

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**  
**MAY 20, 2021**  
**4:00 P.M.**

**AGENDA**

CALL TO ORDER – Jason Jacob, Board President (4:05 p.m.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Candace Temple, Board Vice-President

- 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 – Present  
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; Rosana Sotile, Assistant to the Deputy Library Director;

- II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF APRIL 15, 2021 – A motion to approve was made by Candace Temple and seconded by Delores Watts. **The motion was carried unanimously.** (4:07 p.m.)

III. SPECIAL ORDERS

- A. SPECIAL PRESENTATION REGARDING PLANK ROAD MASTER PLAN – MR. CHRIS TYSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF BUILD BATON ROUGE (4:07 p.m.)

- Overview and slideshow of Build Baton Rouge’s master plan for the Plank Road corridor revitalization, including possibility of a new library branch building.
- Discussion regarding the option of relocating the Delmont Garden Branch Library to the proposed area, constructing a new building, and the importance of engaging the community and reviewing any possible relocation; current library facility could be used for another library or other City-Parish purposes; additional discussions will continue as the master plan progresses.

IV. REPORTS BY THE DIRECTOR

- A. FINANCIAL REPORT – Ronnie Pierce (4:40 p.m.)

- For 2021, operating expenditures through April 30th are 28.17% of the operating budget. Through April, we should have spent no more than 33% of the budget.
- Cash collections from Property Taxes for 2021 remain ahead of those collected in 2020, as we are 1.34% ahead of the same date last year.

- B. SYSTEM REPORTS – Mary Stein (4:42 p.m.)

- “Around the Parish” slideshow and descriptions of Library programs.
- The mask mandate has been lifted for City-Parish buildings; masks are still encouraged to be worn, but not required.
- Art, Jazz and Pizzazz program was held May 2<sup>nd</sup> at the River Center Branch Library; large attendance of patrons visiting the downtown area.
- Josh Linker, author and entrepreneur, was the guest speaker for the Business Report’s Business Forum webcast on May 12<sup>th</sup>; next month’s speaker will be Steve Cannon, current CEO of AMB Group.

- A virtual watch-party was held on May 15<sup>th</sup> at the Main Library at Goodwood for Authors After Hours, featuring the One Book One Community author Sarah M. Broom, and author Margaret Wilkerson Sexton.
- Keith Comeaux, NASA Deputy Chief Engineer of the Mars Perseverance Rover, was the guest speaker for the April 17<sup>th</sup> Saturday Science program.
- The Library hosted Suiting 101 to collect gently used business suits for those needing interview attire.
- Deep Dives into Books and Gardening is promoting active gardening in our region; new Garden Stories now at Carver Branch Library, making it the third branch in the Library system to have the walkable story stations; Plein Air artists held an outdoor painting workshop for local middle school students.
- Knock Knock Children's Museum held a system-wide training for Children Services' staff; the Carver Branch Library was chosen as a pilot site for Knock Knock's Making Spaces program.
- The Ed Perkins Jazz Group concert was cancelled due to weather; the Library will instead host the Baton Rouge Concert Band on Memorial Day in the outdoor plaza of the Main Library at Goodwood.
- Summer reading begins June 1<sup>st</sup>; can track reading logs either virtually or with traditional paper logs; will have both virtual and live programming, mostly outdoors for in-person events.
- Movies on the Plaza returns every Friday night in June at the Main Library at Goodwood.

## C. OTHER REPORTS

### 1. MAINTENANCE AND ADDITIONAL CAPITAL PROJECTS – Kristen Edson (4:55 p.m.)

- Library Facility Services staff responded to nearly 1,500 work order requests, to date.
- Due to recent heavy storms, roof leaks occurred at Bluebonnet and Jones Creek Regional Libraries, Carver, Delmont Gardens, River Center, Scotlandville and Zachary Branch Libraries, and at Outreach Services; River Center Branch Library and Outreach Services will be warranty claims; a tree fell in the plaza at Main Library and will be replanted by the arborist.
- Parking lot lights at Fairwood Branch Library have been replaced with LED lights by Facility Services staff; retrofitting for the parking lot lights at the Main Library is complete; Nine lights were replaced at Central Branch Library under warranty.
- The energy management system upgrade for Baker Branch Library began April 12<sup>th</sup>; a change order was issued to include an additional party that was needed; estimated delivery of the part is early June.
- Remediation work and duct cleaning are complete at Bluebonnet Regional Library; the air handler unit refurbishment is underway and expected to be completed this weekend.
- A punch-list walk through was held May 4<sup>th</sup> for damage repairs at Carver Branch Library; the operable partition wall was not installed satisfactorily but will be remounted in mid-June by the installer; the recent roof leaks will be included in the Scope of Work for the full roof replacement bid.
- The installation of remaining components for the FM200 system in the Main Library's server room has been slowed due to delays in the supply chain; Fire Marshall inspection has also been delayed.
- A pre-bid meeting for the Main Library's boiler replacement is scheduled for May 25<sup>th</sup>.
- A kick-off meeting was held with Architectural Services and the project architect for replacing the roofs at Jones Creek and Bluebonnet Regional Libraries and Delmont Gardens and Zachary Branch Libraries; the Notice to Proceed was issued May 6<sup>th</sup>; construction projected to begin in early 2022.
- The kick-off meeting for phase two of the Outreach building improvements was held May 17<sup>th</sup>; the Notice to Proceed was issued May 18<sup>th</sup>; discussion included additional demolition work and extensive parking lot work; construction documents should be complete by the end of June; work is projected to begin in 2022.
- Spencer Watts commented he appreciates the assistance provided by Architectural Services, specifically for the re-design of pipe screening for the new boiler at the Main Library.

### 2. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS – Spencer Watts (5:06 p.m.)

- The City-Parish lifted the mask mandate for City-Parish buildings today, except for those under state or federal guidelines, such as judicial buildings and prisons; the Library will still provide masks to those who wish to wear one or need one, and staff are encouraged to wear masks if they feel it's necessary; face shields are also available to staff.
- The Library will remain fine-free through July 31<sup>st</sup>; beginning in June, fees will be assessed for lost library cards, USB drives will not be free of charge, cash will once again be accepted, and charging V-Smart accounts will be phased out; earbuds are free of charge and additional headsets may be purchased for the AWE's.
- Occupancy rules are now 100% if masks are worn; 75% if masks are worn and 6-foot distancing is observed; outdoor occupancy is unlimited as long as performers are 10 feet from the crowd.

- Beginning May 10<sup>th</sup> quarantine period for materials was reduced to 24 hours; furniture will slowly be returned to public floor; seating for public computers will slowly be filled and more divider screens will be purchased; surface cleaning continues.
- Meeting rooms and study rooms will open as available at each library location; supplemental air filtering units will be placed in each room as needed.
- AWE's and interactive tables will be returned to the public floor, as well as board books and other touchable children's items; stuffed animals will not yet return to the floor.
- Makerspaces will reopen in June for weekly workshops, tours, demonstrations and badging; donated books are now accepted; the Recycled Reads sale will resume in June.
- The fountain/splash pad at the Main Library will soon be turned back on; building fogging will be reduced to once per month beginning in May; the Main Library will increase its hours to 2:00 – 8:00 p.m. on Sundays beginning in June.
- Most of the furniture has been installed at Jones Creek Regional Library; a few punch-list items remain; awaiting replacement parts or other components to complete the work; vendors are experiencing delays in shipping; reading units for children (Nooks) were an additional item added to the furniture order; awaiting confirmation on installation date for the Word Wall; awaiting parts for additional end panels, canopies and backstops; exterior intelligent return has been installed and working on finalization of exterior signage; drainage improvements and sod work have been completed.
- The kick-off meeting for Scotlandville Branch Library renovation will be held tomorrow; the building program was revised, edited and updated two weeks ago, and submitted to the architects for preliminary review; the contract for Baker Branch Library renovation has been approved by the Metro Council and is being finalized by the City-Parish.
- The Scotlandville Branch Library site will serve as the Library system's archival annex, as well as serve as the workshop site for the Library's Facility Services; the FAA's wind shear monitoring device is also located on the site.
- Management Partners have completed staff surveys and produced a regression analysis of various categories; next stage of research will involve focus groups; a Zoom conference is scheduled for next week.
- The American Rescue Plan Act will result in a \$47,064.84 grant for each library in Louisiana; first priority is for greater access to the internet through Wi-Fi and hotspots; other priorities include public safety protocols, personnel, technology, training, equipment, and materials costs; the East Baton Rouge Parish Library will submit an application next week; the E-Rate Emergency Connectivity Fund Program is more restrictive, but may help the Library purchase dark fiber to improve network capacity.
- The Library is adjusting its sex offenders policy as there is a provision in the state code limiting a certain class of offender from using libraries when they are near public parks; the policy will be adjusted to reduce the number of libraries that can allow this class of offenders to use a facility.
- The contract with Volunteers of America has been finalized; includes services from case workers and social workers; also includes a new outreach vehicle to facilitate flexible responses to match a worker with a specific need at any given library facility.
- The Library's budget process is proceeding; preliminary work continues, and a new online application is being utilized.

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. SETTING OF DATE FOR SPECIAL 2022 BUDGET WORK SESSION TO JULY 15, 2020 AND MOVING THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING TO JULY 22, 2021– Jason Jacob (5:30 p.m.)

- A motion to set the date for the budget work session to July 15<sup>th</sup> and move the regular board meeting to July 22<sup>nd</sup> was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Delores Watts. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

B. UPDATE ON SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY – Spencer Watts and Patricia Husband (5:31 p.m.)

- The greenbelt setback has been verified and will allow redesign of the site to create around 76 parking spaces; site parameters have changed; adds around 800 square feet to the building; mechanical equipment can be moved off of the roof.
- A meeting was held yesterday with the design team and Architectural Services; reviewed four site plan options; two preferred plans were selected.

- The “linear park” concept is being retained along the buffer zone; will create a park-like setting; more robust landscaping for screening is planned for end of parking lot.
- Question from Kathy Wascom regarding if the Library provides maintenance for the landscaping; Spencer Watts responded that the Library maintains the planning for landscapes next to the Library’s property line and the TND provides maintenance.
- A design team meeting was held April 16<sup>th</sup>; reviewed timelines and schedules; design development will be 3 to 4 weeks later than originally planned due to setback redesign; construction document phase to follow next and be completed at the end of September; the bid would be issued after that and construction would begin first half of next year.
- The selection of the type of mechanical system was finalized; will be a chilled water type of system.
- The design team also reviewed proposed interior design concepts and materials; includes color schemes and accent colors, walls for way-finding, use of graphics, and defining spaces with floor materials and patterns; will use traditional mix of carpet, resilient tile, and walk-off carpet; architects introduced idea of rubber flooring to provide sound absorption, comfort, durability and an environmentally friendly product.
- Other issues covered in the meeting: chair rails, acoustical wall treatments, and recessed corner guards; the Library prefers use of more substantial wall bases that help set frame of view, defining and highlighting a room for a profound difference.
- Brick samples were reviewed and selected during the design meeting.
- Parking lot drainage was discussed; the Library would prefer to avoid curb drains as they tend to attract trash and leaves that wash into the drains; the architects proposed a trench drain system and will provide more information to Architectural Services.
- Library staff held an online meeting with Carson Block, technology consultant for the project; biggest concern is presentational technology for meeting spaces; must-haves include durability, ease of use, and the avoidance of overly delicate systems that need constant tweaking.
- A slideshow of the greenbelt setback and proposed new floor plan was shown to the Board.

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

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

### A. VOTE TO SEND COMMENTS TO CITY-PARISH ADMINISTRATION REGARDING TAX ABATEMENT PROPOSAL – Spencer Watts (5:46 p.m.)

- Spencer Watts commented that traditionally the Library relies on the judgment of the Mayor-President and Metro Council to decide what the relative benefit would be, and to not forward any comments on these types of abatements.
- A motion to forward the proposal without comment was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

### B. LIBRARY OVERVIEW OF 2021 – Spencer Watts (5:47 p.m.)

- Slideshow of report content was shown to the Board.
- 2020 was a challenging year but the Library has done well transitioning out of the lock-down, providing more services as needed.
- Important projects that were completed:
  - River Center Branch Library: was completed in 2020; continues to enjoy good use this year; averaging 6,000 visitors per month over the past several months; high patron usage of computers and Wi-Fi; as restrictions are lifted, the Library can do more with its makerspaces and media spaces; play kitchen for children will open
  - Greenwell Springs Road Regional Library: was completed in 2020; furniture continued to arrive throughout early 2021; patron feedback has been positive; larger building, enhanced technology, dedicated Teen and Children spaces, better collection engagement
  - Jones Creek Regional Library: 90% completed as of today; enhanced Teen and Children spaces are popular; heavy usage of meeting rooms and collaborative spaces
  - South Branch Library: entered schematic design phase in early 2021
  - Other capital projects: architects selected for renovation of Baker and Scotlandville Branch Libraries; new roof and A/C at the Outreach Services building

- Other major repairs or upgrades: Carver Branch Library damage repairs; Facilitize maintenance reporting system; Wi-Fi upgrade; Brivo elevator boards; cameras and security system improvements
- Re-engagement since initial Covid-19 restrictions: Currently, the Library will follow occupancy rules issued by the state; will be flexible and make adjustments as needed.
  - Library provided service throughout the duration of lock-down
  - Increased emphasis on Digital Library continues to bring in new users
  - Strengthened partnerships with community agencies
  - New opportunities to expand the Library's reach through programs offered on digital platform
  - Steadily increasing access and opportunities over time: meeting rooms re-opened at reduced capacity; reducing quarantine period for returned items; study rooms beginning to open up; in-person programs offered at reduced capacity; summer programs scheduled for children and teens
- Programming Highlights: Library staff adapted and learned how to make online programs captivating and interesting, and interactive; coordination of hybrid programs; popular programs for 2021 include Garden Discoveries, the One Book One Community series, the Career Center and Baton Rouge Lecture Series, outdoor music events, and other virtual events.
- Utilization of the Library system over time since the lock-down has been positive; the Digital Library was most active aspect during the lock-down; traditional reference services and printing are now maintaining high usage.
- The East Baton Rouge Parish Library system has a 31% household penetration compared to 125 other libraries across the country that average 24%; 130,651 patrons have actively used their library cards since May 2020; 312,410 current Library cardholders as of May 2021; patron engagement through feedback remains constant and effective.
- Flexibility continues to be the hallmark of the first six months of this year; moving targets and last minute changes; temporarily converting library spaces for storage; Bookmobile scramble; establishing technology for programming, organizational communication and training; conducting an effectiveness study; composing a Technology Plan.
- Future projects include the following: website redesign RFP approval; ILS improvement/replacement; Central, Delmont Gardens and Zachary Branch Library renovations; strategic plan update; redundant server site; dark fiber IRU project; securing a moving contract.

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

VIII. COMMENTS BY THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL – No comments were made.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – Board President Jason Jacob requested a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Delores Watts and seconded by Candace Temple. **The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m. by unanimous vote.**