

ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of January 14, 2025 Meeting

ACCL Boardroom, 4:00 pm

Chair Lynch called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm. Trustees in attendance are Mr. Kurtz (via zoom), Ms. Lynch, Ms. Luke, Mr. Kirkpatrick, Ms. Ritter, Ms. Brickman, Ms. Pratt, Ms. Carter, Ms. Klein, Ms. Leitch, Ms. Bogue, Mr. Atwater, Ms. Cox, and Mr. Woods. Staff members present were Ms. Chambliss (via zoom), Ms. Price, Ms. Mayfield, Ms. Green, Ms. Plaksin, Ms. Josey, Ms. Hood, Ms. Shull, Ms. Lavengood, Mr. Cohen, and Ms. Shimobi-Obijuru.

Announcements:

Ms. Lynch extended a warm welcome to Interim Director, Darla Chambliss, and expressed the board's appreciation for her leadership and support during this transitional period.

Ms. Lynch was also pleased to welcome new board members, Jonathan Kirkpatrick and Nicole Klein.

Public Comment:

Dexter Smith - Patron Dexter Smith attended the meeting to appeal a one-year ban issued for violating the library's Patron Code of Conduct. During the public comment portion of the meeting, Mr. Smith was given three minutes to speak. He denied the allegations outlined in the incident report and expressed his desire for the ban to be lifted.

Following his remarks, trustees were given the opportunity to ask questions. Chair Lynch thanked Mr. Smith for attending and informed him that the Board's decision would be communicated to him via mail or email. Mr. Smith expressed his appreciation and exited the meeting.

Chair Lynch then requested that Security Officer Eli Cohen be called into the meeting to provide further clarification regarding the incident. Mr. Cohen joined the meeting shortly thereafter and responded to questions from board members. Ms. Chambliss recommended that the Board uphold the one-year ban, citing library policy and established precedent.

After discussion, the Athens-Clarke County Library Board of Trustees unanimously voted to uphold Mr. Smith's one-year ban. (motioned by Ms. Bogue, seconded by Mr. Kurtz). *Action Item*

Approval of Minutes:

- The draft minutes of the October 8, 2024 meeting were unanimously approved. (motioned by Ms. Bogue, seconded by Mr. Woods)

Approval of Agenda:

- The January 14, 2025 meeting agenda was unanimously adopted. (Ms. Brickman, seconded by Ms. Carter)

Financial Report:

Ms. Lavengood presented the Financial Report FY2025-Q2. The report was reviewed and unanimously accepted by the Board.

She then provided an overview of the proposed FY2026 Budget, which includes a 4% salary increase for staff and funding to cover State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) costs.

Following the overview, Interim Director Chambliss invited Assistant Director Mayfield to address the Board regarding ongoing water issues at the Pinewoods Resource Center. Ms. Mayfield explained that the branch has faced repeated disruptions due to frequent pipe failures, leaving the facility without running water for extended periods. She shared that discussions with Pinewoods management about installing a reservoir tank have not yet yielded a resolution.

The cost for the reservoir tank is included in the proposed FY2026 Budget. Ms. Chambliss asked the Board to ratify the budget to ensure these costs are covered. (*Action Item*)

Ms. Lavengood presented the Board with a document outlining projected IT costs for 2025. She and Ms. Chambliss requested approval to use unreserved funds for these expenditures. (*Action Item*)

Business Manager Lorrie Lavengood reviewed the outlined figures and prioritized needs. High-priority items included a new phone system required by the county, replacement of the administration copier, and a new projector screen for MPR-B. Medium-to-high priority items included replacing outdated staff computers, upgrading older Envisionware self-check stations, updating PIO office computers with Adobe Suite, and upgrading the projector in the storyroom.

Following discussion, the Board unanimously approved the use of unreserved funds for these expenditures. (*motioned by Ms. Brickman, seconded by Ms. Leitch*)

Committee Reports:

- **Friends of the Library** - Ms. Burns gave the report.
- **Winterville** - Ms. Leitch gave the report.
- **Foundation** – A representative from the Foundation was not present to give the report.

Director's Report:

Ms. Chambliss gave the report.

- Ms. Chambliss began by introducing herself to the Board and sharing details about her professional background. She noted that she previously worked for several years as an editorial artist at the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* before discovering her passion for libraries in the early 1990s, when she began volunteering at her local library. Since then, she has dedicated her

career to library service. Ms. Chambliss retired in August 2024 from a multi-county regional library system headquartered in Dalton, Georgia. She expressed her admiration for ARLS's vibrant programming and innovative projects and shared that she is honored to serve as Interim Director.

- Ms. Chambliss invited department heads to provide brief updates on recent activities and initiatives.
- Darcy Calia, Public Information Officer, shared news about the launch of the "Baby's First" initiative, an early literacy campaign in partnership with the Children's Department. Through this program, ARLS branded goodie bags will be delivered to local hospitals for newborns, each containing a board book and early literacy materials. The team has met with St. Mary's Hospital and has a meeting scheduled with Piedmont to expand the program.
- Trudi Green, Assistant Director, reported on the success of the Holocaust Exhibit, which was on display from November 7 through December 19. The exhibit drew strong community engagement, including guided tours for approximately 500 students and their teachers from Clarke Middle, St. Joseph's, and Athens Academy. Tours were led by library staff using a script provided by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Patrons also offered overwhelmingly positive feedback.
- Nike' Shimobi-Obijuru, Chair of Staff Development Day, shared highlights from another successful day of professional learning and connection for staff. Board member Charlene Brickman served as the keynote speaker, delivering an engaging talk on the importance of adult play. The event also served as a celebration of Valerie Bell, marking her final Staff Development Day before her retirement on December 31, 2025.
- Elizabeth Hood, Teen Services Coordinator, announced that the Teen Department is currently accepting donations for one of its most anticipated annual events, Bling Your Prom.

Communications:

- Ms. Ritter expressed her gratitude to the Friends of the Library for their continued support of the East Side Library. She also highlighted the Aaron Heard and Lay Park Resource Centers, and spoke about the importance of strengthening outreach efforts to better understand and meet the needs of those communities. Ms. Ritter noted that having additional staff at the resource centers would help enhance services and make community engagement more effective. Chair Lynch asked Ms. Ritter if she would be willing to serve as the point of contact to discuss expanding outreach efforts with the new Executive Director. Ms. Ritter agreed.

New Business:

- Vote for trustee to fill vacancy on Regional Board

The Board unanimously approved Ms. Bogue to fill the Athens-Clarke County vacancy on the Regional Board. (motioned by Ms. Brickman, seconded by Mr. Woods)

Board Actions:

- Ratify ACCL FY26 Budget proposal - Unanimously approved without opposition.
- Approve unreserved funds expenditures - Unanimously approved. (motioned by Ms. Brickman, seconded by Ms. Leitch)
- Vote to uphold patron Dexter Smith's 1-year ban. Unanimously approved. (motioned by Ms. Bogue, seconded by Mr. Kurtz).

Old Business:

None

Adjourn:

With no further business, Chair Lynch adjourned the meeting at 5:34 p.m. Unanimously approved without opposition.

Next Meeting:

April 8, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.