



Livingston Parish Library Board of Control
Regular Meeting September 17, 2024

Minutes

The Livingston Parish Board of Control met in a regular session on September 17, 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 6:03 p.m.

2. Moment of Silence

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

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance is said by those in attendance.

4. Roll Call

Present: Summer Smith, DeWanna Christian, Steve Bernard, Abby Crosby, Larry Davis, Kathy deGeneres, Shalisha Labat, Francine Smith, Ronnie Bencaz

Absent:

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 Francine Smith, seconded by Abby Crosby

Yeas: Christian, Bernard, Crosby, Davis, deGeneres, Labat, F. Smith, Bencaz

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain: S. Smith

The motion carried.

6. Public Comments on Agenda Items

No public comments at this time.

7. Presentations

- a. Introducing Jacki Lorio, Department of Children and Family Services
 - i. Presented by Steve Bernard, Board Member

Mr. Bernard informs the board that the presenter could not attend, which will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

- b. 2023 Legislative Audit for the Livingston Parish Library
 - i. Presented by Margaret Pritchard, Baxley & Associates

Ms. Pritchard, a CPA with Baxley & Associates, provides a detailed report on the 2022-2023 year. In her report, she states that the library received the highest level of opinion and that the financial statements were true and fair. No audit findings were found; **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.**

Abby Crosby, a board member, asked if someone from the state or another firm could come in and teach a class on sexual harassment and other necessary information to the board. Deanna Parrish, Director, states that she can look into this.

- c. Millage Presentation on the Health Unit and Jail **[REMOVED by ADDENDUM]**
 - i. Presented by Ricky Goff, Parish Council Member

8. Director's Report – presented by Michelle Parrish, Director

- a. Financial Update
 - i. Michelle Parrish, Director, informed the board of the budget through August 31 and that we are on track and everything is

within the margin of error. She also states that the library is within 69% of the budget. She says the most significant expense right now will be maintenance and utilities. She also states that the budget for the next year will be discussed at the next board meeting in November.

The board has questions about the current millage and how it will affect the budget; **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.**

b. SRP Statistics

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board of various statistics regarding this year's Summer Reading Program. She stated this was *“the biggest Summer Reading Program to date”*. **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.**

c. Reminder about Book Festival, November 9

Presented by Michelle Parrish, Director

- i. Ms. Parrish informed the board of upcoming performers for this year's Book Festival. She informs the board of a seed library at all branches implemented with the Master Gardeners. Also, the partnership with the State Library and the Louisiana State Parks Department was introduced.

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. New Business

a. Officer Election: Election of a Board Chair

- i. Presented by Larry Davis, Board Member

Ms. Parrish states that Mr. Davis has chosen not to present agenda item a.

- b. Officer Election: Livingston Parish Board Vice President – to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the term.

i. Presented by Ronnie Bencaz, Board President

Mr. Ronnie Bencaz informs the board of the current vacancy in the Vice President position and asks for nominations to be discussed and voted on.

DeWanna Christian, a board member, asks a question about voting on the President at the next meeting. Mr. Bencaz's term expires January 2025; however, a new voting election will occur at the November 2024 meeting. Ms. Christian asked if we could postpone voting for Vice President until then so everyone could have the same term. Mr. Brad Cascio, Parish Attorney, states that the library board policy states that if there is a vacancy in any position, that vacancy should be filled at the next meeting. Mr. Cascio reiterates that this is just filling the current term for the remainder of the 2024 year. When the President is voted in at the next meeting in November, a Vice President for the new term will also be voted upon.

At this time, the floor was opened up for nominations for Vice President.

Francine Smith nominated Steve Bernard, and Larry Davis nominated Abby Crosby.

A vote was taken for Mr. Bernard, as he was the first nominee.

Yeas: Bernard, deGeneres, Labat, F. Smith, Bencaz

Nays: S. Smith, Christian, Crosby, Davis

Absent:

Abstain:

A 5 to 4 vote occurs, and Steve Bernard is installed as Vice President for the remaining 2024 year.

c. Discussion & Resolution: Creating "@mylpl.info" email address for all Board of Control members to use in the course of their duties.

i. Presented by Steve Bernard, Board Member

Mr. Bernard suggests using library-issued emails for corresponding purposes with the board. He states that the parish council has implemented this, and it might be easier than creating separate personal emails.

The board discusses the idea of creating the address, with some stating they've already done so with separate emails, and the idea is irrelevant.

3 comment cards were submitted on this agenda item: all 3 in support.

3 present and do not wish to speak:

Mandy Pickering, Tim Elsea, Marla Elsea

Ms. Parrish asks Mr. Cascio if everyone has to agree on this item. Mr. Cascio states that not everyone has to agree to create the accounts, but it would be nice for uniformity.

The board then discussed various training associated with their positions. **You can find more detailed information by listening to the audio recording of the meeting or watching the video link to our YouTube channel.**

MOTION to create email addresses, but it can be optional made by Steve Bernard, seconded by Francine Smith

[A vote was taken at this time. However, a few board members were unsure of the motion and asked that their votes be redacted. The new vote on the motion is listed below.]

Yeas: S. Smith, Christian, Bernard, Crosby, Davis, deGeneres, Labat, F. Smith, Bencaz

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

- d. Discussion & Adoption: Livingston Parish Library Strategic Plan for 2025-2029
 - i. Presented by David Gray, Public Information Officer

David Gray, the library's Public Information Officer, presented to the board a slideshow of its Strategic Plan for 2025-2029 and the goals that the library would like to accomplish in the future. This plan was based on ideas submitted via polls, community meetings, and a strategic planning committee comprising library staff and board members. Mr. Gray stated

that the mantra for the library going forward is CDE, which stands for Connect, Discover, and Enrich.

Mr. Gray stated that the poll given to registered voters in Livingston Parish resulted in 86% favorable of the library vs 8% unfavorable, based on the sample size. According to the responses, utilizing the library's space makes up a majority of why people attend the library, whether that's study rooms, programs, or using wi-fi. The top choice was maintaining branches and creating small satellite branches to address the parish's growth. Mr. Gray also informed the board of the 6 Town Hall meetings where questions from the public were addressed.

Mr. Gray then provides various statistics based on polls taken. The board then discusses Bookmobile services and what is needed for future endeavors. **You can find more detailed information by listening to the audio recording of the meeting or watching the video link to our YouTube channel.**

Mr. Gray then discusses branch maintenance and what is needed regarding HVAC systems, furniture upgrades, and landscaping. He mentions the outdoor courtyard at the Denham Springs-Walker Branch and how some of the other branches also have useable outdoor space. He gives a few examples, one being a pavilion at the Main Branch that could be used to help house events such as the Book Festival or outdoor story times.

Mr. Larry Davis, a board member, interjects to ask questions regarding what can be purchased based on the taxpayers' needs. He states that maintaining branches is the most important thing, and we do not need additional Bookmobiles, walking trails, etc.

There is an in-depth discussion amongst board members. Mr. Gray and Ms. Parrish then discuss the five-year strategic plan and the library's future in depth. Mr. Gray then explains in detail how the demographic sample size for the poll was conducted.

Ms. Parrish answers questions and explains outdoor space utilization at the South Branch. **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.**

Mr. Gray then discusses possibly adding study rooms to the Albany-Springfield and South Branches, as they are the only branches without dedicated study rooms.

1 comment card was submitted in support of this agenda item.

Cathleen Hyde

MOTION to accept the strategic plan made by Francine Smith

SUBSTITUTE MOTION to table until November to get further advice or input from constituents made by Larry Davis, seconded by Abby Crosby

Yeas: S. Smith, Christian, Bernard, Crosby, Davis, deGeneres, Labat, F. Smith, Bencaz

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried. The strategic plan will be tabled until November's meeting.

- e. Discussion & Adoption: Policy Change – to add Code: 2-227, Cybersecurity Training, to the Operation of the Library section of the Livingston Parish Library Policy Manual
 - i. Presented by Dustin Cotton, Assistant Director of Branch Services

Mr. Cotton informs the board that Cybersecurity training has already been in place for two years. This is to encapsulate it in the policy. This is similar to ethics and sexual harassment training, based on the legislative auditors' recommendation.

MOTION to accept the policy made by Abby Crosby, seconded by Larry Davis

Yeas: S. Smith, Christian, Bernard, Crosby, Davis, deGeneres, Labat, F. Smith, Bencaz

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 brings a few 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 accept made by Abby Crosby, seconded by Shalisha Labat

Yeas: S. Smith, Christian, Bernard, Crosby, Davis, deGeneres, Labat, F. Smith, Bencaz

Nays:

Absent:

Abstain:

The motion carried.

- g. A-1: Discussion & Resolution: Create a Parenting 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 **[ADDED by ADDENDUM]**

Mr. Davis brings the original idea of having a parenting shelf out of the children's area to the board. He discusses that the public has welcomed the parenting shelf; he just feels it should be outside the children's area. Ms. Francine Smith discusses moving the shelf higher if it's currently within eye level of children. Mr. Davis responds, "*It needs to come out of the children's section.*" Ms. Shalisha Labat stated that she went to every branch, and the shelves were located next to the juvenile librarian's desk. Mr. Davis states that the location needs to be across from the main circulation desk so parents can view their child fully when they walk in.

There is a lengthy discussion amongst the board regarding this agenda item; **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.**

10 comment cards were submitted

3 in opposition would not like to speak Elise LeBlanc, Tim Elsea, and Cathleen Hyde

6 in opposition, would like to speak Mandy Pickering, Marla Elsea, Clark Forrest, Trey Cowell, Jordan Gonzalez, and Ricky Goff

1 in support, would like to speak Amy Bullock

Ms. Pickering supports the parenting shelf and its curated items. However, she opposes moving it and believes it should stay inside the children's section.

Mr. Davis then states that he does not understand why we are fighting so hard to keep sensitive topics in the children's section. Mr. Crosby reiterates Mr. Davis' statements that children's innocence should be protected.

Ms. Elsea states, "*Why do we fight so hard for kids' books to stay in the kids' section? Because they're kid's books.*" She states that they're not "*ruining anyone's innocence.*" The board and Ms. Elsea then discuss various lawsuits to which Mr. Davis states that "*lawsuits can be thrown around in America for any reason.*"

Mr. Forrest reminds the board that he was once a member of the Board of Control for 3 years and believes every child should have the same opportunity.

Trey Cowell states he favors Mr. Davis' agenda item, and at a bare minimum, there should be a height restriction in place.

Ms. Bullock states that she favors making a parenting shelf available to people at any location and is not opposed to having it at a certain height.

Jordan Gonzalez states that the topics on the shelf need to be covered, and books made for children should be made accessible to children.

Councilman Ricky Goff supports elevating the shelf and believes the board has the right to decide where the items should go. He states that it doesn't matter where the books are housed as long as they are elevated out of the reach of children.

Mr. Cascio states that it is a case-by-case, book-by-book decision about whether something can go on this parenting shelf. He then states, "*as long as what's on there fits there, then you're good.*"

Ms. Francine Smith then reiterates that moving a book is the same as removing a book, to which Mr. Cascio agrees. She states that she likes the idea of possibly making the shelf higher in the children's section and asks if it's possible. However, Mr. Cascio states that that might be too far from a constitutional point of view. You are still considered restricted access if the shelf is raised higher. So, depending on the item, removing it from the children's section is the same as putting the shelf too high.

Ms. Labat states that she visited branches, and the items on the parenting shelf are not on the short stacks but in the higher stacks, which are still accessible in the children's section.

Ms. Parrish then explains the shelf heights of the children's area to those unfamiliar with the short stack vs tall stack terminology.

Councilman Ricky Goff states that the word "parenting" would relate to an adult, that a parenting shelf is a defined category within that children's section, and that an adult would need to be able to reach the items.

MOTION to move the parenting location outside the youth and adult shelves made by Larry Davis, seconded by Abby Crosby

SUBSTITUTE MOTION to table until more research is done made by Francine Smith, seconded by Kathy deGeneres

Yeas: Bernard, deGeneres, Labat, F. Smith, Bencaz

Nays: S. Smith, Christian, Crosby, Davis

Absent:

Abstain:

The substitute motion carried.

10. Adjournment

Mr. Bencaz adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

** Per Mr. Cascio: The Livingston Parish Library Board of Control meeting ended whenever there was no longer a quorum of board members seated in the meeting room. Multiple board members left at approximately 8:17 pm, but no vote for adjournment was made.

