

Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
Monday, January 23, 2023
4:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Members present: Anna Reeves, Board President; Morris Porter, Vice President; Brenda Garman, Treasurer; Kigwana Cherry; Cher Best. Members absent: Christopher Mulliens; Beverly Tarver (excused); Lillie Hamilton (excused); Kimberly Brown (excused); Thomas Gardiner (excused). Ex-officio members present: Commissioner Bobby Williams; Emanuel Mitchell, Library Director; Dennis Garman, standing in for Leon Maben, Friends of the Augusta Library President; Ben Dudley, ARCPLS Systems Administrator; Tina Monaco, recorder. Ex-officio members absent: Leon Maben, Friends of the Augusta Library President.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

ARCPLS Systems Administrator, Ben Dudley introduced and demonstrated new technology being made available to the ARCPLS board members as well as that being offered to library patrons. Moving forward, the Board will receive all documents pertaining to library business through Google Drive and each board member will be issued an iPad on the days of the board meetings with all respective documents uploaded to Google Drive. Providing all documents electronically will reduce the cost of paper, toner, and postage. The Library is currently spending \$140 per month in postage. The iPads will stay at the library, and be secured in the IT department when not in use. The link to Google Drive will be sent in an email to each board member.

Next, Mr. Dudley introduced the new technology ARCPLS received as the result state funding through G.E.E.R (Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund). Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) used the funding to purchase Chromebooks, Launchpads and Hotspots. ARCPLS opted in to receive 87 Chromebooks, 36 Launchpads, and 28 Mobile Hotspots. The Launchpad (pre-loaded educational activity learning tablets) will be checked out to children. The Chromebooks will also be available for check out at all library locations, including the book mobile. The book mobile will be outfitted with a charging station as well. Each device also comes with a case, and instructions for use.

The Board will vote by email regarding the use of iPads during board meetings.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Due to the absence of a quorum, the Board could not adopt a motion to approve the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Due to the absence of a quorum, the Board could not adopt a motion to approve the minutes from the November 2022 board meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Mitchell reported the following:

ARCPLS owes Augusta Richmond County \$1,463,983.00. A payment of \$59,481.43 was made on January 13, 2023. Commissioner Williams asked for an update on the Library's request to have the debt forgiven by Richmond County. Ms. Reeves answered that the board members who spoke with the Richmond County Finance Department about debt forgiveness learned the Commissioners were not aware of the debt, nor the Library's request to have it forgiven. Mr. Mitchell stated that the Richmond County Finance Department seems unwilling to forgive the debt, and has offered no reason why.

Mr. Mitchell referred the Board to the **ARC Library billing and payment reconciliation** sheet, and explained how ARCPLS incurred its current debt to Richmond County.

Commissioner Williams recommended the Board and Mr. Mitchell approach the Commissioners during the Five (5) Minute Delegation portion of the Commission meeting and explain the debt problem. Commissioner Williams will work with the other commissioners to hopefully resolve the issue. Mr. Porter and Ms. Reeves attempted to be placed on the meeting agenda over the summer and were denied.

REPORTS

- A. President's Report:** Mr. Mitchell attended the Rotary Club meeting with Ms. Reeves on January 9th, and presented his vision for ARCPLS.

Ms. Reeves is assisting Sandra May, Wallace Branch Manager, in selecting folks in the community to participate in themed Story Times. She asked the Board for assistance. She also requested Board assistance with locating outside groups to sponsor the Appleby Concert Series.

Mr. Mitchell is sending out workshops for the Board, which will be discussed at the meetings.

- B. Director's Report:** Mr. Mitchell participated in the new director's training facilitated by Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) on December 6, 2022. He also attended the Winter 2022 Directors Meeting on December 7 – December 9 at Live Oak Public Library in Savannah, Georgia. One of the topics discussed is the current trend in certain Georgia counties to challenge books in public libraries, and the resignation of a library director in Thomas County, Georgia due to a conflict over book censorship. The state representative from Thomas County is also leading the way in changing the MLIS qualification for library directors in Georgia. Mr. Porter asked what books were being challenged, and Mr. Mitchell said the books were on subjects of religion, African American history, and LGBTQ+ topics. Mr. Mitchell referred the Board to the American Library Association (ALA) Article III of the *Library Bill of Rights* regarding book censorship in the event a similar situation occurs at ARCPLS.

On December 6, 2022, the Richmond County Commission approved an additional \$500,000.00 from the ARPA funds for ARCPLS. It will be used on programs focusing on first – third grades, and for creating a makerspace for young adults and linking it up with the Georgia Cyber Center. Mr. Mitchell expects the makerspace at ARCPLS to engage young adults and older adults through access to new technology, i.e. 3D printing resources, video production, music equipment, etc. Ms. Best suggested a partnership with the Jesse Norman School of the Arts, as they also have a makerspace. Mr. Mitchell will contact Executive Director Gary Dennis.

The Summer Reading Program kickoff will be on June 3, 2023 from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm at Brookfield Park.

In December 2021, 16,010 items were circulated and December 2022, 20,400 were circulated. Computer usage for December 2021 was 2,286 and for December 2022 was 3,150. Wi-Fi usage for December 2021 was 1,330 and for December 2022 was 1,263. Hotspot usage for December 2021 was 5,261 and December 2022 was 6,264.

Currently ARCPLS employs 49 staff with 33 full-time and 16 part-time. Deshawn Hayes, formerly employed at Wallace Branch was hired as the Library Assistant II Substitute, and Thaetra Williams formerly employed in the HQs children's department was moved to a Library Assistant II position at Friedman Branch. Mr. Mitchell will interview for the Assistant Library Director position on Friday, January 28. The open Library Assistant position at Wallace Branch closes Friday, January 28th. Three library student assistants have been hired to fill vacant positions. Former Library Assistant I Rachel Kee became the Children's Librarian on January 17, 2023.

In December 2022, ARCPLS took in \$1200.00 in donations and built a partnership with Sam's Club. Sam's donated \$250.00 gift cards to the PRIME-TIME mini grant. ARCPLS was granted \$6000.00 by GPLS to implement the PRIME-TIME program, which is geared toward under-served families. The program allows families to meet in the library during evenings for six weeks and participate in early literacy activities. Meals are provided and the Sam's \$250.00 gift cards will pay for those meals for February-May.

C. Committee Reports

a) **Finance Committee** - Ms. Reeves announced Ms. Beverly Tarver's resignation. Ms. Tarver was appointed by Commissioner Francine Scott, and will send a formal resignation to Commissioner Scott. Ms. Tarver (co-chair) and Mr. Cherry (chair) serve on the Finance Committee, and Ms. Reeves requests Mr. Cherry continue to serve as chair and a co-chair will need to be selected at the February board meeting. Ms. Shell Berry of the Community Foundation will speak at the February board meeting. The YMLA 501(c)(3) status also needs to be renewed.

b) **Personnel Committee** – No business

D. **Friends of the Library Report**- Mr. Garman discussed the FOAL annual meeting on Monday, January 30, 2023 at 6:00 pm. Library Director Emanuel Mitchell is the keynote speaker. The Board and Mr. Garman discussed previous meetings, attendance, former speakers, and marketing the meeting as a fundraising event for ARCPLS. Ms. Best recommended board members invite ten (10) of their colleagues.

Library patrons can now become FOAL members and make donations to FOAL via the ARPCLS website.

Following Reports, Ms. Reeves asked Commissioner Bobby Williams to introduce himself to the Board. Commissioner Williams represents the Fifth District.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Incident Reports -- Mr. Mitchell reviewed the incident reports for December 2022.
- b) Bookmobile Update – scheduled to be back at the end of February. Payment will be made on arrival. Mr. Mitchell will develop sponsorship levels prior to the February board meeting. The route is being determined.
- c) Appleby Update – an independent assessment was conducted on December 12, 2022. Mr. Mitchell and Mayor Johnson will tour Appleby to discuss the renovations.
- d) Friedman Update – the plaque is delayed due to a conflict with Augusta-Richmond County and the vendor.
- e) Wallace Emergency Door – this item will have to be voted on by the Board. Mr. Mitchell is working with Central Services.

- f) Board Meeting Schedule of 2023 – Upcoming board meetings will be held at outlying branches, and will begin with a tour and introductions of the branch manager and staff.
- g) Grievance Policy/Appeal Process – Ms. Reeves stated that the board statement that will be issued in the event a library employee contacts the Board with a grievance needs to be written by the February board meeting so it can be voted on.
- h) Board Member Attendance – A letter has been written to Mr. Christopher Mulliens addressing his four (4) unexcused board meeting absences. He will be given the opportunity to appeal his removal from the Board.
- i) Official statement of the Board of Trustees – Mr. Mitchell will craft five (5) statements for the Board to vote on, and send the statements via Google Forms.
- j) Library Director’s Evaluation Change – The Director’s evaluation change needs to be voted on by February 8, 2023. The Board will vote on the change by email.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) COVID-19 Policy Update – the COVID policy will be voted on by email.
- b) ARPA Funds and MOU with Augusta Richmond County
- c) Nomination of Board Officers – a nominating committee will be selected during the February board meeting to vote on new board officers. Mr. Porter will chair the committee.
- d) Appointment of attorney to represent the Board – the Board renews its contract, or votes on a new library attorney annually. This item will be voted on through email.
- e) Approval of accounting firm – the Board renews its contracts, or votes on a new accounting firm annually. This item will be voted on through email.
- f) Review of ARCPLS Constitution Article III, Section 6 – A change to allow former library employees to serve on the ARCPLS Board of Trustees after a two (2) year separation was approved by board vote in April 2022. Mr. Mitchell asks the Board to remove the amendment from the ARCPLS Constitution due to ethics violations. Alan Harkness, Director of Chattahoochee Public Libraries assisted Mr. Mitchell in drafting an ethics policy detailing the conflict of interest and possible litigation that could arise from allowing former library staff on the library board. The ethics policy will need to be approved by the Board, then voted on at the February board meeting.
- g) Headquarters Roof – How to proceed with the HQs roof will be voted on by email.
- h) Library Day at the Capital- Ms. Reeves asked for volunteers to attend Library Day at the Capital on Wednesday, February 8, 2023. Ms. Reeves, Mr. Porter are attending with Mr. Mitchell. Departure will be 6:00 am, and Mr. Mitchell is driving the library van.

Mr. Mitchell is going to send each item that needs to be voted on in a Google Form.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting ended without adjournment at 6:00 pm.

