if there was anything further before adjournment. Erin Sandefur asked if there were any director's comments. Ms. Seneca stated responded to Ms. Sandefur's email inquiry with that question. Ms. Sandefur stated she was asking because she was surprised there were no comments left considering everything going on.

Ronnie Bencaz adjourned the meeting at 5:49 p.m.