

Ouachita Parish Public Library

Board of Control

Minutes

December 12, 2024

The Ouachita Parish Public Library Board of Control Meeting was held on Thursday, December 12, 2024, at the Main Branch of the Ouachita Parish Public Library. In attendance were the following members: Ms. Betty Ward-Cooper, President; Mr. Darris Waren, Vice-President; Mr. Larry Bratton, ex-officio member; Ms. Alex Webre; Ms. Kathy Craig; and Mr. LaMario Looney. Ms. Misti Cordell and Mr. Wyman Mardis were absent. Also attending were Mr. Jay Mitchell, OPPJ Assistant District Attorney; Ms. Nancy Green, OPPL Acting Director; Ms. LaKeisha Bosworth, OPPL Assistant Director; and Ms. Casie Castle, OPPL Business Manager.

President Cooper called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm and Mr. Looney led the invocation.

Mr. Bratton asked to add one agenda item to discuss upcoming Broadband Grants information. The agenda change was approved on a motion by Mr. Bratton, seconded by Mr. Waren, with all in favor. The agenda, with change, was approved on a motion by Ms. Craig, seconded by Ms. Webre, with all in favor.

There were no guests or public comments.

The minutes from the previous meeting held on November 14, 2024, were approved on a motion by Mr. Waren, seconded by Ms. Webre, with all present voting in favor of approval.

The monthly reports from the month of November 2024 were then presented.

The Statistical Report was noted with information about the Library of Things that included patron requests for tools to be added to this collection. The specific tools requested were drills and one set has been purchased and added to this collection for a trial period.

Also noted at this time was the partnership with the local Food Bank for the month of December and the placement of boxes to collect food donations at each branch during December.

Ms. Green also discussed the potential of hiring ULM intern student, Olivia Wyatt, as the new Communications Coordinator. Ms. Green mentioned that Olivia has been working well as an intern and she has a good grasp of what is needed to promote OPPL and all we have to offer.

Mr. Looney then asked if the library could partner with Monroe City Schools to help students with their reading. Ms. Green and Ms. Bosworth both discussed how the library partners with

schools to provide resources for teachers as well as going into classrooms for story times and other programs. Also noted was the Read, Learn, Succeed program through United Way in which many of our staff participate weekly in area schools.

The Financial Report for November 2024 as well as the Personnel Report for November 2024 were then presented and all three reports were approved on a motion by Ms. Webre, seconded by Ms. Craig, with all present voting in favor of approval.

Ms. Bosworth discussed a PLA Digital Literacy Grant that she applied for on behalf of the Ouachita Parish Public Library and that Grant has been approved. Ouachita Parish Public Library was one of 150 libraries across the nation to be awarded this \$10,000 grant to be used to reach a minimum of 75 patrons with digital learning. Ms. Bosworth hopes that all Branches will be able to offer computer classes and that the Grant will allow digital navigators to help with teaching the classes. The library will have until June 16, 2025, to complete the grant's requirements.

Mr. Bratton then spoke about the upcoming Broadband Grants which he noted would tie into Ms. Bosworth's discussion. Mr. Bratton stated Comcast approached the Broadband Committee and provided every student at Central Elementary School with a laptop computer. Mr. Bratton noted that the Broadband Initiative originally gave \$1.36 billion to Louisiana with \$14 million being assigned to Ouachita Parish for the expansion of a broadband network in rural areas. He noted that 4,600 locations have been identified as underserved and the Governor has set aside 8 initiatives to award grants with the remainder of the \$1.36 billion which came to around \$700 million. Mr. Bratton discussed a \$100 million grant being one of the initiatives that would be specific to offering online tutoring to students.

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled to be held on Thursday, January 9, 2025, at the Main Branch Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:49 pm on a motion by Mr. Waren, seconded by Ms. Webre, with all present voting in favor.

Betty Ward-Cooper, President

Nancy Green, Secretary