

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 20, 2022
4:00 P.M.

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER – Jason Jacob, Board President (4:04 p.m.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Candace Temple, Board Vice President

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 (4:53 p.m.)

Delores Watts – Present (4:19 p.m.)

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; Autumn Rice, Library Technician I; Brain Thornhill, PC/LAN Administrator; Jason Salsbury, PC/LAN Specialist

OTHER IN ATTENDANCE – Terry Jones, staff writer, The Advocate; Dustin Bonanno, Designer and Specification Writer, Tipton Associates; Gretchen Siemers, Director of Planning and Special Projects, Build Baton Rouge

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 18, 2021 – A motion to approve was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

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

III. REPORTS BY THE DIRECTOR

A. FINANCIAL REPORT – Rhonda Pinsonat (4:05 p.m.)

- For 2021, operating expenditures through December 31st are 82.02% of the operating budget. Although 2021 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 2021 are approximately 0.18% behind 2020. This total will also change in a few months, once 4th quarter interest earnings are posted.
- For 2022, cash collections are ahead of last year, as we are 1.68% ahead of 2021. Given last year's uneven performance for this revenue, it is too soon to know if this slight increase will be maintained over the remainder of the year.

B. SYSTEM REPORTS – Mary Stein (4:07 p.m.)

- “Around the Parish” slideshow and descriptions of Library programs.
- Statistical reports show an increase in gate count, circulation, meeting room use, program attendance, and reference questions; a 12.5% increase from last year.
- The Sock it to Me drive collected 6,000 pairs of socks from the community; largest number ever collected.

- December and January holiday events included ballet, therapy dogs, story-time workshops, and adult art workshops.
- Record Swap Day was held at the Bluebonnet Branch Library in December 2021; 132 people attended and was the first event of its kind.
- The Festival of Lights and Red Stick Revelry were held at Town Square, in front of the River Center Branch Library, in December 2021 to celebrate Christmas and New Year's Eve; children's events were held during the day and featured Clay Achee and friends from Ziggy's Arts Adventure.
- The Main Library at Goodwood is featuring a curated exhibition, Toward a Larger Freedom, that features photographs of local activists and associated QR codes to hear oral history; in conjunction with Together Baton Rouge's 10th anniversary.
- An impersonator of President Abraham Lincoln presented A New Birth of Freedom at the Main Library earlier this month.
- Many of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. events were postponed; the Library has partnered with the Baton Rouge Mayor's initiative to inspire a community culture based on literacy, youth empowerment, and equity and inclusion; events will be rescheduled at a later time.
- The Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC) hosted their Economic Outlook 2022 summit at the Main Library; the Library's Reference Department and Career Center have assisted BRAC in testing out a new initiative, known as Handshake.
- Drew Brees was last week's guest speaker on the Business Forum webcast; next month's guest will be Jack Daly.
- For the ninth time, the EBR Library System has been recognized as a Star Library by the Library Journal; based on information and data from 2019.
- The Library's 2022 marketing message will be, "You search, we find."
- The Library's Teen Services department will soon be circulating family board games, with the tagline, "Games to Geaux."; will circulate for one week at a time.

A suggestion was made by Spencer Watts to move item "A" under Unfinished Business to follow item "B" under Reports by the Director. A motion to move the agenda item was made by Candace Temple and seconded by Delores Watts. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

C. 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 for the Board to go into executive session was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Delores Watts. **The motion was carried unanimously.**
- The Board entered executive session at 4:23 p.m.
- The Board returned from executive session at 4:50 p.m. and a motion to enter regular session was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.**
- A motion was then made by Donald Luther, Jr. that the Board affirms it only discussed litigation matters concerning the River Center Branch Library with the Parish Attorney's office. The motion was seconded by Candace Temple. **The motion was carried unanimously.**
- Donald Luther, Jr. thanked Mary Stein for her presentation and commented on the national recognition of the East Baton Rouge Parish Library system.

D. OTHER REPORTS

1. MAINTENANCE AND ADDITIONAL CAPITAL PROJECTS – Kristen Edson (4:51 p.m.)
 - Roof leaks were repaired at Scotlandville and Delmont Gardens Branch Libraries.
 - Pride-Chaneyville and Central Branch Libraries received high dusting in their center lofted areas near skylights.
 - All locations received exterior window washing, except Carver Branch, due to scaffolding placed around the building for the roofing project.

- Ballasts and lighting controls were replaced for exterior lighting at Outreach Services, Central Branch and Jones Creek Regional Branch Libraries.
- The outdoor terrace at River Center Branch and the pony wall in the parking lot at the Main Library were both pressured washed in preparation for painting.
- The Energy Management System upgrade at Eden Park Branch Library was completed.
- Flush valves were replaced in the single-stall restroom on the third floor at River Center Branch Library to prevent another overflow; an exterior window pane was also replaced on the third floor.
- Two new catch basins are being installed at the rear of Delmont Gardens Branch Library, near the staff parking lot; a water line was punctured during installation but was repaired.
- A slideshow of photos depicting recent issues and projects was presented to the Board:
 - A two-car accident occurred at the Main Library on December 8, 2021 at the entrance to the parking lot, damaging the monumental sign; no one was hurt and no major structural damage occurred, only cosmetic damage; landscaping will also have to be replaced, as well as some side lighting; Library staff are reviewing the possibility of adding bollards around the sign.
 - Installation of all three boilers at the Main Library was completed January 3, 2022; the exhaust stacks were raised above the parapet wall on the roof; a screen will be added later to maintain the design integrity of the building; the intake valves were also repositioned.
 - The Carver Branch Library metal roof project has begun; scaffolding was erected; work has begun above the building's meeting room storage since it is closest to the public entrance; an old screw from the previous roof punctured a water pipe in the ceiling during the start of work, but the problem was resolved quickly.
- A meeting was held December 22, 2021 to review final comments from the architect and Architectural Services regarding the multi-branch roofing and exterior restoration project; finer details are being revised; final construction documents should be received in the next two weeks in order to release a request for bids; the branches included in this project are Delmont Gardens and Zachary Branch Libraries, and Bluebonnet and Jones Creek Regional Libraries.

2. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS – Spencer Watts and Mary Stein (5:00 p.m.)

- A seven-member committee has been working on the new Employee Handbook; it will create a unified document that will serve as a primary resource for all employees for workplace expectations, policies, and system-wide procedures and forms.
- Two different aspects of the Library's literacy initiative were launched in January; will be the most significant programmatic efforts the Library has ever undertaken in this area and will include the following:
 - The "PRESS START! Ready, Set, Read" initiative; partnerships with LPB and the Knock Knock Children's Museum; includes guided-play curriculum and activities for ages 2 to 4, developed by Children's Services Coordinator, Tara Dearing, and staff; includes exploration of all the letters of the alphabet, as well as colors, numbers, concepts and shapes; patrons can take home booklets for at-home activities.
 - The Home Library Pilot Project: partnerships include Baton Rouge Parents Magazine, Kid Scoop News, the Baton Rouge Alliance for Students, and Patrons of the Public Library, among others; initiative will focus on third grade students in underperforming schools who will receive a free book and activity each month; will encourage more children's books in homes; long-term goal is to provide free books to all grade levels; comment from Donald Luther, Jr. regarding the literacy projects and encouragement to continue working together.
- Covid-19 Update: The infection rate of the Omnicron variant has been high, with over 800 new cases per day on average, over the past four days; the Library is maintaining its usual safety practices; the City-Parish is providing vaccines and booster shots for employees; a large number of Library staff are vaccinated; the Library also continues to follow the CDC and City-Parish guidelines for exposures and positive tests with display of symptoms; the City-Parish instituted a mask requirement for all City-Parish buildings during the last week of December; the Library reinstated the social distancing protocols for public access computer stations during the first week of January; Library staff infection and exposure rates were the highest ever in recent weeks; due to the holidays and high vacancy rate, the library periodically faced some scheduling difficulties.
- The Star Library achievement places our library system in the top 3% in the country.

- The genealogical research database, Ancestry.com, has reverted back to its traditional access model; previously, users had remote access during the pandemic; at the start of the new year, the license permits only on-site use at the Library; there is no other alternative subscription basis; question from Kathy Wascom if there is another database with remote access: there are other databases and resources that patrons can use.
- Computer Services update: credit card issues continue with the Library's bank and mk Solutions, that includes log files and driver issues; VDI deployments continue and the patch updates provided by Stephen Soloman, Server Analyst; improvements to the intranet Hub include enhancements to the budget app; upgrades continue for the firewall and core switches; work continues for the Infor software updates.
- The City-Parish issued a delayed opening tomorrow morning due to the upcoming winter weather; all Library staff have been apprised and public announcements were made.

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

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

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. UPDATE ON SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY – Spencer Watts and Patricia Husband (5:40 p.m.)

- A slideshow of concepts and designs was shown the Board.
- Regular design update meetings were held December 7, 2021 and January 4, 2022; an additional meeting was held December 10, 2021 to discuss power, data, security, surveillance systems, and card access.
- Interior concept discussions included textures, furniture, lighting, as well as chair rail types and method of installation, glass board sizes, corner guards, interior wayfinding signage, base types and installation, flooring, and room shade types.
- Other discussion points included the following:
 - RFID gate placement
 - Need for gutters and possible locations
 - Exterior furnishings and lighting
 - Staff work area furniture
 - Lighting overlay with furniture and shelving
- Detailed discussions were held on the option of metal bases in the restrooms; it was decided to use tiled bases instead of metal.
- Patricia Husband described the photos shown to the Board of furniture concepts in various library departments.
- It was suggested that the construction documents may not be ready until June, which is later than expected.
- Discussion with the Board on fabrics, colors and textures.

B. UPDATE ON SCOTLANDVILLE BRANCH LIBRARY – Spencer Watts and Patricia Husband (5:52 p.m.)

- Library staff met with the architects and Architectural Services on January 6, 2022 to discuss comments and questions on the Design Development documents. Key items discussed include the following:
 - Enlarging the Black Heritage area by 6 feet on each side; will allow for more seating and program space
 - Expanding the Teen Services area
 - Reducing the size of the data room in order to provide more staff work space
 - Updating the current columns to provide a more open, airy and lighter look
 - Maintaining and enhancing public access computer placement in each department
 - Laptop bars for patrons
- A slideshow of conceptual layouts for each library department was shown to the Board and changes were discussed.
- Meetings were also held to discuss mechanical, electrical and plumbing issues, as well as data and power.

C. VOTE TO ADOPT RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING RE-SUBDIVISION AND EXCHANGE OF PROPERTY FRONTING ROUZAN SQUARE – Jason Jacob (6:05 p.m.)

- A motion to adopt the resolution authorizing re-subdivision and exchange of property fronting Rouzan Square was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Delores Watts.

The motion was carried unanimously.

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

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. VOTE TO CONSIDER PLANNING FOR A NEW DELMONT GARDENS BRANCH LIBRARY AND THE ACQUISITION OF A NEW SITE WITHIN THE PLANK ROAD REVITALIZATION PLAN – Spencer Watts (6:06 p.m.)

- Review of the previous year’s discussions and community input on constructing the new library branch, as well as the Plank Road Revitalization Plan that would include the site of a new branch facility.
- A motion to approve Library staff to begin planning for a new Delmont Gardens Branch Library and take part in the acquisition of a new site within the Plan Road Revitalization Plan was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Delores Watts. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

B. VOTE TO ELECT OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR 2022 – Jason Jacob (6:10 p.m.)

- A motion to retain the Board officers from 2021 was made by Donald Luther, Jr. and seconded by Kathy Wascom. **The motion was carried unanimously.**

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

VII. COMMENTS BY THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL

- Donald Luther, Jr. addressed members of the public in attendance to introduce themselves.
- Jason Jacob commended the Library system on its Star rating and thanked staff for their hard work and dedication in making the library one of the best in the nation.
- Martha Guarisco commented on her excitement for the early literacy initiatives.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT – Board President Jason Jacob requested a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Delores Watts and seconded by Donald Luther, Jr. **The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m. by unanimous vote.**

Mr. Jason Jacob, President

Mr. Spencer Watts, Library Director