



Livingston Parish Library Board of Control
Regular Meeting, July 16, 2024

Minutes

The Livingston Parish Board of Control met in a regular session on July 16, 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 prayer, led by board member Larry Davis.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance is said by those in attendance.

4. Roll Call

Present: Ronnie Bencaz, Ivy Graham, Kathy deGeneres, Dewanna Christian, Larry Davis, Francine Smith, Abby Crosby, and Steve Bernard

Absent: Wendi Neal

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

5. Approval of Minutes

MOTION to waive reading of minutes from the last meeting made by Ivy Graham, seconded by Steve Bernard

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Davis, Smith, Crosby, Bernard

Nays:

Absent: Neal

Abstain: Christian

The motion carried.

At this time, David Gray, Public Information Officer, explained the process of the new color-coded comment card system procedure.

Mr. Steve Bernard took this time to thank former board member Melissa Anderson for her years of service.

Library Director, Michelle Parrish, introduced new board member Dewanna Christian.

6. Public Comments on Agenda Items

No public comments at this time.

7. Presentations

a. An introduction and donation of “Rescued by Grace” by Mrs. Pamela Evans White, local author.

Mr. Larry Davis, board member, introduces Mrs. Pamela Evans White. Mrs. White is donating five books to the library system. She spoke on the theme of *Empowering Kingdom Growth* or EKG and how we need to keep the heartbeat strong in church and community and educate through empowerment. She then goes on to share her life experiences, parental loss, child loss, and loss of her home. Her main initiative is a faith-based nonprofit that houses a free conference to help those dealing with loss. For more information, please visit her website at www.weareEKG.com

8. 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 they will go over the 2025 budget in November.

b. SRP Statistics for May-June 2024

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board that we are on pace to have a record-setting year. We have already surpassed last year's registrants by over 300, and we are up 15% to set an all-time record.

c. Reminder about Strategic Planning Community Meetings

Presented by Michelle Parrish, Director

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board of upcoming meetings on July 23 at the Albany-Springfield Branch, and the last one being on August 5 at the Denham Springs-Walker branch. The last meeting will be live-streamed and these meetings are from 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm.

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.

9. Parish Attorney's Report

- a. Opinion about Relocating Books to a "Parenting Assistance" or "Parenting" collection on the adult side of the library
 - 1. Presented by Brad Cascio

Mr. Cascio sent a letter to board members stating that the Supreme Court ruled in multiple cases that *"Any type of relocation of a book is viewed and treated the same way as a removal. So the same strict scrutiny is going to apply."* He then stated that they would look for compelling government interest and looking for motivation. If the books are relocated, it is best to put them where they belong, and if someone is looking for a type of book, they will naturally find it in that section. In his opinion, unless there are explicit materials, you cannot put an age restriction on a book simply because it goes against your personal beliefs. He also suggested different types of sections to create, if not already created. He then states, *"I would just warn you to be careful when relocating a book. Like I said, it's going to be looked at the motivation for relocating it, where you're relocating it, and it's going to be looked at just as tightly and just as closely as if you took it off the shelves completely."*

Mr. Davis informs everyone that he, Ms. Parrish, and Mr. Dustin Cotton all visited the East Baton Rouge Parish Library and toured the Goodwood branch. He then speaks on questions that were brought up at the last meeting regarding where and how items would be accessed. He states that in the next agenda item, he proposes a parenting shelf in a particular location, depending on where staff could best create the section.

Ms. Parrish then explains the process of changing a shelf location and how items are categorized in the library. She then discusses the logistics of if the board votes for a parenting shelf and where it would be located. She also informs the board that EBR's parenting shelf covers various topics associated with parenting, such as grief and potty training, and that it doesn't contain a specific genre of books.

Mr. Cascio asked if a patron used the card catalog to search for an item. Would it show the shelf location? Mrs. Julia Falcon, Assistant Director of Support Services, said it would show the collection and the shelf location. She stated that the shelf location would show a "parenting shelf" and a sticker on the outer spine showing that these items are to be housed together.

The board then discussed where this shelf would be located. Ms. Parrish stated that, for example, at the Denham Springs-Walker branch, the location could perhaps be adjacent to the circulation desk. However, managers would have to decide what works best for their branches, given that some branches have less space to work with regarding shifting items. **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.**

Ronnie Bencaz, Board President, calls a short recess at 6:46 pm.

Mr. Bencaz resumes the meeting at 6:48 pm.

There is a public comment from Cathleen Hyde stating the confusion about jumping from agenda topics and how those in attendance would like clarification on which agenda item is currently being discussed. She then has a question regarding options for possibly challenging an item's location. Ms. Parrish then states that she would need clarification from other libraries on how they've handled these situations, given that this shelf is relatively new and not many libraries have implemented them.

10. New Business

- a. Discussion & Resolution: Create a "Parents Shelf" location for books from youth collections to assist parents with sensitive topics. This shelf location will be outside of the youth and adult shelves.
 - i. Presented by Larry Davis Board Member

This item was previously discussed along with agenda item 9a, so Mr. Davis states that public comments may be read.

Twenty-four public speaking cards were submitted on this agenda item: 12 in support and 12 in opposition; **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.**

3 in support and would like to speak:

Roger Wilder, Logan Vecellio, Bridgette Rushing Gilbert

6 in support but do not wish to speak:

Spencer Authement, Fischer Holden, Gus Holden, Kirstie Holden, Cody Holden, and Jamey Sandefur

2 in support and will provide information if requested:

Robert A. Seals and Jennifer Holden

1 in support, Summer Smith

5 in opposition and would like to speak:

Elizabeth Doolittle, Amanda Jones, Jordan Gonzalez, Clark Forrest, and Marla Elsea

7 in opposition but do not wish to speak:

Mandy Jo Pickering, Vicki Turner, Tim Elsea, Cathleen Hyde, Lori Callais, Lynda Ingram, and Niki Thornton

There was then a discussion amongst the board on parenting advice topics. **You can find more detailed information by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

MOTION to accept the resolution as written made by Larry Davis, seconded by Abby Crosby

SUBSTITUTE MOTION to create the parenting shelf as long as it's within and accessible from the children's section made by Francine Smith

Mr. Bencaz asks Mr. Cascio for a legal perspective, to which Mrs. Cascio responds, *"Again, this will be case by case, book by book, but if you have a parenting shelf and these are books that are coming out of the children's section and onto the parenting shelf, I think it would be more narrowly tailored to have the parenting shelf within the*

children's section or within the curtilage of the children's section so it's still accessible if someone were to be looking for it."

The board then discussed the shelf's location in the children's section, and Mr. Davis stated, *"The sensitive topics need to be kept out of the Adult section, out of the Children's section. They need to have their own shelf."*

Mr. Cascio then states, *"... is this book for a child? Yeah. I mean, it was made for a child to read. So to put this on a shelf, you know, not near the children's section is gonna be a problem down the road if someone claims their First Amendment rights have been violated."*

Ms. Francine Smith, a board member, then stated that her substitute motion would help to alleviate some legal issues.

Once again, the board discussed where exactly to place the shelf. **You can find more detailed information by listening to the posted audio recording of the meeting or watching the posted video link to our YouTube channel.**

Ms. Smith then asked if her substitute motion could be voted upon. The substitute motion was seconded by Kathy deGeneres.

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Smith, Bernard

Nays: Christian, Davis, Crosby

Absent: Neal

Abstain:

The substitute motion carried.

10. New Business

- b. Discussion & Resolution: Whether "I'm Not a Girl" by Maddox Lyons & Jessica Verdi meets the criteria outlined in LA R.S. 25:225C(2)(d)(ii) and the definition provided in LA R.S. 25:225B(4) as claimed by a complainant who submitted a Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials Form (3-309a) and whether to move this material to another collection based on this challenge.
 - i. Presented by Ronnie Bencaz, Board President

Ronnie Bencaz, Board President, calls a short recess at 7:39 pm.

Mr. Bencaz resumes the meeting at 7:41 pm.

The board discusses whether the book meets the criteria listed in agenda item 10b. Mr. Davis states that he thinks it does, based on the resources in the back. He then references Elizabeth Doolittle's earlier testimony, stating he believes she's still "Affected by what she stumbled upon as a young child," to which she vocally announces, "*That is offensive, sir. What am I affected by?*" The board then continues with its discussion.

Ms. Ivy Graham, board vice-president, states that she did not find anything that meets the criteria of the statute, that there is nothing sexually explicit about the book being discussed.

Ms. Kathy deGeneres states that she could not find anything objectionable about this book.

Ms. Francine Smith asks if the book is voted upon not to contain sexually explicit material, could it still be moved to the parenting shelf at a later time? Ms. Parrish responded that yes, it could be moved to the parenting shelf without a problem.

Ms. Abby Crosby then discusses the references in the back of the book and how they lead to websites containing explicit content. The resources found in the back of the book are discussed amongst the board. Mr. Davis then points out that this particular title is considered an autobiography based on the fact that the author is transgender. Mr. Davis asks how the book got put into the system, and Ms. Parrish responds that there is only one copy in the system and that "when we order a picture book for our system, we order five copies so that they go to each branch." She states, "Because it's only one copy, it usually means that it was requested." Ms. Crosby then asks about the weeding processes. Ms. Parrish states that if it meets specific criteria, an item will be weeded; **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 explains the process of the Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Library Material Form and how the board usually does not discuss each challenge. In this case, a claim of sexually explicit material was submitted, which then went directly to the board for discussion and determination, based on the law, whether it contained sexually explicit material. Since we now have a parenting shelf, it would be moved to that location. However, if a parenting shelf didn't exist and the board deemed it sexually explicit, it would be transferred to the Adult parenting section.

Twenty-five public speaking cards were submitted on this agenda item and are listed below; **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.**

5 in support and would like to speak:

Kirstie Holden, Rebecca Roberts, Amanda Robert, Roger Wilder, Gus Holden, and Logan Vecellio

1 in support but do not wish to speak; Fischer Holden

9 in opposition and would like to speak:

Lori Callais, Mary Loofbourrow, Dani Gotti, Jennifer Holden, Jordan Gonzalez, Amanda Jones, Jade Amethyst, Cathleen Hyde, and Marla Elsea

7 in opposition but do not wish to speak:

Niki Thornton, Manning Bergeron, Vicki Turner, Lynda Ingram, Tim Elsea, and Mandy Jo Pickering,

1 in opposition and will provide information if requested; Sarah Sanders

1 in opposition, Summer Smith

1 in neutral and would like to speak to provide unbiased information; Kathi Logan.

MOTION that the book is sexually explicit made by Abby Crosby, seconded by Larry Davis

Yeas: Christian, Davis, Crosby

Nays: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Smith, Bernard

Absent: Neal

Abstain:

The motion failed.

10. New Business

c. Discussion of Resolution: Giving all Livingston Parish Library employees an across-the-board pay raise of \$1 per hour to help keep their wages in pace with inflation.

i. Presented by Francine Smith, Board Member

Ms. Francine Smith spoke to the board and stated that, due to rising costs and inflation, she believes pay should be increased by \$1 per hour across the board. She also noted that the library system is losing employees to other systems with better pay. Ms. Graham asked if this would be a *“one-time thing, and they would still be subjected to their merit and cost-of-living raises?”* Ms. Smith responded, *“Yes.”*

Mr. Davis then responds that he is “... *all for it, but the middle class is suffering right now, and several people are making cuts in different things. This is not the time.*”

Ms. Crosby then stated that this should be discussed after the millage meeting to see where the library stands and how much money is budgeted. She then stated that she would like to table this until then.

MOTION to give a one-time, one-dollar raise made by Francine Smith

SUBSTITUTE MOTION to table this discussion until after the millage meeting made by Abby Crosby, seconded by Dewanna Christian

Eleven public speaking cards were submitted on this agenda item and are listed below; **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.**

1 in support and would like to speak; Jordan Gonzalez

9 in support but do not wish to speak; Mandy Jo Pickering, Vicki Turner, Amanda Jones, Lynda Ingram, Lori Callais, Niki Thornton, Cathleen Hyde, Marla Elsea, and Tim Elsea

1 in opposition and would like to speak; Rebecca Roberts

The board then voted on the substitute motion previously made by Ms. Crosby

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Christian, Davis, Crosby, Bernard

Nays: Smith

Absent: Neal

Abstain:

The substitute motion carried.

10. New Business

d. Discussion & Approval: Surplus Items for Disposal

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

Mr. Cotton thanked all of the board members for their service, the public for their attendance and comments, Mr. Cascio for his attendance, and the security detail.

Mr. Cotton brings two items to the board for surplus; **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 scrap items made by Abby Crosby, seconded by Larry Davis

Yeas: Bencaz, Graham, deGeneres, Christian, Davis, Smith, Crosby, Bernard

Nays:

Absent: Neal

Abstain:

The motion carried.

11. Adjournment

Mr. Bencaz adjourned the meeting at 9:04 p.m.