



Livingston Parish Library Board of Control
Special Meeting, June 23, 2023

Minutes

The Livingston Parish Board of Control met in a special session on June 23, 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 5:58 p.m.

2. Moment of Silence

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

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance is said by all those in attendance.

4. Roll Call

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

Absent: Layton Ricks

Also Present: Michelle Parrish (Interim Director)

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

Jonathan Perrin, Livingston Parish resident, spoke on his first library experience at the Watson library when it was housed in what is now the Walgreens location. He states that he is showing his support Michelle Parrish and Dustin Cotton for Director and Assistant Director. He states *“I don’t think you’re going to find two more qualified responsible people to run the library system.”*

Danielle Durr, Branch Manger of the Watson Branch of the Livingston Parish Library, read a letter that the staff of the Watson Branch drafted to be presented to the Board of

Control. This letter stated the support of Michelle Parrish as Director of the system and was signed by all staff of that branch.

Garry Talbert, Livingston Parish Councilman – Watson area- District 2, submitted a letter to the Board of Control in support of Michelle Parrish being the new Director of the library system. He states that working her way up through the system and having the support of the staff behind her is very important. He then goes on to say that he inadvertently caused some of the turmoil behind the scenes against the library and states that Ms. Parrish would be a great asset if she was made Director.

Ellen Albert, employee of Livingston Parish Library and has worked with Michelle at the Main Branch. She states that no matter the issue at hand, Michelle handles them with grace and is effective in all situations. She has made the staff work well together as a team and the whole system works with her and for her in every capacity that they can.

6. New Business

a. Recommendation and Appointment of the Livingston Parish Library Director

i. Presented by Ronnie Bencaz, Board President

Mr. Bencaz speaks on process of electing and appointing a new Director. Stating that the committee interviewed four candidates, reduced it down to two, and selected one.

Mr. Bencaz then speaks on four items: Salary, Time of Employment, Goals, and the Contract. He then suggests an open discussion on these and that the board needs to “*come to a conclusion*” on these items. He then suggests salary stay at Step 14 and then in January, during the six-month evaluation, a discussion of a raise may be introduced at that time. In July of 2024, another evaluation will then put her on the yearly schedule and they would take the schedule from there. He then asks if there is any discussion from the board.

Mr. Larry Davis then reads a statement where he states that he has studied the library system for six months and has learned some of its strength and weaknesses. He then states that the search for director provided three strong candidates who provided wisdom and knowledge. He states the interviews were over five hours long and also states that Ms. Parrish does not have enough experience to be director. He then states that the other three candidates were together more qualified to run this system than Ms. Parrish alone. He also states that hiring Ms. Parrish is part of the “*good old boy policy*” and ultimately his vote is against promoting her to Director of the Livingston Parish Library.

Mr. Ronnie then brings the topic back to the issue at hand, the salary of the director.

b. Salary of Director

Motion to start at Step 14 on the schedule with a possible raise at the first board meeting in January, after evaluation, and follow the schedule thereafter made by Francine Smith and seconded by Kathy deGeneres

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

Nays: Davis

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

c. Time of Employment

Motion to accept until the first board meeting in January 2024, after a good evaluation in January 2024 until the first board regular meeting in July 2024, after a good evaluation in July 2024 until July 2025, and annually thereafter made by Francine Smith and seconded by Melissa Anderson

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

Nays: Davis

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

d. Goals

Mr. Ronnie asks if anyone would like the job description in the Policy Manual read aloud. He states that would be the goals set forth for the director.

Motion made to accept the job description as per the Policy Manual made by Wendi Neal and seconded by Melissa Anderson

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

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

e. Contract

Mr. Bencaz states that the fourth item is the contract. He states that the system has never had a signed contract, that they have always gone by the policy that the minutes of this meeting is the contract.

Motion that the minutes of this meeting be the contract for our new Director made by Melissa Anderson and seconded by Francine Smith

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

Nays: Davis

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

f. Voting for Library Director

Mr. Bencaz states that per the committee, with one objection, that there be a vote on Michelle Parrish as the new Director, subject to the timelines that were previously approved.

Motion that Michelle Parrish be voted in as the next Director subject to the timelines in the agenda made by Francine Smith and seconded by Ivy Graham

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

Nays: Davis

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried

Mr. Bencaz then presents Michelle Parrish as the new Director of Livingston Parish Library

Ms. Parrish then reads a statement thanking the Library Board of Control for their vote of confidence and voices her goals for the future of the Livingston Parish Library system.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Bencaz adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.