

Ouachita Parish Public Library

Board of Control

Minutes

March 9, 2023

Ouachita Parish Public Library Board of Control Meeting was held on Thursday, March 9, 2023, at the Main Branch of the Ouachita Parish Public Library. In attendance were the following members: Mr. Darris Waren, Vice-President; Mr. Wyman Mardis; Ms. Alex Webre; Ms. Kathy Craig; and new board member Ms. Mashi Epting. Ms. Betty Ward Cooper, President; Mr. Larry Bratton, ex-officio member; and Ms. Misti Cordell were absent. Also attending were Mr. Jay Mitchell, OPPJ Assistant District Attorney; Ms. Nancy Green, OPPL Acting Director; and Ms. Casie Castle, OPPL Business Manager.

Newly appointed member of the Ouachita Parish Public Library Board of Control Ms. Mashi Epting was sworn in by Mr. Jay Mitchell, OPPJ Assistant District Attorney.

Vice President Darris Waren called the meeting to order at 12:05pm and gave the invocation.

Mr. Waren welcomed guests Mrs. Connie Sampognaro, Mrs. Vickie Krutzer, Former State Representative Kay Kellogg Katz, Mr. Bill Roark, local realtor, and Mr. Bill Land of Land 3 Architect.

Mr. Waren then called for public comment.

Mrs. Connie Sampognaro inquired if the library had put a policy in place to review books with sexually explicit content as suggested by Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry and she also inquired as to whether an opinion had been received from the Attorney General's office about the Board's previous decision to place the objectional books in a restricted area. Mr. Mitchell responded that no opinion had yet been received and that once he receives the opinion, he will forward it to the library board.

Ms. Katz commented that the public's concern about a book should be enough for the book to be reviewed for reconsideration.

Mrs. Vickie Krutzer stated that she wants to encourage more music and art events to be held at the Library.

Vice President Waren called for any agenda changes. There were no changes, and the agenda was approved as presented on a motion by Mrs. Craig, seconded by Mrs. Webre.

Vice President Warren asked to have Mr. Bill Roark moved up on the agenda to talk about any updates on the search for property for a new Carver-McDonald Branch to be built. Mr. Roark stated that he did not have anything to report at this time as he is not sure where the board is in the process or what the board wants to do as far as looking into properties. He spoke about the research he did at the request of Pat Moore in 2018 to find prospective properties for a new Carver-McDonald Branch to be built on. Mr. Warren stated that the Carver-McDonald Citizens Group has requested that the Branch stay in the area it is in now. It was mentioned that the land next to Miller Funeral Home located across from the current Carver-McDonald Branch is available. Mr. Bill Land of Land 3 Architect related that he had approached the owner of the Miller Funeral Home to ask about the land, but she had informed him that local kids play football on that piece of property, and she would be hesitant to sell it.

Mrs. Krutzer then suggested that the Library partner with the schools around the current Branch to open a joint library inside the school as she had read that other communities across the country have done. Mr. Mitchell expressed that this suggestion had been previously made; however, there were concerns about adults accessing a public library inside a school during school hours.

Mr. Roark left a commitment letter with the library board to be reviewed whereby he would be the sole realtor the library would use in order to buy or sale land/property for the next 12 months. Mr. Roark then left the meeting. Vice President Warren proposed that the Board agree to work with Mr. Roark on locating a property on which to build a new Carver-McDonald Branch as well as to sell the current Main Branch upon completion of the renovations to the new location for Main Branch. Ms. Epting questioned the 5% commission that Mr. Roark would receive when in her experience as a realtor she had only requested 3%. Mrs. Webre stated that she believed the 5% to be a reasonable amount given the time spent by Mr. Roark to locate property as well as advertise the sale of the current Main Branch when the time comes. Mr. Mitchell stated the board would need to present a commitment letter to the Police Jury for consideration and approval of the Buyer's Agreement with Mr. Roark and Tri -State Properties. A motion was made by Ms. Webre and seconded by Mr. Mardis to present the commitment letter to the Police Jury for consideration.

The minutes from the previous meeting held on February 9, 2023, were approved on a motion by Mr. Mardis, seconded by Ms. Webre with all present voting in favor of approval. Vice President Warren called for Ms. Green to review OPPL's monthly Statistical, Financial, and Personnel Reports from February of 2023.

Ms. Green discussed the Statistical Report, noting that for February of 2023 Physical Circulation had increased from February 2022. She also noted Reference questions, eReference questions, in-house usage, and meeting and other room use had all increased. eServices and eBooks/Audiobooks/eVideos showed an increase as well as system services being up overall for the month of February. There were 372 total in-person programs for the month of February 2023 with an overall attendance of 6,045 patrons. Ms. Green also noted the attendance

number for computer classes for February 2023 was 223 which was a significant increase from attendance in February 2022. There were 6 events the library participated in. These events, Ms. Green mentioned, were events the library participated in but that were sponsored by outside organizations in the community. There was a total of 514 people in attendance at these events. Overall for the month of February 2023, there were over 400 programs held either in-person or virtually with over 7,500 patrons in attendance. Visits and Circulation for February of 2023 showed an overall increase from this time last year. The Statistical Report was approved on a motion by Ms. Webre, seconded by Ms. Craig.

Ms. Green discussed the Financial Report for February 2023. She pointed out that there were no major changes or things of note during the month of February except the cost of the survey done by Lazenby & Associates on the new building being purchased for the new Main Branch location. The Financial Report was approved on a motion by Ms. Craig, seconded by Ms. Epting. At this point, Mrs. Krutzer then asked the Board how much money the Library had total. Vice President Warren stated he would need to refer her to Mr. Brad Cammack, OPPJ Treasurer, who was not present at the meeting.

The Personnel report for February 2023 was then discussed by Ms. Green and was approved on a motion by Mr. Mardis, seconded by Ms. Craig.

Under Other Business/Discussion Topics:

Mr. Bill Land of Land 3 Architect was present to speak about the updates to the Ouachita Parish Police Jury purchasing the old Stein Mart building on Louisville Ave to be renovated as the new Main Branch of the Ouachita Parish Public Library. Mr. Mitchell informed the Board that the signed deed to the property should be filed by the end of the week. Mrs. Krutzer and Mrs. Sampognaro questioned the cost of purchasing and renovating the new building versus renovating the current Main Branch. Mr. Land stated that the closing cost of the new building was around \$2.8 million to which Mr. Mitchell stated it was actually a little less than that, looking it up to note that it was \$2,796,875.10. Mr. Land noted the estimated cost to renovate the new building would be around \$4.4 million making a total investment of around \$7.2 million on the new property. Mr. Land then stated that Mr. Roark had estimated the current Main Branch and land selling for around \$3.5 million which would recoup some of the cost of purchasing and renovating the new location. Mr. Land stated that it had previously been estimated to cost around \$6.5 million to renovate the current Main Branch building in addition to another estimated half a million to relocate the administrative offices for continued operation during renovation.

Vice President Warren requested that Mr. Land bring some exterior drawings of what the new building might look like once completed to the next Board meeting and Mr. Land replied that he had some available and would bring them. He also mentioned that in the new building the area that will be designated as the Children's area is laid out in way that will allow it to be a more open area for safety. Mrs. Krutzer spoke again to ask if the public could make suggestions about

the remodel of the new building. Vice President Warren said she could send ideas to Ms. Green to pass on to the board. Ms. Katz inquired as to the square footage of the new building versus the current one. Mr. Land stated the new building would be around 45,000 square feet versus the current building being around 34,000 square feet and that the parking would be much better. Vice President Warren stated there was not much parking at the current Main Branch. Ms. Katz then responded to say that a larger parking area was not really needed with 10 branches throughout the parish. She stated the Ouachita Parish Library had already accommodated the citizens of Ouachita Parish by providing them with 10 Library branches.

Ms. Green next discussed furniture that the library had acquired from a mortgage department that had closed at the Cadence Bank Building located across from the current Main Branch. All the furniture was donated to the library and would be used to help furnish the new Main Branch building.

Ms. Katz spoke again to state for the record that Ms. Frances Flanders was the guiding force behind the Ouachita Parish Library. Ms. Katz noted that Ms Flanders was first a Librarian at Neville High School before becoming the Director of the Ouachita Parish Public Library. Ms. Green also noted that former Library Director Ms. Robin Toms was also a guiding force during her time as director in ensuring the library saved money necessary for the future improvements to Main Branch as well as the Carver-McDonald Branch.

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday, April 13, 2023, at the Main Branch Library in the Louis Lock Meeting Room. The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 pm on a motion by Mr. Mardis, seconded by Ms. Webre, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully,

Darris Waring, Vice President

Nancy Green, Secretary