



Livingston Parish Library Board of Control  
Regular Meeting, May 16, 2023

## Minutes

The Livingston Parish Board of Control met in a regular session on May 16, 2023. 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 5:03 p.m.

### 2. Roll Call

Present: Ronnie Bencaz, Kathy DeGeneres, Melissa Anderson, Larry Davis, and Francine Smith, Ivy Graham (arrived at 5:05), and Wendi Neal (arrived at 5:11)

Absent: Layton Ricks,

Also Present: Michelle Parrish (Interim Director)

### 3. Approve Minutes of March 21, 2023 meeting

Motion to accept minutes as written made by Kathy deGeneres, seconded by Melissa Anderson

Yeas: Bencaz, deGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Smith

Nays:

Absent: Graham (arrived at 5:05), Neal (arrived at 5:11)

Abstain:

The motion carried.

### 4. Public Comments – please refer to audio recording for more information

Marla Elsea, Denham Springs resident, asks the board to *“consider restructuring the public comment section in the future to match the parish council.”* She states that at the council meetings the member explains the item on the agenda with a brief council

discussion, and then they open each item separately for public discussion. She then discusses agenda items 6E, 6H, 6I, and 6J.

Abby Crosby, Livingston Parish resident, agrees that the meetings should be structured in the same way as the Livingston Parish Council. She then discusses nature of books deemed pornographic and states that this can also include cartoon drawings and words. She then also states that she is for auditing of the materials in the branches, if it is in the budget to do so.

Holley Hughes, employee of Livingston Parish Library, discussed RS 14:18:1 subsection B item 6 and its definition of interactive computer service which includes libraries and educational institutions. Also, that subsection H and the provisions of this section shall not apply to providers of interactive computer services, cable, and communications. She then states that this seems to state that it does not apply to libraries.

Amanda Jones, Livingston Parish resident, discussed agenda item 6D and stated that all religions should be represented. She also discussed agenda item 6E and referenced that these forms (3-308 and 3-309) are already available to the public on the library's website. She also discusses agenda item 6G and the ability for others who work to be able to attend the meetings in a timely manner. She lastly discusses agenda item 6H and the statement by Jeff Landry where he stated that no library in Louisiana has a book on their shelf that violates state law. She also briefly discusses agenda items 6I and 6J.

Erin Sandefur, Livingston Parish Councilwoman, references that forms 3-308 and 3-309 are broken links on the website and needs to be looked into. She then discusses agenda items 6H and 6I. She states that "*LGBTQ was never mentioned*" and also "*cancel*" and "*ban*" were never mentioned. She clarifies that nothing is banned and if you want particular books with specific topics then you can purchase them yourself.

Holley Hughes once again speaks and states that the library are about equitable access to the public and not everyone has the means to purchase books for themselves.

Tara, employee of Livingston Parish Library and Denham Springs resident, states that she is thankful for Ms. Michelle Parrish in regards to her role as Interim Director and Mr. Dustin Cotton with his role as Interim Assistant Director.

Jamey Sandefur, Denham Springs resident, states he agrees with the comments for restructuring the public comment section for future board meetings and how would be more user friendly to the public. He goes on to discuss agenda item 6E and states that if there are only 2 complaints out of 145,000 parish residents then the system isn't working.

## 5. Unfinished Business

### a. Director Search Update

- i. Presented by Search Committee

Mr. Bencaz states that the committee will meet on Wednesday May 24, 2023 and decide how to review and evaluate the five applicants. Then a recommendation will be made and be brought to the board.

Motion to accept the Unfinished Business made by Ms. Smith and seconded by Ms. deGeneres

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

## 6. New Business

### a. Managed IT Solutions

- i. Presented by Michelle Parrish and Misty Thomas

Ms. Parrish introduces Misty Thomas as the Head of IT and states that there needs to be restructure of the IT department. She goes on to speak about the current managed IT system and its lacking capabilities that were provided to the library system. She then asks the board for approval of a new system to help provide services that are needed for our current IT department.

There is discussion from Mr. Davis who questions the need for an IT company and a Head of IT position. Ms. Parrish states that this setup was already in place from the former administration, we are simply changing companies. There is then discussion on cost of the service with the total being \$13,600 per month and after 1 year will be turned over to the Head of IT who will then have all the capable knowledge needed to move forward.

Motion to change to a new IT made by Ms. deGeneres and seconded by Ms. Anderson

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Anderson, Neal, Smith

Nays: Davis

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

**b. Discussion of the Livingston Parish Millage Renewal Date**

i. Presented by Michelle Parrish

Ms. Parrish states that the millage renewal is due and up for a vote by 2024. She spoke to Mr. Jim Ryan and said that the council had suggested that the renewal go out in the November 2023 election. She states that if the board decides on a November election then there is only a quorum of 4 needed to approve and a resolution is needed before Friday May 26, 2023 so it can be sent to the Legislative Auditor. All that can be done currently is just a discussion on the date, then they can move forward with a resolution as it's needed submittal to the Legislative Auditor before June 1, 2023.

Ms. Anderson asks for the pros and cons, to which Ms. Parrish states that going out early in November means it's a bigger election and more items on the ballot. She then states that this is just a renewal, it's not a new tax. If it does not pass then we would have to wait and be on the next November election. There has to be a 6-month waiting period before it is put back onto a ballot. She states this does have to be passed and on the desk of Jeff Taylor by August 2025 in order to be on the tax roll.

Ms. Anderson then asks what would happen if it does not pass. Ms. Parrish then states that if it does not pass, then services would have to be cut and buildings would eventually be shut down as this is where the library receives its funding.

Motion to proceed with November election millage proposals made by Ms. deGeneres and seconded by Ms. Anderson

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

**c. Suspension of Sunday hours at the Denham Springs-Walker Branch**

i. Presented by Michelle Parrish

Ms. Parrish states that there are quite a few man hours down at the Denham Springs-Walker Branch, and across the other branches, so moving staff to help with coverage is not an option. Ms. Parrish asks the board to keep the Denham Springs-Walker Branch closed on Sunday's at least through the Summer, due to the influx of the Summer Reading Program, and then re-evaluate after Summer is over perhaps in September. Denham Springs-Walker is the only branch open on Sunday's and most foot

traffic was for computer usage and there is no way to close off just the computer lab area from the rest of the branch. Ms. Parrish then states that all branches have parking lot Wi-Fi available and all branches are open on Saturday as well. The board discusses having the branch closed on Sunday until the September board meeting for re-evaluation.

Motion to close the Denham Springs-Walker Branch on Sunday until September made by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Smith.

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

**d. Adding and Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Board of Control Meetings**

i. Presented by Larry Davis

Mr. Davis states that our community is a community of prayer and having an invocation and pledge before a meeting would set the tone for their day. Mr. Davis goes on to say that *“As representatives of this community, it’s important that the library continues to function with the ideals that matter to the community.”*

There is discussion between Ms. deGeneres, Ms. Anderson, and Mr. Davis regarding invocation at school events. Someone from the audience then suggests perhaps including a moment of silence. There is then discussion amongst the crowd and various board members. Ms. Anderson then states that a moment of silence, as a library, would respect all peoples equally.

Motion to amend and change prayer to a moment of silence made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Ms. Anderson

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

Motion to have a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance before each meeting made by Ms. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Smith

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

**e. Creation of an Online Book Challenge Form**

- i. Presented by Larry Davis

Mr. Davis discusses the book challenge form and the need for the taxpayer to feel as though their needs are being met. He then states that since it is already in place, he is fine with skipping this item.

**f. Increasing Board of Control Meetings to Every Month**

- i. Presented by Larry Davis

Mr. Davis states that the board needs to be more accessible to address issues as they arise, perhaps every month. There is then discussion amongst the board on various concerns about having the meetings every month.

Motion made by Mr. Davis to change the board meeting from every other month to every month. There is no second.

The motion dies.

**g. Changing the Board of Control Meeting Time from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm**

- i. Presented by Larry Davis

Mr. Davis states he is bringing this to board approval to give people enough time to attend the meetings and/or make it on time. Mr. Bencaz states that he is fine with this, however, it is going against policy and the board would need to change the policy to reflect this, if passed.

Motion to change the policy to move the board meetings from 5 to 6 pm made by Mr. Davis and seconded by Ms. deGeneres

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

**h. Auditing all Library Collections for Materials not in line with the Louisiana Statute RS 14:81:1 Subsection E: Regarding sexual exploitation of minors**

i. Presented by Larry Davis

Mr. Davis states that he sent a letter to the Parish Council and had 5 councilmen to approve the adoption of auditing all Livingston Parish Libraries to make sure that *“no child pornography and no sexually explicit materials are in our libraries as it gives in state statute and as it is in state law.”*

Make a motion to begin an audit of all libraries for materials that are not in line with the state statute listed concerning sexual exploitation in regards to children

Mr. Bencaz then interjects that he’s not clear on the issue at hand and if this is meant to go through the entire collection. Mr. Davis states that is exactly right and if we do not go through the collection, then the state will. Also, if anything is challenged and found on the shelves then everyone who votes to keep those things in line are liable to jail.

Mr. Bencaz then poses the question as to what this means for the library system as whole in regards to implementation. Ms. Parrish states that it means having staff members sit and read through over 300,000 items and Ms. Anderson states that these items are already classified. Ms. Parrish then states that there is a form available to submit if a patron deems an item is not classified properly.

Mr. Bencaz then re-states the previous motion made by Mr. Davis. There is no second.

The motion dies.

**i. Adding Best Practices as outlined in SB7 by Senator Heather Cloud**

i. Presented by Larry Davis

Mr. Davis states that the language that is in this bill goes into what a classification of what sexually explicit material is. This gives a definition of what sexual exploitation means and the guidance of how to move forward for the library in those cases.

Discussion amongst the board is made on what this entails exactly.

Motion made to accept SB7 by Senator Heather Cloud. There is no second.

The motion dies.

**j. Implementing Livingston Cultural Heritage Months at library branches honoring first responders, law enforcement, teachers and local businesses**

- i. Law Enforcement Appreciation Day – January 9
  - ii. Teacher Appreciation Day – May 9
  - iii. Small Business Appreciation Day – May 10
  - iv. American Appreciation Day – July 4
  - v. Pastor Appreciation Day – October 8
  - vi. First Responder Appreciation Day – October 28
  - vii. Veterans Appreciation Day – November 11
1. Presented by Larry Davis

Mr. Davis spoke on introducing these into the library as perhaps additional programs honoring those listed above, to be in connection with our community. He goes on to state that this would be a day to perhaps highlight authors who have written books in response to law enforcement, pastors, or small businesses. To showcase and highlight these individuals throughout the year.

Ms. Smith commented on the fact that the library already has certain programs in place to highlight these individuals, such as Community Heroes Day, and Teacher Takeaway. Mr. Davis goes on to say that having these days implemented would give the library the opportunity to highlight a broader aspect of the community through additional programs.

At this time, Mr. Gerald McMorris, Livingston Parish Councilman, steps up and asks that Mr. Davis respect the ladies on the board and let their voices be heard as well.

Ms. Smith then states that it takes a lot of time to create a program as far as budget, attendees, and staff needed to man programs. She goes on to say that implementing some of these dates would be duplicated programs already provided by the library at this time.

Ms. Graham then states that if implemented these days would become policy, events/programs that would have to happen versus our program directors to implement whatever programs that are already lined up.

Ms. Parrish then states that the library already has programs every month geared towards the community with enriching experiences, for example Help your Library Grow, where the library discusses gardening and community togetherness.

Ms. Graham asks if there is a motion made and Mr. Davis states, there is no motion.



**k. Surplus Inventory: Disposal of Items**

i. Presented by Dustin Cotton

Mr. Cotton, Interim Assistant Director, brings to the board a plethora of surplus materials listed for disposal and to auction.

Motion made to dispose of the items as presented on the surplus inventory list, seconded by Ms. Smith

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

**I. Bank Designees: Additions**

Ms. Parrish gives written resolution to Mr. Bencaz to read and add Dustin Cotton, Interim Assistant Director, as Bank Designee.

Motion made to adopt resolution as presented by Mr. Bencaz, seconded by Ms. Anderson

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Anderson, Davis, Neal, Smith

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

**7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Bencaz at 6:31pm.