

# Ouachita Parish Public Library

## Minutes

September 15, 2022

Library Board of Control Meeting was held on Thursday, September 15, 2022, 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; Ms. Alex Webre; Ms. Misti Cordell; Mr. Wyman Mardis; Ms. Kathy Craig, and Mr. Larry Bratton ex-officio member. Mr. Robert Wright, Jr. was absent. Also attending were Mr. Brad Cammack, OPPJ Treasurer; 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 Betty Ward Cooper called the meeting to order at 12:05pm.

Ms. Craig to give the invocation.

There were no changes, and the agenda was approved as presented.

Guests in attendance were Ms. Maxine Tatum, Chairman of the Carver-McDonald Committee; Ms. Dilcie McDonald Green; Louisiana State Representative, Mrs. Pat Moore; City of Monroe Councilwoman Ms. Juanita Woods; Mr. Rick Miller, Miller Funeral Home; and Executive Director of Southside Economic Development District Representative, Mr. Charles Theus. Mr. Brad Cammack, Police Jury Treasurer and Mr. Jay Mitchell, Legal Counsel for the Police Jury were also in attendance.

Ms. Tatum spoke first giving a summary of the minutes she had taken at the library board meeting the Carver-McDonald Committee attended on September 11, 2008. (A copy of those minutes has been attached to this meetings minutes for reference.) Ms. Tatum spoke about the Carver-McDonald Committee's concerns in 2008 to keep the Anna Meyer Branch open as a computer center for the community. She then spoke about the renaming of the, at the time named, Carver Branch to honor the first African American Librarian in Ouachita Parish, Mrs. Odie Lee McDonald. Ms. Tatum then stated the lease with the Monroe City School Board on the branch had expired in 2013. Mr. Jay Mitchell corrected that the lease had been renewed with the Monroe City School Board upon expiration for another 50-year term. Ms. Tatum also discussed three sites which had been viewed in 2008 as possible sites for the rebuilding of the Carver-McDonald Branch.

Monroe City Councilwoman Ms. Juanita Woods expressed that the Carver-McDonald branch serves 5 different schools and feels the community cannot be properly served with the current

branch. Ms. Woods voiced that the community would love to see the Carver-McDonald Branch rebuilt.

Louisiana State Representative Mrs. Pat Moore voiced her support for the rebuilding of the Carver-McDonald Branch and the need to continue to serve the schools in and around the area where the Branch is located now.

Mr. Rick Miller, Miller Funeral Home addressed the fact that the land next to Miller Funeral Home on Renwick Street was available for development and would be an ideal location for the rebuilding of the Carver-McDonald Branch.

Mr. Charles Theus, Executive Director of SEDD offered any assistance needed.

The minutes from the previous meeting held on August 4, 2022, were approved on a motion by Mr. Bratton, seconded by Mr. Warren with all present voting in favor of approval.

The Statistical, Financial and Personnel Reports from July and August of 2022 were presented and approved on a motion by Darris Warren and a second by Misty Cordell.

The issues of the Carver-McDonald Branch were discussed, and Mr. Bratton inquired about Citizens Advisory Committee. Mr. Warren mentioned that in the past the board has used realtor Mr. Bill Roark to help locate sites. Mr. Mitchell advised the board that they could recommend sites and locations to the Police Jury for the Police Jury to review and decide whether to acquire or not. Mrs. Moore suggested looking back at the three sites that were previously looked at for the Carver-McDonald Branch in 2008. Ms. Woods agreed with Ms. Moore citing that the three sites presented by Ms. Tatum and the Carver-McDonald Committee were close to the current branch's location. Mr. Warren asked if moving Carver-McDonald Branch closer to Hwy 165 was a concern to which Ms. Woods stated she was concerned with that option due to it causing the branch to be moved away from the schools and the possibility of children having to cross the highway to reach the branch.

Mr. Theus suggested forming a Citizens Advisory Committee and having their suggestions of locations be scored alongside the board's suggestions to find the best place. Ms. Tatum then indicated that she felt all that the Carver-McDonald Committee had done in 2008 to find locations seemed wasted if finding new sites was being discussed.

Ms. Webre suggested revisiting the sites viewed in 2008 to check for available for purchase and development.

Ms. Tatum then requested that the minutes from the 2008 meeting to be added to the minutes for this meeting. Mr. Mitchell said if the board wanted the minutes from the 2008 meeting attached, the board could make a motion to do so. Mr. Warren inquired of Ms. Tatum if in 2008 the Carver-McDonald Committee had been tasked to find new sites for the branch. Ms. Tatum responded that the committee had brought 3 concerns to the board: 1. Keeping Anna

Meyer Branch open, 2. Renaming Carver Branch to Carver-McDonald Branch, and 3. The small size of the Anna Meyer Branch.

A motion was made by Mr. Mardis and seconded by Ms. Cordell to attach the 2008 meeting minutes presented by Ms. Tatum from the Carver-McDonald Committee to the current meeting minutes.

The Library Board agreed that Mr. Bill Land be contacted for sites that might be available for construction for a new Carver-McDonald Branch that could accommodate a building the size of the Ollie Burns and Searcy Memorial Branches. Ms. Moore inquired about a process being in place to move forward with this. Ms. Cooper agreed that the discussion of possible sites for Carver-McDonald Branch would be put on the agenda for the next Library Board meeting.

The renovations of Main Branch was discussed and Mr. Brad Cammack expressed that the library has close to \$8 million to use for renovations due to placing money into the capital outlay over several years to prepare for that purpose. According to Mr. Cammack, at the Police Jury meeting, Mr. Land had stated that \$6 million was the figure he had been given to work with. Mr. Cammack said the Library Board needs to make a definite decision to present to the Police Jury. Mr. Bratton noted that Mr. Land's presentation to the Police Jury had been well received.

Ms. Woods then asked the board to consider Ms. Gladys Smith, a realtor in the area around Carver-McDonald Branch, as someone to inquire with about future locations for a new Carver Branch to be built on. Mr. Cammack looked up Ollie Burns Branch and noted it is on 2.3 acres of land.

Mr. Waren said it would be good for the Library Board to look over the plans for the Main Branch renovations and email each other. He asked Mr. Mitchell if that would be acceptable to do legally. Mr. Mitchell stated that as long as the email was not a group email of quorum size (five members) and as long as decision-making was not done over the emails, it would be legal.

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday, October 13, 2022, at the Main Branch Library in the Louis Lock Meeting Room. The meeting was adjourned at 1:09 pm on a motion by Mr. Waren, seconded by Ms. Craig, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted

Nancy Green, Secretary

Betty Ward-Cooper, President