

Oconee County Library Board Meeting

Minutes for April 21, 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, Kelly Hansford, Wanda Stitt-Gohdes, Laura Moore, and Rachael Watson. 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.

No public comments were offered at the meeting.

A motion by Ms. Moore seconded by Ms. Stitt-Gohdes, carried approving the minutes of the January 20, 2026 board meeting.

Representatives of Arcollab, Lori Newcomer and Kjirsten Ogburn, presented the architect's plan for Phase II construction of the Oconee library at Wire Park. Arcollab is an Athens firm that has developed plans for some 14 other libraries in Georgia. Ms. Newcomer indicated that the design development phase is nearly complete with drawings to support a construction request for proposals in July, contract award in August and commencement of construction in September. The RFP will request breakout pricing for elements of the project. Ms. Ogburn indicated that the construction would convert some of the large unfinished storage area creating three new public rooms: a children's activity room, a young adults activity room and an expanded Ivy Room for quiet study. Enough storage area will be retained to support branch needs. The library entry area will be reworked, and improved signage will be provided. New furniture will be provided for the new rooms and existing furniture will be rearranged. Board member discussion highlighted the need to maintain staff line-of-sight access into the new rooms. Mr. Mitchell indicated that the Friends of the Library were pleased with their existing space which will not be reduced in Phase II. The recently approved library art decorations will not be impacted. Decoration of the new rooms will be coordinated with the art projects. One member suggested a safe swing be considered for the children's activity room.

The branch manager's report was provided by Mr. Mitchell for the Wire Park location. Success measures all increased with library card issuance, Wi-Fi usage and eLibrary checkouts showing double-digit percentage increases. Notable programming events last quarter included a gaming partnership event between teen and UGA Gaming for Good Clubs, a historical reenactment of a Georgia signer of the Declaration of Independence, a children's Teacup Fairy Garden and the 5th annual FanFest event with over 1000 in attendance. Two book drop signs have been added to help patrons find the drive-through book drop location.

Ms. Radcliffe provided the report for the Bogart library location. Success measures were provided with Wi-Fi usage greatly increased. Notable programming events included ESL classes, an indoor scavenger hunt for children, Tolkien Reading Day and a Storybook Trail program discussing local trees and the land history of the library. The county repaired warped flooring in the meeting room and responded quickly to several other maintenance needs.

Ms. Mayfield summarized her written report of extensive support activities during the last quarter. Notable events included bi-weekly meetings with branch managers, support of the regional courier service, construction planning meetings with Arcollab, support of the Oconee County board of trustee Art Committee meetings, support of the Athens Eastside Library project and a food drive for the Northeast Georgia Foodbank.

Ms. Swanson presented the financial report. Considerable board discussion ensued regarding self-generated revenue, credit card fees and the Oconee Library reserve balance. Ms. Stitt-Gohdes moved to accept the financial report. After a second by Mr. Lutz, the board voted to accept the financial report.

Chair Norris announced that the executive committee nominated officers for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2026. The following individuals were nominated: Daphne Norton (Chair), Kelly Hansford (Vice-Chair) and Fred Lutz (Secretary). The board elected the nominees by acclamation.

The board reviewed the regional library system meeting room policy. It was noted that any appeals of Oconee library meeting room use decisions would be resolved by the regional board of trustees. Upon a motion by Ms. Stitt-Gohdes seconded by Ms. Moore, supplements to the regional meeting room policy were approved by the board for the Wire Park and Bogart locations.

Chair Norris is leaving the Oconee library board of trustees at the end of June having completed her two terms on the board. Mr. Mitchell thanked her for her outstanding leadership and participation. He presented Ms. Norris a book to be added to the library in her name recognizing the service of Rubielen Norris. Board members enthusiastically thanked Rubielen for her dedicated leadership and service to the Oconee library.

There being no further business and 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 July 21, 2026 at the Wire Park location.

_____ Rubielen Norris, Chairperson

_____ Fred Lutz, Secretary