

Oconee County Library Board Meeting

Minutes for January 20, 2026 4:30 p.m. The Oconee County Library at Wire Park

Chairperson Norris called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. The following members of the Board were present: Chairperson Rubielen Norris, Vice-Chairperson Daphne Norton, Secretary Fred Lutz, Deann Craft, Kelly Hansford, Wanda Stitt-Gohdes, Laura Moore, Angela Moss-Hill, Rachael Watson and Mandy Marable. A quorum was present.

Oconee County Library and Athens Regional Library System members were also present including Beth McIntyre, Toby Mayfield, James Mitchell, Katherine Ratcliffe and Lorrie Swanson.

The meeting was video recorded by Lee Becker of the community. No public comments were offered at the meeting.

A motion by Rachel Watson seconded by Laura Moore, carried approving the minutes of the October 21, 2025 board meeting.

Art Presentations and Reports

Daphne Norton reported the progress of the Art Committee which was established to provide appropriate art for the new Wire Park location. Two proposals were presented at the July 15, 2025 board meeting. Subsequently, the Request for Proposals was reopened and advertised locally. Four proposals were presented to the board at this meeting. Highlights of the presentations are as follows:

1. Glen Galau presented an idea for three large, rectangular panels for the inside walls of the main room. The panels are metal printed with striking black tree on pure white enamel. Panels are U/V and scratch resistant with an estimated life of 60 to 80 years. The projected cost for the printed panels is \$10,000 with delivery within several weeks after authorization. Installation is estimated to take a day and cost about \$1000.
2. Bess Carter and Sarah Glass presented a "Little Cloud" themed set of nine paneled murals for the children's library space. Individual soft-color panels would highlight well-known areas within Oconee County (Elder Bridge, Rocket Field, etc.) and would be accompanied by pictures of indigenous small animals tying the display together with poetry. The panels would be acrylic painted on composite wood covered by plexiglass for protection. The artists desired to collaborate with the committee to achieve the best presentation. The projected installed cost is \$10,353 with an installation date in late June 2026. Installation could be accomplished in about a day.

3. Madeline Kennon proposed “Our Story” murals painted on the inside walls throughout the library with “nods” to local history and historic places. Vines and books would tie the larger murals together. A puzzle corner mural and mural in the entrance vestibule were suggested as interest spots. The murals would be created by projecting a picture onto the walls for the artist to complete in paint. Touch-up and minor repair were offered as needed for the life of the murals. The artist indicated a willingness to work on appropriate weather-resistant art outside the library if that were permitted by Wire Park management. A cost of \$20,000 was proposed with a month required to create the murals within the library.
4. Will Eskridge proposed a series of acrylic murals within the library. The murals would be protected by a U/V resistant clearcoat. Characters and stories from books would be connected with a whimsical raccoon reader appropriate to each area of the library. Murals would be painted directly on the interior walls. A cost of \$14,000 was proposed with a month required to create and install the project.

After the artist presentations, Ms. Norton stated that the art committee (Daphne Norton, Angela Moss-Hill and Laura Moore) were providing a recommendation after review of all proposals. The art committee recommended that two proposals be accepted: Mr. Galau’s tree theme for the main part of the library and the Carter/Glass mural panels for the children’s area. A motion to that effect was made by Ms. Norton and seconded by Ms. Stitt-Gohdes. Discussion ensued. It was noted that while the total cost of two projects exceeded the amount suggested in the Request for Proposal, the board could decide to commit additional funds to the project above the donation received to fund the art project. The motion carried.

Library Reports

The branch manager’s report was provided by Mr. Mitchell for the Wire Park location. Success measures were all positive with library card issuance, computer usage, Wi-Fi usage and eLibrary checkouts showing double-digit increases. Notable programming events last quarter included the Teen Makers Market featuring teen entrepreneurs selling handmade creations, an adult craft materials swap, and a Letters to Seniors writing program. Mr. Mitchell noted that all library computers have been upgraded to Windows 11.

Ms. Radcliffe provided the report for the Bogart library location. Success measures were provided with library card issuance and Wi-Fi usage showing double-digit increases. A new baseline for patron visits was created due to replacement of the door automatic counter. Notable programming events included December story time (attended by 113 people including Santa and Mrs. Claus), North Oconee High School Career day (attended by over 300 teens) and participation in the Bogart Trunk or Treat where books and candy were distributed.

The board received a written summary of third quarter library programming planned for the Wire Park and Bogart locations.

Director McIntyre discussed two handouts provided by the Georgia Public Library Service. The Library Service brochure listed the many community benefits provided by robust community libraries. In particular, community patrons have access to modern technology and high-speed Wi-Fi in accessible, improved facilities. Nearly half of all Georgians hold a library card with all counties in Georgia having at least one public library. The Carl Vinson Institute projects the public library value to Georgians at over one billion dollars in terms of services and economic impacts.

Ms. Mayfield summarized her written report of extensive support activities during the last quarter. Notable events included the Madison Harvest Festival, annual ARLS staff day, Oconee County art committee proposal review meetings and supporting library participation in holiday programs within the region.

Ms. Swanson reviewed the proposed Oconee County libraries budget for FY 2027. Questions regarding the projected revenue from the Board of Commissioners and the City of Watkinsville were addressed. It was noted that the proposed budget reduces reserves. The intent is to retain a buffer equal to the expense of three months of operation. A motion to approve the budget as proposed was made by Mr. Lutz and seconded by Ms. Stitt-Gohdes. The motion carried.

Ms. Stitt-Gohdes inquired whether any progress had been made with Wire Park management regarding the outside book drop signage since the book drop is hard to find. No progress has been made. Ms. Stitt-Gohdes requested that the subject be revisited with Wire Park management.

There being no further business, upon the motion by Mr. Lutz seconded by Ms. Stitt-Gohdes, the chair adjourned the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for 4:30 p.m. on April 21, 2026 at the Bogart library.

_____ Rubielen Norris, Chairperson

_____ Fred Lutz, Secretary