

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
NOVEMBER 18, 2021
4:00 P.M.

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER – Jason Jacob, Board President (4:12 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 – Absent

Delores Watts – Present

Donald Luther, Jr. – Present (4:15 p.m.)

Kathy Wascom – Present

Nicole Allmon-Learson – Present (4:20 p.m.)

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; Autumn Rice, Library Technician I; James Fagan, Library Network Technician I; Patricia Arnold, Literacy Projects Librarian

OTHERS PRESENT – Mark Ballard, husband of the late Donna Britt, 2021 Sphat Scholar; Gretchen Siemers, Director of Planning and Special Projects, Build Baton Rouge

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 21, 2021 – A motion to approve was made by Kathy Wascom and seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

III. SPECIAL ORDERS

A. PRESENTATION RECOGNIZING SPAHT SCHOLAR, DONNA BRITT – Mary Stein and Patricia Arnold (4:13 p.m.)

- Slideshow presentation of photos of Donna Britt in various roles as a volunteer and supporter of the Library and community; she was also a WAFB News Anchor.
- The scholar endowment was awarded to Donna Brit posthumously; it was accepted by her husband, Mark Ballard.
- Ms. Britt frequently volunteered her time reading to school children; she hosted Library events, promoted the Library on social media, and supported numerous literacy efforts over the years.
- A selection of books will be placed in Children’s Services in Ms. Britt’s honor.

IV. REPORTS BY THE DIRECTOR

A. FINANCIAL REPORT – Rhonda Pinsonat (4:25 p.m.)

- For 2021, operating expenditures through October 31st are 69.45% of the operating budget; through October, we should have spent no more than 83% of the budget.
- Cash collections from Property Taxes for 2021 are trailing those collected in 2020, as we are approximately 0.32% behind the same 11 months last year; third quarter interest earnings are not yet official; Finance Department officials estimate the Library’s third quarter interest is \$22,000.

B. SYSTEM REPORTS – Mary Stein (4:27 p.m.)

- “Around the Parish” slideshow and descriptions of Library programs.
- The December Business Forum series guest speaker will be Junior Bridgeman, owner of Ebony and Jet magazines; November’s guest speaker was Dr. Ivan Misner, BNI founder and bestselling author.
- Around 700 people attended the 8th annual Baton Rouge Mini Maker Faire, October 18-23; events for both children and adults were held at the Main Library; community branches also held small maker pop-up sessions throughout the week.
- A GIS exhibit is on display at the Main Library; GIS Day was held November 17th at the River Center Branch Library.
- The 21st Annual Attic Treasures and Collectibles featured a patron’s collection of family jewelry that was valued to be worth “enough for an armored car.”
- The October Recycled Reads event was held outdoors to minimize the risk of Covid transmission.
- The Main Library hosted “Meet the Breeds”, an interactive program featuring various breeds of dogs.
- Spooky Stories with storyteller Mike Anderson was held last month at various library locations for children and families.
- Opera Louisiane performed at the River Center Branch Library on November 6th; Open Air Fair will be held in the spring.
- Upcoming musical offerings through the Library include the Baton Rouge Civic Orchestra, the EBRPSS Talented Fall Concert, The Winter Concert, the Holiday Nutcracker Community Tour, St. Alban’s Ukulele Orchestra, Hugo Kringle, Mike Anderson (The Dulcimer Guy), and more.
- The Downtown Festival of Lights will be held December 3rd; the River Center Branch Library will host indoor and outdoor events; the branch will also host events for Red Stick Revelry on New Year’s Eve.
- The Library continues to collect new pairs of socks for its annual “Sock it to Me” sock drive; it is hosted in conjunction with Baton Rouge Parents magazine.

C. OTHER REPORTS

1. MAINTENANCE AND ADDITIONAL CAPITAL PROJECTS – Kristen Edson (4:36 p.m.)

- Reprogramming of perimeter alarms was completed at all locations, except for Delmont, Baker and Zachary Branch Libraries due to unexpected issues with key pads; will be replaced.
- Grout cleaning was completed at Eden Park and Central Branch Libraries.
- Updates on landscaping beds were completed at Eden Park Branch Library on October 20th; a new maintenance trench was installed at Delmont Gardens Branch Library on October 22nd to divert mulch away from the building’s foundation.
- New exterior lights were installed at the rear of the River Center Branch Library building, and at Delmont Gardens Branch Library near the receiving and dumpster area; this is an effort to deter after-hours activities in these areas.
- Exterior lighting fixtures were also replaced at Outreach Services and Jones Creek Regional Library.
- Work required to add computers and other systems to the Main Library’s generator was completed on November 5th; the coil that was broken during February’s freeze has been repaired, having been delayed by supply and labor shortages.
- A leaking backflow preventer was replaced and underground lines were repaired at Carver Branch Library.
- A water leak was fixed at Central Branch Library; it was discovered the coil also needs to be replaced.
- The ignitors and a flue switch on the boiler at Zachary Branch Library were replaced.
- The vendor is still waiting for delivery of the materials needed for the Carver Branch Library roofing project.
- A meeting to review edits was held on November 14th for the Outreach Services Phase II renovation project; still waiting on finalized details of the new parking lot.
- It is estimated that the Notice to Proceed will be issued in February 2022 for the roofing and exterior restorations of four library branches.
- A pre-construction meeting was held November 16th for the Main Library boiler project; the project will begin the Monday after Thanksgiving and should be completed in two to three weeks.

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

- There is strong interest from the community regarding the Delmont Gardens Branch Library project to build a new building on a site that would be part of the Plank Road Revitalization effort; cost to build would be similar to the cost of renovating the existing building; the Board was asked to approve the Library's preliminary work to move toward the purchase of a vacant lot at the corner of Mohican Street and Plank Road, which would include the following:
 - A site review and consultation with Architectural Services
 - Discussions with other City-Parish officials
 - Review possible restrictions or covenants on the property
 - Investigate possible issues with subdivision of the site
 - An appraisal, further along in the process
- Question from Kathy Wascom regarding whether or not the project is part of the North Baton Rouge economic development district and if necessary zoning has been established; Spencer Watts explained it's in that area, but is part of the Build Baton Rouge's Plank Road Revitalization initiative; the zoning could be discussed and verified at a later meeting with Build Baton Rouge; Gretchen Siemers commented that she is available to answer any questions.
- A motion to authorize Library staff to initiate the process of preliminary work on the Delmont Gardens Branch Library project was made by Kathy Wascom and seconded by Nicole-Allmon Learson. **The motion was carried unanimously.**
- A meeting was held with Elzie Alford, Clerk of Court and Judicial Administration for the City Court, regarding placing self-service kiosks in libraries; would be utilized by the public for paying fines, traffic tickets, and other payments, to schedule community services, and eventually DMV-related functions; meeting discussions included the basic technology, intuitive interfacing, online help capability, actual footprint of the units, and other factors; would be placed in most Library locations, except for River Center Branch due to its close proximity to the courthouse; the Library will continue to explore this possibility.
- An emergency extension of the Janitorial Services contract for 12 library branches was issued due to a bid review process; no janitorial services were provided for those branches earlier this week; staff in the Library's Business Office were commended for working quickly in negotiating temporary arrangements; an agreement was reached on the new bid and contract.
 - Question from Jason Jacob regarding if this has happened before; Spencer Watts responded that many of the problems could have been avoided, but the Library has not previously experienced this level of service interruption; due to the current labor market, it can be difficult for the smaller companies to provide services, but that does not appear to be the primary reason for the current issues.
- Update on Covid-19: The Governor lifted the mask mandate on October 27th and the City-Parish followed suit; the Library still encourages everyone to wear a mask, especially for staff in close contact with the public, such as Children Services due to the large number of unvaccinated children; there has been a combination of public reactions; number of state infections and hospitalization rates remain low; Library will continue to remain cautious.
- Library staff met with staff from the City-Parish Human Resources on October 28th regarding issues caused by the switch to the Saturday through Friday work week; a follow-up meeting was held on November 17th; information and statistics will be gathered to determine how to best overcome the obstacles; the City-Parish IT department is also assisting to help find a solution.
- The State Library Conference occurred on November 5th; a noteworthy session was presented by Meredith Schwartz of Library Journal and included an overview of trends and innovations in public library services.
- Technology Update: A glitch has emerged in the credit card terminal operations between two vendors, but is being resolved; Library staff are working with a vendor on changes and improvements to the Intranet Hub; Stephen Solomon, Server Analyst, is working with the vendor to upgrade the Library's firewall; Amanda Dial, Systems Librarian, is working with the vendor on upgrades to the ILS, the catalog and the statistical portal; progress continues with the next stage of the VDI project.
- The one-year walkthrough was held yesterday for the Jones Creek Regional Library renovation project; staff from Architectural Services were present to help address issues with the roof; carpet cleaning issues were also resolved.

- Public requests have been made for the Library to expand its Sunday hours; due to current staffing situations, the Library would not be able to accommodate those hours at this time.
- The Library Board of Control meeting agendas are posted on the Library's website; the Library does not have control over the posting on other websites maintained by the City-Parish.
- There is an issue with the charge-back rate for property insurance that included a substantial increase; the Library is investigating the issue further.
- Comment by Candace Temple regarding making sure the Library is included in any grant funding that the City may receive for the Plank Road Revitalization master plan, as it relates to the Delmont Gardens Branch Library project; the Library is not a for-profit business and should not be excluded in any possible grant funding.

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 ON SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY – Spencer Watts and Patricia Husband (5:11 p.m.)

- A slideshow of plans to reconfigure the parking lot was shown to the Board.
- Update on reconfiguring the parking lot: No parking spaces will be lost due to the reconfiguration; the greenbelt abutting the entrance will be the responsibility of Rouzan, as confirmed with multiple written statements; some trees may not be salvageable; the architects are requesting an additional five weeks on the contract; the larger lot would eliminate having a small lot to the west; Architectural Services projects a maximum indirect cost up to \$16,000 for the reconfiguration; it will also be to the Library's advantage to work with Rouzan and reinforce a good partnership; The City-Parish has asked for the Board's endorsement, or vote, on how Library staff should proceed.
- Discussion regarding whether the vote to support reconfiguring the outparcels should be added to the agenda or held during a special meeting in December; the Board decided to give Library staff the authority to proceed. A motion to give support to Library staff to continue the work with reconfiguring the outparcels was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Nicole Allmon-Learson. **The motion was carried unanimously.**
- A design meeting was held November 2nd, and covered the following:
 - The interior designer presented an overview of processes and concepts; a photo of material concepts was shown to the Board
 - A photo of the furniture floorplan with power and data markings was also shown to the Board
 - Discussions on staff desks and work spaces, such as overhead storage, adjustable height tables and task chairs; also benching systems, including computer stations with wire management and USB options
 - Different types of lounge seating were discussed; also meeting room furnishings and shelving
 - The landscaping sub-consultant has changed; discussions included grass growth habits, updating the species of camellia, and changing the vine planting along the courtyard fence

B. UPDATE ON SCOTLANDVILLE BRANCH LIBRARY – Spencer Watts (5:35 p.m.)

- The architect is consolidating the final schematic changes; no new updates have been provided.
- A photo of the original site concept was shown to the Board, as well as a lighting floorplan.
- More information on this project will be provided at the January meeting.

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

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. LIBRARY OVERVIEW OF 2021 – Spencer Watts (5:37 p.m.)

- The Library currently has over 300,000 card holders.
- Data collected by an external agency demonstrated the East Baton Parish Library's strong performance compared to peer libraries; steady recovery continues in market penetration and new cardholder retention.
- Updates in collection development include new content, new or enhanced digital resources, and a changing marketplace, including printing and shipping delays.

- Manufacturing of the new bookmobile is nearing completion; the purchase order for the replacement of “Big Blue” has been issued.
- This year’s programming success saw a mix of in-person and virtual programs.
- The Library continues to focus on literacy; project examples include “1,000 Books Before Kindergarten”, the Mayor’s Joint Task Force on Literacy, and the Conscious Kids Bookshelf.
- The Library’s Career Center promotes career and small business resources; also community partnerships that range from disaster relief, science, community issues, to economic development.
- Library staff continue to find new ways to increase efficiency; current projects include a new staff handbook, staff cybersecurity training, RFID system for credit card payment implementation, and staff surveys and focus groups conducted by a consulting firm.
- River Center Branch Library received several awards this year: American Architecture Award 2021 winner (Museum of Architecture and Design); American Libraries 2021 Library Design Showcase; Gold Rose Award, AIA BR; and Members Choice, AIA BR.
- Final completion of the Greenwell Springs Road and Jones Creek Regional Libraries occurred this year.
- Initial design phase of the new South Branch Library began this year; construction documents phase is slated to commence.
- Other major maintenance projects this year included the server room HVAC upgrades and the dry pipe fire suppression system installation; Wi-Fi upgrades; additional security cameras and upgraded systems.
- Capital Improvements Timeline for upcoming projects include the Scotlandville Branch Library renovation and addition, the Baker Branch renovation, the Delmont Gardens Branch preliminary site planning, and Central and Zachary Branch renovations further down the road.
- Forthcoming major Library initiatives include: an RFP for a new website; the final stages of the VDI rollout; continuing work on the E-Rate RFP for Dark Fiber options; roofing and exterior improvement project; disaster recovery site build-out; the Emergency Connectivity fund application; and minor renovations to Bluebonnet Regional Library and miscellaneous repairs at five other library locations.

B. ANNOUNCE THE RESULTS OF THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF LIBRARY DIRECTOR – MR. JASON JACOB

THE BOARD MAY GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS THE CHARACTER, PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY OR PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH OF MR. SPENCER WATTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH LA. R.S. 42: 17(A)(1). MR. WATTS MAY REQUIRE THAT SUCH DISCUSSION BE HELD IN OPEN SESSION.

- A motion to go into executive session was made by Nicole Allman-Learson and seconded by Donald Luther, Jr. **The motion was carried unanimously.** (5:52 p.m.)
- Discussion was held in the Library’s board room on the third floor.
- The Board returned from executive session at 6:53 p.m.
- Jason Jacob commented that Spencer Watts had a successful evaluation, and appreciates his leadership and hard work in growing the Library system.

C. VOTE TO SEND COMMENTS TO CITY-PARISH ADMINISTRATION REGARDING TAX ABATEMENT PROPOSAL (6:54 p.m.)

- Spencer Watts provided a brief description of the tax abatement proposal.
- A motion to forward the proposal to the Metro Council without comment was made by Candace Temple and seconded by Nicole Allmon-Learson. **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 – There were no comments.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – Board President Jason Jacob requested a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Nicole Allmon-Learson. **The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m. by unanimous vote.**

Mr. Jason Jacob, President

Mr. Spencer Watts, Library Director