

Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
Monday, September 19, 2022
4:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System (ARCPLS) Board of Trustees (BoT) was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Board President, Anna Reeves.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Anna Reeves, Board President; Branda Garman, Treasurer; Lilly Hamilton; Kigwana Cherry; Cher Best, Christopher Mulliens. Members absent: Morris Porter, Vice President (excused); Beverly Tarver (excused); Beatrice Green (excused); Kimberly Brown (excused). Ex-officio members present: Emanuel Mitchell, Library Director; Leon Maben, Friends of the Augusta Library President; Commissioner Catherine McKnight; Tina Monaco, Recorder.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Garman moved to approve the agenda as written. Ms. Best seconded. All voted in favor.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Library Assistant I – Children’s

Library employee request for interim pay until the Children’s Librarian position is filled was tabled during the August 2022 board meeting due to her absence. The employee submitted a letter to the board which was received in the August 2022 board packet. The letter stated her reasons for requesting an interim pay increase.

Mr. Mitchell added that as of August, the employee began creating programs for the children’s department which is working outside of the scope of her duties.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Mulliens moved to approve the August 2022 minutes. Ms. Garman seconded. All voted in favor.

TREASURER’S REPORT

Mr. Mitchell reported the following:

As of September 19, 2022, the Library owes Augusta-Richmond County \$1,338,127.56. A payment of \$90,603.87 was made on September 16, 2022. The Library is working diligently to get this balance down.

Included in the board packets were banking statements from Well Fargo and South State Bank which Mr. Mitchell hopes the board has had a chance to review.

Looking at the Local Treasurer’s Report for August 2022, salaries for both full-time (\$61,008.59) and part-time (\$6,864.78) were the Library’s biggest expense, a difference of almost \$20,000 compared to last month. Looking at Line 45 (Library Receipts) ARCPLS collected \$7,485.16.

REPORTS

President's Report

Ms. Reeves and Mr. Mitchell have had weekly meetings to discuss library business. She participated in Arts in the Heart, and included information about Library Card Sign-up (September) for the Rotary Club. She asked board members to do the same for their respective clubs and organizations.

Mr. Mitchell's meet and greet went well with about sixty (60) community members attending.

Ms. Reeves thanked the board for all of their hard work and support. Ms. Beatrice Green's position will be filled soon, as it's on the agenda for the upcoming commission meeting. The other empty board positions will not be filled until January 2023 when new county commissioners are elected.

Commissioner McKnight said that Ms. Bonner (Clerk of Commissions) informed her that if a board member misses more than three meetings, their respective commissioner is to be notified. She noted the problem with board members not attending the meetings which creates an issue when a quorum is needed for voting on library business.

The board retreat is coming up in October and Ms. Reeves is waiting on Ms. Kimberly Brown to finalize the caterer.

Director's Report

Mr. Mitchell thanked the board for their ongoing support during his first month as ARCPLS Library Director. Part of his hundred-day goal is to meet each of the Augusta-Richmond County Commissioners.

The budget was submitted to Richmond County Finance Department, asking for an increase of \$300,000.00, with \$150,000 allotted for library improvements.

On Wednesday, September 14th Mr. Mitchell met with the city administrator, and other officials of the Augusta-Richmond County Finance Department to go over the budget. Mr. Mitchell has an upcoming meeting with the interim administrator to discuss how to decrease, or perhaps forgive the debt to Richmond County. Mr. Mitchell will explore options such as partial or full debt forgiveness by the Richmond County Commission before locking into a payment plan to pay off the debt.

ARCPLS budget for 2023 also included capital outlay requests for \$100,000.

September is Library Card Sign-Up month which ARCPLS promoted on the library website and social media. We participated in Arts in the Heart by setting up a library information and craft booth.

Staff Day is on Monday, October 10th. Staff will participate in Connections Matter, trauma-informed training presented by Julie Miller from the Georgia Family Connection Partnership. The training will teach staff how to recognize patrons suffering from trauma-related conditions, and how to communicate effectively. Mr. Mitchell requests both the board and FOAL participate in the training.

Library usage continues to increase as we move out of the pandemic. ARCPLS saw 19,241 visits in August, an almost six thousand (6000) patron increase. Ms. Reeves asked how this compared to pre-COVID, and Mr. Mitchell replied that number are lower than before the pandemic but the trend each month is upward.

Currently, three positions are being filled including Library Assistant II (Friedman), Children's Librarian, and Library Substitute. All essential positions to move forward.

The Poet in Residence (Aaron James Snow), Diondra Blocker (Public Relations Assistant), and Mr. Mitchell were interviewed on WRDW's Morning Mix to promote Library Card Sign-up Month, and all the programs and events that are happening within the library system.

Ms. Reeves suggested the board keep in mind any opportunities for Mr. Mitchell to speak to the public, whether at various civic clubs, town halls, etc. contacts in the communities.

Committee Reports

Ms. Reeves spoke with Ms. Tarver who has been working behind the scenes on the Community Foundation business, and the YMLA Foundation.

Mr. Mitchell met with the principal of A. R. Johnson following an incident that occurred at Wallace Branch involving two students of the school. This meeting led a potential partnership with A. R. Johnson to include information and digital literacy, as well as career days at the library. They will meet again in December to work out the details for the upcoming year.

The second meeting with the Richmond County School Board staff, and Assistant Superintendent Marcus Allen. They discussed working together on deposit collections, which involves checking out books to Richmond County Public Schools for thirty (30) days to supplement resources missing from the schools' media centers. Developing this initiative will allow ARCPLS to cultivate relationships within the school system, and offer programming to benefit students. Deposit collections also increase circulation numbers, which can lead to an increase in state funding. Ultimately the goal is to increase the literacy rate among students.

Mr. Maben recommended that Mr. Mitchell reach out to Director Felina Martin at the HUB as well as the director of the AU Literacy Center. Mr. Mitchell replied that Mr. Nixon of the AU Literacy Center Board met with him and gave him the contact of the Director of the AU Literacy Center. Mr. Maben also mentioned Steven Kendrick of the Boys and Girls Club.

Friends of the Augusta Library Report

Mr. Leon Maben reported the following:

FOAL is meeting in person every month at 5:00 p.m. at the Headquarters Library.

The FOAL Bookstore is open Tuesday – Saturday. Saturday business has increased as more volunteers are signing up to cover shifts, and active posting on the FOAL Facebook page seems to be drawing in more customers. Volunteers are also regularly restocking the bookstore shelves with “new” books.

The FOAL summer book sale was on August 5 – 6, and raised \$859.43. Mr. Maben thanked VP Dennis Garman, the FOAL bookstore committee, the FOAL members and volunteers for their time. The fall book sale is being planned.

The Hub has requested a book donation from the FOAL for the AU Literacy Center.

The FOAL Facebook page has 488 contacts.

A link was added to the ARCPLS website calling for donations to the FOAL.

The FOAL by-laws committee is updating the current by-laws.

FOAL membership stands at sixteen (16) members and 123 lifetime members. The membership committee is always recruiting new members. It's \$20.00 per year to become a FOAL member.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Incident Reports from Augusta – early September:

Mr. Mitchell reviewed a total of five (5) incident reports occurring throughout the library system, including a female patron who was found bathing in a HQs bathroom; a patron who was injured while installing a display for the Georgia Room when a glass door came off its hinges and hit her in the head; a staff member was injured when the expanding partition in the auditorium at HQs broke his finger; a delivery truck hit the book drop at Wallace Branch, and a police report was filed. Central Services was contacted. Lastly, two students from AR Johnson Magnet School were discovered in the bathroom of Wallace Branch Library engaged in inappropriate behavior. Mr. Mitchell met with the school principal following the incident.

B. Update of the Appleby Branch Renovations:

Mr. Mitchell referred the board to an email forwarded to Rick Acree at Central Services from Samuel Beaird Studio 3 Design Group, outlining the cost saving measures the Group generated to reduce the cost of renovations at Appleby. The cost savings estimate totaled \$28K, but the goal is \$100K. Mr. Acree suggested ARCPLS redo, and send it out for bid again. However, Nathan Rall (GPLS Facilities & Construction) emailed Mr. Mitchell a report listing library systems in Georgia eligible for additional funding. ARCPLS is on the list, and Appleby, Wallace and Friedman Branches will be accessed for funding for repairs. Mr. Mitchell is meeting with Mr. Rall on Wednesday, September 21st during the director's meeting in Hall County, Georgia to discuss when the assessment will be done, and how much of an increase in funding we can expect. If we receive the money, we will not have to send it out for bid again. Older buildings are being assessed. He will email the board following the meeting.

C. Update on Friedman Branch Renovations:

Mr. Mitchell reviewed the maintenance contract for the HVAC system. The handrail was installed in the front of the building for wheelchair accessibility. The misspelling of Morris Porter's name on the plaque is going to be corrected. There was discussion about whether the plaque was approved by the board, and who will be responsible for paying for the correction. The grand reopening will be scheduled when the plaque is corrected.

D. Bookmobile:

The refund (\$176,177.00) for the bookmobile grant has been submitted, and ARCPLS should expect the refund in the next month. In preparation for its rolling out as a mobile hotspot, a Verizon chip was programmed by IT, and now ARCPLS is working on funding for shelving. However, this will not stop the bookmobile from going out. The collection is about 50% complete. Mr. Mitchell stated that the bookmobile will operate as a regular branch, will have regular rounds, and a set schedule. For the state to recognize the bookmobile as a branch it must have the hours of a branch. Ms. Best asked if there will be a promotional rollout, and Mr. Mitchell said a grand opening will be held as soon as the shelving is installed. Mr. Mitchell discussed the \$2.3 million allocated to Georgia libraries by Gov. Kemp for technology. ARCPLS will use the funds to buy thirty (30) hot spots, and forty (40) Chromebooks. Mr. Mulliens asked if using the bookmobile as a branch will position ARCPLS for more funding, and Mr. Mitchell replied yes. The bookmobile will be staffed by the library outreach department and volunteers for now, but additional staff may be hired if the budget allows.

E. Removal of Key Executives from Wells Fargo Bank Accounts (Mashell Fashion):

Ms. Garman moved to remove Mashell Fashion as a Key Executive from the Well Fargo Account. Ms. Best seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

F. Add Emanuel Mitchell as new Key Executive to Well Fargo Bank Account:

Ms. Garman voted to add Emanuel Mitchell as new Key Executive to the Wells Fargo Bank Account. Ms. Best seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

G. Removal of former board members from the Wells Fargo Bank Account

Ms. Garman moved that former board members Sue Pittman and Gwendolyn Rountree be removed from the Wells Fargo Bank Account. Ms. Best seconded. All voted in favor.

H. ARCPLS Board of Trustees Retreat (October 17):

The retreat will begin at 2:00 pm. Ms. Reeves asked the board members to please be on time.

I. Library Patron Request for Access Privileges Reinstatement:

Mr. Mitchell met with the library patron in question. The patron was banned for one year due to ongoing violations of the patron behavior policy. Upon meeting with the patron Mr. Mitchell decided he will be allowed back on a provisional basis. If the patron violates any of the policies, rules and/or regulations of the library, his privileges will be revoked, and he will be banned again. Given the patron's challenges, Mr. Mitchell considers him to fall under a protective status. The board and Mr. Mitchell discussed the patron's former infractions and consider them more of a nuisance than a danger. Moving forward, Mr. Mitchell will deal with the patron directly.

Mr. Mulliens expressed his concern about the safety of library personnel, particularly female staff who have been harassed by problem patrons. Mr. Mitchell asserted that those patrons will be permanently banned and arrested for criminal trespass if they enter library premises. He believes in protecting his staff. If the patron in question posed that kind of threat, Mr. Mitchell would not allow him back. Ms. Best moved that ARCPLS provide a provisional reinstatement based on the patron's adherence to the rules and regulations of ARCPLS. However, if he violates any of the rules his reinstatement will be revoked. Ms. Garman seconded. All voted in favor.

J. DRAG Story Time: No update.

K. Staff Request for Interim Pay:

Ms. Reeves asked for a motion to go into closed session to vote on interim pay for a library employee. Mr. Mulliens made a motion, Mr. Cherry seconded. All voted in favor. Closed session began at 5:55 p.m. Meeting resumed at 6:05 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Library Staff Day (October 10, 2022):

Mr. Mitchell asked the board to be present during staff day for a Q&A and meet and greet session to allow the staff and board to become familiar with one another, and for staff to get an understanding of what the board does. The FOAL was invited too. It falls on Columbus Day. No more than thirty (30) minutes.

B. Updated Library COVID Policy:

The new policy reflects current CDC guidelines. Mr. Mitchell included the policy in the board packet. The only change is the five (5) days instead of ten (10) days of isolation. Ms. Garman moved to accept the new COVID policy. Ms. Best seconded. All voted in favor.

C. Assistant Director Position:

Mr. Mitchell asked the board to approve the hiring of an assistant director if the library budget increases or stays the same. Mr. Cherry moved that the board allow Mr. Mitchell to hire an assistant director contingent on the library budget increasing or staying the same. Ms. Garman seconded. All voted in favor.

D. Headquarters Library Floor Replacement:

Mr. Mitchell showed the board a map of the area in HQs where the flooring will be replaced; from behind the circulation desk to the beginning to the children's department. It will be replaced with LTV. It's been submitted out for bid. This is the next project for HQs.

E. Staff Suggestion Box:

Mr. Mitchell implemented the staff suggestion box to give employees an opportunity to voice ideas and generate feedback for the library. He reviewed several of the suggestions with the board. The suggestions will be discussed on staff day.

F. ARCPLS Telework Form:

Mr. Mitchell requests the board president be removed as a signatory on the ARCPLS Telework Form because it creates delays when approving telework time for staff. Mr. Mulliens moved to have the board president's signature removed from the ARCPLS Telework Form. Mr. Cherry seconded. All voted in favor.

G. Customer Service:

Ms. Best suggested implementing a patron suggestion box to encourage library patrons to tell us how we're doing. Mr. Mitchell will have Ben Dudley add a tab to the ARCPLS website. The board discussed how to better market and promote ARCPLS. Mr. Mitchell revealed the new mascot idea which will be a striped armadillo.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No Comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Cherry moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mulliens seconded. All voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.