

MINUTES FOR SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL
MAIN LIBRARY
FIRST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
7711 GOODWOOD BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806
JULY 27, 2021
4:30 P.M.

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER – Jason Jacob, Board President (4:40 p.m.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Donald Luther, Jr.

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; Mary Stein, Assistant Library Director; Patricia Husband, Assistant Library Director; Ronnie Pierce, Library Assistant Business Manager; Rosana Sotile, Assistant to the Deputy Library Director.

OTHERS PRESENT – Dwight Hudson, Metro Council Member; Sydney Kern, WBRZ Reporter; Terry Jones, The Advocate Staff Writer; Trey Godfrey, Baton Rouge Area Foundation Senior Vice President; Robert Fenet, member of the public.

II. DISCUSSION AND VOTE TO ADOPT A RESOLUTION REGARDING PRESERVATION OF THE INTEGRITY OF THE DEDICATED FUNDING MILLAGE SYSTEM

- Donald Luther, Jr. spoke that he reviewed the resolution and is in favor of passing it so that it can be presented to the Metro Council; he expressed his concern regarding making changes in the middle of a millage cycle; he feels it is best to protect the millage and look for other ways to address issues in the parish.
- Jason Jacob read the resolution aloud.
- Donald Luther, Jr. responded that anything over 0.25 or 0.3 point of a reduction in the Library's millage would cause the Library to potentially cut programming and reduce staff.
- Kathy Wascom responded that she seconds Mr. Luther's response and would like to vote to proceed in passing the resolution; she expressed her concern regarding the interruption of a millage cycle, as it affects the integrity of a 10-year millage; she feels the Library has a fiduciary responsibility to honor the promises it made to the taxpayers; after the current 10-year millage cycle is complete in 2025, the Council should then reevaluate the millage.
- Candace Temple responded that she also agrees with the Library's resolution; she finds it disheartening that the Library has to fight for what taxpayers approved in 2015; taxpayers want to see an improved Library system because it has a huge impact in the community; she does not feel that money is the problem for solving the drainage issue; the millage rededication proposal shows distrust in the way decisions are made, and more time should be dedicated to analyzing its possible effects; she feels proud of Library staff for developing a strategic and detailed plan to fulfill its mission of serving the community, and would not like to see it punished for the work it does for the parish; she also feels privileged to be able to help keep things in order for the Library system, and fully supports the Library's resolution.
- Martha Guarisco commented that she also fully supports the Library's resolution; she feels it is important to point out the false dichotomy that has been set up, in that people are either for drainage improvement or for the Library; the people of this parish are for both, and it is not for us to figure out in order to solve the drainage issue, she explained, as it is our mission to work at the Library and support the Library; she agrees with Candace Temple in the sentiment that she is proud to be a part of the Library system.

- Jason Jacob responded that he echoes his fellow board members and wishes the approach was more measured; that the millage would be allowed to run its course, then the Council could discuss what to do next; he stated he is against any type of monetary rededication in the middle of a cycle, as it is inherently unsound and he does not like the precedent it sets; he expressed that he is in full support of the Library's resolution.
- Spencer Watts commented that there is a possibility the rededication plan could be readjusted; the proposed 1.0 millage reduction could be changed to a 0.5 reduction, but the data shows that the Library would still have a budget that would require adjustments in services and staffing; even a half point millage reduction at the end of the millage cycle would begin to introduce more problems.
- Candace Temple explained a situation in which she attended a meeting during which the proposed millage rededication was being discussed; someone at that meeting mentioned his thoughts on the City appropriating too much money to some agencies without analyzing its decisions; she feels the Library should have time to fully analyze the proposed rededication and to establish a plan; she commented that the Library has a plan that is strategic and supportive of the community, and it should not be interrupted; she feels the Library should have at least three to six months to analyze the proposed rededication.
- Donald Luther, Jr. responded that the Library was approved by taxpayers for an 11.1 millage, but incurred a rollback to 10.52 and will face yet another rollback; the Library was able to recognize it was collecting more money than it needed, so it went forward with the rollback; the Library has proved that it tries to be fiscally responsible as a board and still meet its goals; to reduce the millage any more would have a negative impact on the services and goals that the Library has planned for over the past 10 years.

Board President Jason Jacob asked if there are any public comments. Public comments were made as follows:

- Bob Fenet expressed his support of the Library's resolution.
- Dwight Hudson spoke in support of rededicating the Library's millage, as he is a co-sponsor of the original proposal, and expressed his desire to work collaboratively with the Library on this matter.

Board President Jason Jacob requested a motion to adopt the Library's resolution. A motion was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Kathy Wascom. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

III. COMMENTS BY THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL

- Donald Luther, Jr. commented that he hopes the Metro Council postpones the millage rededication to the next council meeting to allow for more time in finding a better resolution.

IV. 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 5:11 p.m. by unanimous vote.**

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BOARD'S PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY, ALL ITEMS ON WHICH ACTION IS TO BE TAKEN ARE OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT, AND COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS MAY BE RECEIVED ON OTHER TOPICS REPORTED AT SUCH TIME AS THE OPPORTUNITY IS ANNOUNCED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OR THE PERSON CONDUCTING THE MEETING.