

Ouachita Parish Public Library

Board of Control

Minutes

February 9, 2023

The Ouachita Parish Public Library Board of Control Meeting was held on Thursday, February 9, 2023 at 12:00pm 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. Misti Cordell; Ms. Alex Webre; and Ms. Kathy Craig. Mr. Wyman Mardis was absent. Also attending were Mr. Jay Mitchell, OPPL Assistant District Attorney; Ms. Nancy Green, OPPL Acting Director; Ms. LaKeisha Bosworth, OPPL Assistant Director; and Ms. Casie Castle, OPPL Business Manager.

President Betty Ward- Cooper called the meeting to order at 12:02pm. Mr. Waren offered the invocation.

There were no agenda changes, and the agenda was approved as presented on a motion by Ms. Cordell, seconded by Ms. Craig.

President Cooper welcomed guests Mrs. Connie Sampognaro, Mrs. Vickie Krutzer, Former State Representative Kay Kellogg Katz, Ms. Dilcie McDonald Green, Ms. Anna Reed, Ms. Marie Brown, Mr. Cliff Thomas, and Mr. Bill Land of Land 3 Architect.

President Cooper then called for public comment.

Ms. Connie Sampognaro distributed copies for the board of Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry's Policy suggestions concerning age-inappropriate content for children in public libraries. Mrs. Sampognaro also stated that before coming to the last board meeting on January 12, 2023, she met with other members of the public including a Sheriff and elected officials to ask their opinion about the books that she had brought before the Board for reconsideration at that time. She expressed that all of those that she had talked to about these books were in agreement with her. Mrs. Sampognaro then made reference to the fact that she mistakenly mentioned the wrong parish in her comment at the January Library Board meeting and she was later contacted about this mistake by a Board member. Mrs. Sampognaro expressed that she felt bullied by this Board member.

Mrs. Katz spoke saying she decided to attend the meeting due to what she was hearing in the community about the books that were brought before the Board for reconsideration at the January 12 board meeting. Ms. Katz expressed concern that these books were in the Children's

section at the library. Mr. Warren responded that the books in question were never in the Children's section of the library but were in the Young Adult section. He further stated that once Ms. Green and Mrs. Bosworth were made aware of their being an issue with them, the titles were reclassified and moved to the Adult section. Mr. Warren then stated that the library board had decided at the January 12 board meeting to move the titles from the shelves to behind the Circulation desk at Main Branch to be checked out on request by patrons over the age of 18. Ms. Katz stated that local community issues needed to be handled by the locally.

Mrs. Vickie Krutzer spoke stating she believes that the books that she and Mrs. Sampognaro presented for reconsideration at the January 12 meeting need to be removed from the library. She said that everything affects our young people. President Cooper stated that the library has policies and procedures in place for reconsideration of books. She thanked Mrs. Sampognaro, Ms. Katz, and Mrs. Krutzer for their comments.

The minutes from the previous meeting held on January 12, 2023, were approved on a motion by Mrs. Craig, seconded by Mrs. Cordell with all present voting in favor of approval.

President Cooper called for Ms. Green to review OPPL's monthly Statistical, Financial, and Personnel Reports from January of 2023.

Ms. Green discussed the Statistical Report, noting that for January of 2023 Physical Circulation exceeded the total from January 2022. She also noted Other Patron Use was up from January of 2022. She mentioned that some totals for eServices were not available from the state library at the time the Statistical Report had been printed; however, she mentioned the updated information that had not been included such as Homework Help showed an increase, Pronunciator had 13 uses, and Learning Express had 67 uses for the month of January. Overall eServices showed an increase as well as system services being up overall for the month of January. Total program attendance was 5,550 patrons which was an increase from December 2022. Visits and total patron use for January of 2023 showed an overall increase from this time last year.

Ms. Green then highlighted two recent programs that were held for young adults at the Carver-McDonald Branch and at the Louise Williams Branch. The Carver-McDonald Branch partnered with Carroll Junior High School to allow students to vote for their favorite books from the Louisiana Young Readers' Choice book list. Students were required to read at least two of these books. Representatives from the Louisiana Secretary of State Voter Outreach Division brought actual voting machines to the Branch and students were able to cast their votes on these machines. This was quite an experience for these young adults.

The Louise Williams Branch hosted a program called "Words Have Power". Young Adults ages 12-18 were asked to choose their favorite quote from an influential African American and explain what the quote meant to them. Prizes for this contest were donated by the Friends of the Library organization. One hundred and fifty quotes were submitted. The winning quote was,

"Nothing will work unless you do" by Maya Angelou. The winner of the contest will be featured in the April edition of the Ouachita Parish Public Library's Cattails newsletter.

The Statistical Report was approved on a motion by Mr. Waren, seconded by Ms. Webre.

The Financial Report for January 2023 was presented and approved on a motion by Mr. Waren, seconded by Mrs. Craig. Mr. Waren then asked Mr. Mitchell when the Ad Valorem taxes would start to be paid. Mr. Mitchell stated that there was a normal schedule of payments each year with 2 or 3 being scheduled to be paid before May.

The Personnel report for January 2023 was approved on a motion by Ms. Cordell, seconded by Ms. Craig.

Other Business/Discussion:

Mr. Bill Land of Land 3 Architect gave updates about the building on Oliver Road that is to be renovated as the new Main Branch of the Ouachita Parish Public Library. Mr. Land has presented the Ouachita Parish Police Jury with a Property Assessment Report and has been in contact with J. W. Perry who works with Faulk & Foster who previously oversaw the building. Mr. Land believes the building to be a good, sound structure. Through Mr. Perry, Mr. Land was able to contact the roofing, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical contractors who have worked on the building in the past. Mr. Land has not been able to access the elevator in the building as it is boarded up and is currently a freight elevator, but he hopes to upgrade it to a passenger elevator. Mr. Land discussed the needed repairs to the parking lot and stated that he had contacted Lazenby & Associates, a local engineering and surveying firm, to determine the line between the building under consideration and the neighboring building. After his inspection of the building, Mr. Land feels there are no deal-breakers to acquiring what he believes to be a good building. Mr. Mitchell stated at this point that he was comfortable with the inspection that had been made and that he felt everything was on track. He stated he was hopeful the Police Jury could close on the purchase by the end of the month.

President Cooper asked if Mr. Land felt there were any issues with the building. Mr. Land responded that at first he had questioned the integrity of the metal deck at the site, but he had found that it was well supported. He also noted that the northeast corner of the roof membrane was rippled which he attributed to the storm and high winds the area has been experiencing. Mr. Land estimated the cost to repair the roof at \$38,000. He also noted that asbestos had been found in the carpet glue of the building and that removal would cost \$25,000 and abatement would cost \$78,000.

A future site for a new Carver-McDonald Branch was discussed. Mr. Bratton stated that he felt once the Police Jury closed the deal on the new site for the Main Branch that the board would be in a better position to move forward with looking for property for a new Carver-McDonald Branch. Mr. Mitchell stated for clarification that any site the board found would be then recommended to the Police Jury for possible purchase. President Cooper asked if the board

wanted to make a choice of real estate agent. Mr. Mitchell stated that since this section of the agenda was written as "Discussion/Action on property in Carver-McDonald area" that the board could make a motion to select a real estate agent. A motion was made by Mr. Waren and seconded by Mrs. Webre to recommend to the Police Jury to engage Mr. Bill Roark as realtor to locate a new site for a new Carver-McDonald Branch.

Mr. Bratton then stated that he had attended a meeting and learned Renwick Street could be closing due to a safety initiative on US Highway 165 by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. He said the plan was for frontage roads to become one-way streets. Mr. Bratton suggested that a DOTD representative attend the board meeting in March so that the Board would have more information going forward.

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday, March 9, 2023, at the Main Branch Library in the Louis Lock Meeting Room. The meeting was adjourned at 12:54 pm on a motion by Mrs. Webre, seconded by Mrs. Craig, with all voting in favor.