

MINUTES FOR REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL  
**MAIN LIBRARY**  
**FIRST FLOOR LARGE MEETING ROOM**  
**7711 GOODWOOD BOULEVARD**  
**BATON ROUGE, LA 70806**  
**JANUARY 21, 2021**  
**4:00 P.M.**

**AGENDA**

CALL TO ORDER – Jason Jacob, Board President (4:03 p.m.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Donald Luther, Jr., Board member

I. ROLL CALL – Rosana Sotile, Assistant to the Deputy Library Director

Jason Jacob, Board President – Present  
Candace Temple, Board Vice President – Present  
Martha Guarisco, Board Treasurer – Present  
Delores Watts – Absent  
Donald Luther, Jr. – Present  
Kathy Wascom – Present  
Nicole Allmon-Learson – Absent

*A quorum was present*

STAFF PRESENT – Spencer Watts, Library Director; Kristen Edson, Deputy Library Director; Mary Stein, Assistant Library Director; Patricia Husband, Assistant Library Director; Rhonda Pinsonat, Library Business Manager; Ronnie Pierce, Library Assistant Business Manager; Bryce Tomlin, Technical Services Coordinator; Rosana Sotile, Assistant to the Deputy Library Director; David Lewis, Network Technician I

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 19, 2020 – A motion to approve was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

III. SPECIAL ORDERS – There were no items to cover under Special Orders.

IV. REPORTS BY THE DIRECTOR

A. FINANCIAL REPORT – Rhonda Pinsonat (4:04 p.m.)

- Operating expenditures through December 31, 2020 are 82.48% of the operating budget; although 2020 has ended, a number of expenditures are not yet posted, so both total expenditures and the corresponding percentage will increase for several more months.
- Cash collections from property taxes for 2020 are approximately 4.59% ahead of 2019; this total will also change over the next few months once fourth quarter interest earnings are posted.
- For 2021, cash collections are 3.38% behind those for 2020; while it is unusual to be behind 2020, another two or three months of revenue must be collected before determining if this will be an ongoing issue or if it only represents a temporary lag in collections.

B. SYSTEM REPORTS – Mary Stein (4:06 p.m.)

- “Around the Parish” slideshow and descriptions of Library programs.
- Circulation and programming statistics were lower for 2020; a meeting with the State Library will be held next week to better determine programming statistics due to the unique way of counting virtual programs.
- Digital Library statistical counts have increased, including databases and online learning; the Library’s public reopening on June 1, 2020 and the opening of the stacks in October 2020 helped to increase statistical counts for print and audio/visual items.
- The “Sock it to Me” promotion collected a triple amount of socks in December, compared to the previous year; other holiday promotions included Food for Fines and a blood collection drive with the Blood Bank.

- Virtual holiday programs included a children’s Nutcracker performance with the Baton Rouge Ballet and the virtual Festival of Lights downtown, where the River Center Branch Library served as a hosting station for production crews; Outreach Services coordinated an in-person event with the Grinch visiting the B.I.G. (Behavioral Intervention Group) Center.
- The River Center Branch Library also hosted production crews for the Red Stick Revelry on New Year’s Eve and the Mayor’s Inauguration on January 2, 2021.
- Other holiday programming included Reading Wonderland, hosted by Beanstack, and Theatre Baton Rouge’s streaming of *Gift of the Magi* and *Show Tunes, Greatest Hits*.
- Sylvia Weatherspoon, news anchor for WBRZ News 2, hosted an online “Christmas Storytime” event, reading 12 books from the Library’s Children’s Services throughout December.
- The Library co-sponsored the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Business Forum with the Baton Rouge Business Report on January 11, 2021, with guest speaker Steve Forbes; next month the speaker will be John Maxwell; in March, the speaker will be Renee Mauborgne, author of *Blue Ocean Strategy*.
- The “Get Organized” five-part series with Alyssa Trosclair will continue in February; registration is through the online calendar; will repeat on Tuesdays later this spring.
- The “Garden Discoveries” continues to be a hybrid program with in-person garden talks and streaming on Facebook Live; February’s topic will be on garden gnomes.
- The Library has embarked on a new partnership with the Conscious Kids Project, which is a national organization, along with local organizations, including Line4Line, East Baton Rouge Parish School System, and Knock Knock Children’s Museum; a curated selection of 40 children’s books that celebrate diversity will be donated to over 50 schools in East Baton Rouge Parish throughout January 2021; the collaboration also includes online activities and projects to complement each book, as well as training for teachers, librarians and counselors.
- The book chosen for this year’s One Book One Community event is *The Yellow House*, by Sarah M. Broom; an info-guide with related activities is now available.
- AARP tax aide will only be available at three sites: Broadmoor Methodist Church, Bluebonnet Regional Branch Library, and Central Branch Library; VITA tax services will hold a virtual tax day; tax forms are available at library locations and online.
- Question from Kathy Wascom regarding feedback on the usage of the fourth floor of the River Center Branch Library; Mary Stein replied that there has been extremely positive feedback on the space by both the general public and those who use the space frequently.

### C. OTHER REPORTS

#### 1. MAINTENANCE AND ADDITIONAL CAPITAL PROJECTS – Kristen Edson (4:27 p.m.)

- The roof, skylights and copula were soft washed at Jones Creek Regional Library on December 22, 2020; “before” and “after” photos were shown to the Board; the vendor will also soft wash the roof and skylights at Fairwood Branch Library.
- All library locations received preventative quarterly maintenance on chillers and air handler units, as well as annual coil cleanings of the air handling units.
- At the Main Library at Goodwood, grout cleaning and sealing of tiles was completed; exterior window washing was completed at all library locations.
- Annual library branch visits will be conducted Friday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> to assess any maintenance issues.
- Recent electrical work includes replacing 8 parking lot light bulbs at Main Library; working to replace parking lot lights at Fairwood Branch Library; installation of new security lighting at the rear of Outreach Services; a leaning light pole at Bluebonnet Regional Branch Library was repaired; and building surge protection was installed at Bluebonnet Regional, Greenwell Springs Regional, Central Branch, and Baker Branch Libraries.
- At the Main Library at Goodwood, all public computers, copy machines, power outlets, exterior pedestrian lighting, elevators A, B and C, and more interior lights were added to the building’s back-up generator; will allow for normal operations if an extended power outage were to occur, without depleting the generator’s kilowattage.
- Verification of the terminations needed to run fiber optic connections on the first floor of the River Center Branch Library have been completed; public computers in that area will be returned to their original configurations.
- Evaluations are being made on the HVAC systems at all library locations to improve the air filtration systems. This analysis is partially attributable to heightened concerns related to Covid-19 and the benefits of improving filtration.

- Irrigation repairs at Jones Creek Regional Branch Library were completed December 12, 2020; also planting of 6 magnolia trees; more funds need to be added to the landscaping budget for continuation of the project with a new vendor contract; will request the Metro Council to approve the special funds that were set aside for this project.
- Pressure washing of the building at Jones Creek Regional Branch Library will be completed next week; construction debris and irrigation debris were removed from the landscaping area by the respective companies.
- The project kick-off meeting for server room upgrades at the Main Library at Goodwood was held on December 15, 2020; the crane carrying the new rooftop unit arrived on December 16<sup>th</sup>, and the ceiling grid was removed on December 19<sup>th</sup>; the wet sprinkler heads were removed last week, and the dry pipe system drawings have been received by the mechanical engineer for review.
- Window tinting was installed on January 11, 2021 in the staff lounge at the Main Library at Goodwood; provides additional protection from UV light and improves HVAC efficiency; doors for the staff lounge were ordered and should be installed before the next Board meeting; the doors provide enhanced security for the third floor.
- A kick-off meeting for repairs at Carver Branch Library was held December 11, 2020; the change order for installation of bollards in the parking lot has been processed; an automatic room divider will be installed instead of a manual divider in the meeting room.
- The boiler and chiller installations and inspections are complete at Delmont Gardens Branch Library; owner training occurred yesterday; final acceptance will be on the agenda of next week's Metro Council meeting.
- The interior patron areas of Eden Park Branch Library have been repainted with the same original color; other library branches will be assessed for repainting; the chiller was replaced and its water pumps were installed this week; a punch-list should be generated by the end of January to close out the project.

## 2. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS – Spencer Watts (4:41 p.m.)

- Mr. Watts expressed appreciation for the efforts made by Kristen Edson and Alvin Rattle, Facility Services Manager, on the generator project at the Main Library at Goodwood; Mr. Watts also explained that after much consideration on whether or not to invest in the automatic room partition at Carver Branch Library, it was decided that investing in the automatic solution was the best outcome as it can be difficult to physically move the manual partition, especially when it falls off of its tracks; we will use this as a test site to determine if the automated system reduces track maintenance issues.
- Kathy Wascom commented in regards to the work order summaries of maintenance requests throughout the Library system; she commended Kristen Edson and Facilities staff for keeping up with the work and extending the life of the library buildings, making it pleasant for patrons.
- 12 responses were received for the RFQ (Request for Qualification) for the Scotlandville Branch Library project, and 14 for the Baker Branch Library project; the Design and Selection Board met on December 21, 2020 during which the architects were selected.
- Team members from Management Partners conducted more in-depth interviews with Library management staff; working to compile a staff survey; data from the survey will help inform the next phase of the study to address issues that have been identified.
- Initiatives for the New Year: coping with the risks and impacts of the pandemic; reducing barriers to access of library materials; enhancing and improving literacy efforts and reading skills; continuing to expand resources and support for entrepreneurs, especially minority and under-served groups; increasing awareness and access for health information; and internal focus on working with the City-Parish to address staff initiatives, including compensation and addressing stress associated with the change in work week schedules.
- Library staff continue to process new student card applications.
- Regarding PCI compliance, it was discovered there are companies that help organizations move through the steps at an accelerated pace and manage compliance issues; the Library will consider engaging a company to assist.
- Library staff are still completing training for the new Intranet, migrating content and designing pages; other functions of the intranet include a statistics application for reference and programming data, as well as budget functions; the site will go “live” on January 25<sup>th</sup>; will take several months for the full transition.

- The new inventory system will also be included in the new intranet; content migration of inventory spreadsheets has begun.
- The warranty walk-through for River Center Branch Library was held January 12<sup>th</sup>; substantial issues include a second floor air handler that periodically trips, loose terrace lights, and maintenance questions for the backup batteries for the accordion security doors; smaller miscellaneous issues were also addressed.
- Other items briefly mentioned: there is still consideration for future library buildings in the south and central portions of the Parish; consideration of either renovating or building a new structure for Delmont Gardens Branch Library; and Inclusive Leadership Training for Library staff.
- Update on COVID-19: there has been concern related to surges of COVID-19 in the community and the Library continues to ensure safety; there was a brief increase in Library staff testing positive but no cross-contamination and infection rates have subsided; mask mandates are still enforced with polite intervention and secondary efforts to maintain compliance; regular announcements over the public address system in all library locations reminds patrons of the mask mandate.
- Question from Kathy Wascom regarding if there is a City-Parish mandate for wearing a mask; Spencer Watts responded that yes, masks are required for all City-Parish buildings, and the Library posts flyers and signs; the Library also provides masks for patrons who do not have one.
- Question from Kathy Wascom: Are confrontations from patrons not wanting to wear a mask lessening or not? Spencer Watts responded that confrontations have increased over the past six weeks; internal incident reports indicate that some people are angry to still have to wear a mask; Kathy Wascom asked if the upset patrons leave the Library; Spencer Watts responded that they would not be permitted to enter the building without a mask, but the Library offers other accommodations for those who cannot wear a mask.

Board President Jason Jacob asked for public comments. No public comments were made.

V. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES – There were no reports of committees.

## VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### A. UPDATE REGARDING LITIGATION RELATED TO THE RIVER CENTER BRANCH LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION PROJECT - REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE PARISH ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

THE BOARD MAY GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER IN ACCORDANCE WITH LA. R.S. 42: 17(A)(2). THIS MATTER INVOLVES PENDING LITIGATION RELATED TO THE RIVER CENTER BRANCH CONSTRUCTION PROJECT.

- A motion to go into executive session was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.** (5:09 p.m.)
- Discussion was held in the first floor large meeting room. Robert H. Abbott, III, from the Parish Attorney's office was in attendance during the discussion.
- A motion to return to open session was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.** (5:48 p.m.)
- A motion to go on record that the only item discussed during the executive session was the pending litigation related to the River Center Branch Library construction project was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.** (5:48 p.m.)

### B. UPDATE ON RENOVATION OF JONES CREEK REGIONAL BRANCH LIBRARY – Patricia Husband and Kristen Edson (5:48 p.m.)

- Several punch-list items remain, including installing a missing data port, adjusting door locks for study rooms, reinstalling sinks in work areas, extending the conduit for the exterior sign, and repairing leaks at the lobby water fountain.
- The water intrusion issue still exists at the rear exit door; a possible solution has been determined.
- A slideshow of new furniture in various areas of the library was shown to the Board.

- Question from Kathy Wascom regarding electrical and power outlets built into some pieces of the new furniture; Patricia Husband responded that electrical plug-ins and USB ports are built directly into some furniture; the meeting room tables contain outlets directly in the middle of the table.
- Six Brody tables are on site in Adult Services; it is a flexible table with space for a laptop, storage and an outlet for power.
- Shelving has been installed, as well as the laptop bar; furniture continues to be delivered at a measured pace; end panels and canopy tops should be shipped soon.

Board President Jason Jacob asked for public comments. No public comments were made.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

### A. TECHNOLOGY PLAN 2021-2023 – Kristen Edson and Bryce Tomlin (5:57 p.m.)

- Leadership team members from Computer Services conducted research into other library technology plans for goal ideas, formatting and content.
- Budget information remains from previous budget year; other information is from current projects; also incorporated results from patron survey technology questions.
- Gives a comprehensive look at what the Library currently has and what can be done moving forward; using a programmatic approach compared to the previous document.
- First planning session for the year already took place; will have quarterly check-ins to review the areas listed in the plan, and possibly add more goals for the next several years.
- Spencer Watts commented that it will be a living document, adapting new goals and ideas each year.
- Kristen Edson responded that there will be a proactive approach, instead of reactive.

### B. UPDATE ON SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY – Spencer Watts (6:02 p.m.)

- An initial meeting was held in November to discuss massing and lot lay-out; now moving into conceptual development; preliminary concept work and two design options were discussed in the December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- The Library presented concerns about the proposed designs: materials being used, rooflines and drainage, aesthetic and architectural issues, and wayfinding and engagement.
- The design team responded professionally and addressed the concerns at yesterday's meeting; once a design concept is agreed upon, it will be presented to the TND for review.
- Question from Kathy Wascom regarding if the design team needs more creative spirit with the designs; Spencer Watts responded that the design team is working well, and the Library had some different ideas that adjusted elements of the original proposed design; the team is responding cooperatively and professionally to concerns and suggestions.
- Question from Kathy Wascom regarding if there is a proposed conduit for pedestrians to walk from Glasgow Middle School to the new library and if the ditches will be enclosed; Spencer Watts responded that it is not the Library's decision but progress is being made.

### C. VOTE TO ELECT OFFICERS FOR THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL FOR 2021 – Jason Jacob (6:10 p.m.)

- Donald Luther, Jr. made a motion to nominate the re-election of Jason Jacob for Library Board President, Candace Temple for Library Board Vice-President, and Martha Guarisco for Library Board Treasurer; the motion was seconded by Kathy Wascom. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

### D. VOTE TO SEND COMMENTS TO CITY-PARISH ADMINISTRATION REGARDING TAX ABATEMENT PROPOSAL – Spencer Watts (6:11 p.m.)

- Discussion on the modest impact of the proposal on the Library's revenue; the Library typically relies on the City-Parish and Metro Council to consider relative economic development benefits of the proposal.
- A motion was made to forward the proposal to the City-Parish with no comment by Candace Temple and seconded by Donald Luther, Jr. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

Board President Jason Jacob asked for public comments. No public comments were made.

VIII. COMMENTS BY THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL

- Donald Luther, Jr. thanked the Library staff for the detail and attention that is put into their work, such as the soft washing of the roofs and careful selection of tile based on how it feels.
- Martha Guarisco thanked the Library for providing digital library cards for her students; it makes a difference for the children to have access to what they need and want.
- Candace Temple stated that she is looking forward to what the Library will be doing in 2021 and commended Mary Stein on writing the updated mask mandate.
- Jason Jacob wished everyone a happy new year and is looking forward to the year ahead.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – Board President Jason Jacob requested a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m. by unanimous vote.**