

ATHENS REGIONAL LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of July 20, 2023 Meeting

Multi-Purpose Room A, 3:30 pm

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 p.m. by Chair Campbell. Present were Ms. Ross, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Garner, Mr. Mason, Mr. Lutz, Ms. Norris, Ms. Russell, Mr. Shapiro, Ms. Quick, Ms. Shoemaker, and Mr. Timmons. Absent were Ms. Frey, Ms. Morris, Ms. Terrell, and Mr. Woods.

Staff present were Ms. Bell, Ms. Price, Ms. Calia, Ms. Josey, Ms. Obijuru, Ms. Mayfield, Ms. Green, Ms. Shull, Ms. Plaksin, Ms. Stangle, Ms. Hlgginbottom, and Ms. Clark.

Recognitions and Resolutions - None

The Draft Minutes of the April 20, 2023 meeting were amended to include two edits to page 2. Ms. Price made the appropriate edits. The amended minutes were unanimously approved. (Moted by Mr. Garner, Seconded by Ms. Russell)

The adoption of the July 20, 2023 agenda was unanimously approved without opposition.

Public Comment - Several community members attended the meeting. Twelve community members signed up for public comment. Each community member was given up to 3 minutes to address the Board. The following people addressed the Board during public comment: K. Kline, T. Canby, L. Stevens, D. Chasteen, G. Cowie, S. Jamison, R. Zimdars, J. Frick, L. Rhodes, R. Fosten, R. Johnson, and E. Whitlock.

Each speaker spoke from personal experiences and voiced their support for the freedom to read, and was against book banning. Several speakers shared their love for libraries and shared that libraries and collections should represent the entire community.

Financial Report:

Financial Report FY2023-Q4 and the ARLS Proposed FY24 budget was presented to each Board member. Ms. Bell introduced Business Manager, Lorrie Lavengood, who gave the report. Ms. Lavengood informed the Board that the numbers are subject to change and the books will remain open until the end of October.

Ms. Bell reminded the Board that due to the accounting software migration, we do not have the final numbers. Ms. Lavengood informed the Board that going forward, they will see an item breakdown so that expenses can be accounted for more efficiently. She assured the Board that the new format meets audit standards.

Ms. Bell and Ms. Lavengood took questions from Board members.

Financial Report FY2023-Q4 was unanimously accepted.

Regional Reports

Athens-Clarke County:

Ms. Russell gave the report. She gave an update on the site selection for the future East Side branch. Four sites have been approved including 2 sites on Barnett Shoals Road, the old Gaines School building, and a site near Southeast Clarke Park. Ms. Russell will keep the Board updated as the site selection process moves forward.

Franklin County:

Ms. Quick gave the report. She reported that circulation numbers are up. She was excited to report that the Franklin County branch was given a budget increase of \$5,000.00. Unfortunately, the branch was vandalized. Cameras have since been installed to help prevent vandalism in the future. Happy Helpers have been volunteering at the library.

Madison County:

Ms. Ross gave the report. The library welcomed a new assistant. Ms. Ross reported that computer use is up by 50%. Programming is also going very well. The library is proud of their partnership with MedLink. She was pleased to report that the library had a significant donation, and received a budget increase.

Oconee County:

Mr. Campbell gave the report. He reported that the Oconee Board of Trustees meeting was very well attended by the public. He thanked the staff for all their hard work regarding reconsideration requests. The Wire Park site construction is coming along well. He attended a walk through of the new building last week.

Oglethorpe:

Mr. Garner gave the report. Summer Reading is going very well. The Friends purchased prize books for the program. He was pleased to report that the library has the highest number of passive programs that they've ever had. The library held a very popular Teddy Bear Picnic program, as well as a Fire Safety program. Children thoroughly enjoyed both programs. The library has welcomed new Branch Manager, Catherine Ratcliffe. Catherine came from another branch and is very knowledgeable. She has hit the ground running.

Director's Report:

Before giving the Director's Report, Ms. Bell wanted to make the Board and public aware that some library staff were experiencing harassment due to some community members not agreeing with certain materials in the books collection. She stated that the harassment must stop. She shared that ARLS has a very qualified and hardworking staff who does a great job serving the community, and they do not deserve the treatment that they have been subjected to.

Ms. Bell presented Board members with an updated Reconsideration of Materials Policy and Request for Reconsideration Procedures document for approval. She stated that the policy and procedures were updated to ensure requests were being processed in a timely manner. In the updated policy, the Collections Department will process up to 5 titles or materials regionally per quarter. Ms Bell added that the shelving location of materials is not based on the Collections Department's opinion; shelving location is determined by taking into account publisher recommendations, vendor recommendations, author intent, and reviews. Board members reviewed the updated policy. Director Bell, Assistant Director Sue Plaksin, and Collection Manager Lindsay Josey addressed any questions or concerns from the Board. Ms. Plaksin informed the Board members that Programming will be addressed in a separate policy. Ms. Bell added that a reconsideration of programs process will be developed in the

near future. *(Action Item)*

Director Bell introduced Ms. Darcy Calia as the new Public Information Officer. Darcy began working with ARLS on June 20th. Ms. Calia is a graduate of UGA and comes with a host of knowledge.

We were notified in March that the **State Health Benefits Program (SHBP)** may be increasing the employer share for health benefits for all staff working 30 hours or more per week starting in January 2024. They propose a rather dramatic increase from \$843 per month, per eligible employee, to \$1,093 per month, per eligible staff member; an increase of \$250. Further, they are expecting the employer share to increase \$250 every January through fiscal year 2027. We did not know about this before submitting our budget request for FY24, so some changes in the amounts that we can award staff will be different from what was originally planned. Now that we know about these proposed increases, we will be able to budget for them in the future years. This could all change in August. It is my understanding that these increases are still being deliberated. GPLS is in discussion, and will keep us informed if anything changes. For now, we have to prepare a budget that meets these possible increases.

Austin Jenkins, former Branch Manager of Oglethorpe County, has accepted a part-time position assisting Assistant Director, Toby Mayfield, with branch services. Austin is a great leader who is already helping Branch Managers and will be an asset in this position.

Finally, Ms. Bell was pleased to report Niké Shimobi-Obijuru, Circulation Services Coordinator, and Jordan Rhym, Heritage Room Intern, were both selected as recipients of the **ALA Spectrum Scholar program**. This is a very big honor. Both Niké and Jordan are in an accredited MLIS program.

Committee Reports:

Finance - None

Policy - None.

Personnel - None.

Nominating - None

Old Business:

None

New Business:

- a. Approval of the FY24 Proposed Budget - Unanimously approved.
Motioned by Ms. Russell, Seconded by Mr. Timmons
- b. Approval to move Staff Development Day to November 15, 2023 to accommodate voting - Unanimously approved. (motioned by Mr. Lutz, seconded by Mr. Shapiro)
- c. Approval to permanently move SDD to the 3rd Wednesday of November going forward. Unanimously approved. (motioned by Ms. Norris, seconded by Mr. Garner)
- d. Approval of the ARLS Reconsideration of Materials Policy and Procedures with amendment to remove the name of the previous staff member who no longer works for the system - Unanimously approved. (motioned by Ms. Russell, seconded by Ms. Ross)

Announcements: none

Adjourn: With no further business, Chair Campbell called for adjournment at 5:07 p.m. Unanimously approved without opposition.

Next Meeting is scheduled for October 19, 2023 at 3:30 pm.

Board Actions

- Approval to move Staff Development Day to November 15, 2023 to accommodate voting.
- Approval to permanently move SDD to the 3rd Wednesday of November going forward.
- Approval of the ARLS Reconsideration of Materials Policy and Procedures with amendment to remove the name of the previous staff member who no longer works for the system