

Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
November 21, 2022
4:30 pm

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System (ARCPLS) Board of Trustees was called to order at 4:35 pm by Board President, Anna Reeves.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Anna Reeves, Board President; Morris Porter, Vice President; Brenda Garman, Treasurer; Beverly Tarver; Lillie Hamilton; Kimberly Brown; Thomas Gardiner; Kigwana Cherry. Members Absent: Christopher Mulliens; Cher Best. Ex-officio members present: Commissioner Catherine McKnight; Emanuel Mitchell, Library Director; Dennis Garman, standing in for Leon Maben, Friends of the Augusta Library President; Steve Sanders, ARCPLS attorney; Tina Monaco, recorder. Ex-officio members absent: Leon Maben, Friends of the Augusta Library President.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Board business requiring a vote was moved up on the agenda, as a few members had to leave early. Ms. Tarver moved to approve the agenda with changes. Ms. Brown seconded. All voted in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Tarver moved to approve the October 2022 minutes. Ms. Brown seconded. All voted in favor.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Mitchell reported the following:

As of October 18, 2022, ARCPLS owes the Augusta Commission \$1.5 million. This debt fluctuates depending on when payment is applied. The last payment, made on Friday, November 18, 2022 was \$58,127.50. The Library is working aggressively to reduce the debt.

ARCPLS submitted all documentation to the auditor. The audit is taking place now.

The Board received the Wells Fargo and South State Bank statements in their packets.

Referring to the Local Treasurer's Report, ARCPLS biggest expense is full time salaries at \$48,180.87 for October 2022 and \$64,638.90 for September 2022, a reduction of \$16,458.03 (Line item 31). WAGES (Part-Time) (line item 43) for October 2022 were \$7,178.03 compared to \$11,718.44 in September 2022, a reduction of \$4,540.41.

Under GENERAL FUND REVENUE (Line 45) Library Receipts, ARCPLS collected \$6,339.96 in October 2022.

ARCPLS submitted an amended budget to the Augusta-Richmond County Finance Department in August 2022, requesting an additional \$300,000.00 for FY2023. The increase was approved at \$298,110.00. Mr. Mitchell thanked the Board for working with him to accomplish the goal.

Ms. Tarver asked Mr. Mitchell if the Library will receive additional ARPA funds to offset costs incurred during the pandemic. Mr. Mitchell does not know, but replied that the funds are running low (\$7,000,000.00), and Richmond County is being strict in terms of allocating the money. The Augusta Fire Department requested \$6,000,000.00, but received \$3.5 million.

Mr. Mitchell brought it to the Boards attention that the ARPA increase which brought employees making below \$15/hour to \$15/hour will run out soon. Once that money runs out, those employees will lose the increase. He recommends the Board approve \$15 raises to those employees before the funds run out.

REPORTS

- A. **President's Report:** Ms. Reeves met with Mr. Mitchell several times over the last month. She spent the last few weeks handling the personnel issue that is discussed below in New Business. She also arranged for Mr. Sanders, the library attorney to be present at the board meeting to discuss library policy and procedures when addressing personnel issues. She visited Wallace Library and met the new children's librarian.
- B. **Director's Report:** Mr. Mitchell reported the following: 57 second graders from Bartow Chapel Elementary were at the HQs Library on October 22nd. They participated in a library tour, story time, and library card signup. He sent pictures of the event to the Board. He congratulated the children's department on a successful event

Library statistics were included in the board packet for September. Month-to-year comparisons for October; in 2021 the Library circulated roughly 21,000 items, and for 2022, the Library circulated 23,214 items. Computer usage in October 2021 (3,527) and October 2022 (4,034). Wi-Fi is slightly down. Mr. Mitchell suggested this is because more folks are coming to the library and using resources. Web hits are up compared to last year; October 2021 (6,942) October 2022 (8,147).

Prior to Ms. Fashion's departure, she required all department heads, and pertinent staff to submit procedures manuals for their respective departments. Coming in, Mr. Mitchell was missing the Financial Officer manual. Mr. Mitchell does not know what the position entails day-to-day so he is dependent on the manual to inform him of the position's duties and responsibilities. Mr. Mitchell asked the Financial Officer to have the manual completed by February 28, 2023.

Currently, the Library employs 51 staff, 32 fulltime, 19 part-time, and is hiring for a Library Assistant II Substitute position that closed on November 7, and a Library Assistant II for Friedman Branch. This position closed on November 10. The Assistant Director position closed out November 11, 2022. The first candidate has been interviewed. We had one internal candidate who applied.

The Library received four (4) donations; one (1) monetary in the amount of \$9,682.44. Two of the monetary donations were made by FOAL; \$2,500 for Wallace Branch Library and \$250 for NaNoWriMo. The Appleby Foundation donated \$5,000 for facility maintenance at Appleby Library. Donations for this month total \$17,432.44.

The outreach team participated in Emergency Preparedness Day and had ten library card sign-ups. The library looks forward to more partnership opportunities with the Augusta Fire Department. For the first time, a Richmond County HR employee served on the library interview committee for the Assistant Director position.

C. Committee Reports

a. **Finance Committee:** N/A

b. **Director's Evaluation:** Ms. Tarver moved to move the meeting into closed session to discuss the Director's evaluation. Ms. Brown seconded. All voted in favor. The Board meeting moved into closed session at 4:47 pm. The meeting was reopened at 4:58 pm.

D. **Friends of the Library Report:** Mr. Dennis Garman (FOAL President Leon Maben was absent) discussed the Friends book sale on Friday, November 4th and Saturday, November 5th. Several volunteers from Augusta University assisted with the sale. The book shop is open Tuesday-Saturday for at least 2 to 4 hours. The annual Friends meeting will be held January 30, 2023. The revised FOAL Constitution and By-Laws will be voted on during the January meeting.

Mr. Mitchell is set to speak to the downtown Rotary Club at Ms. Reeves request, and she suggested either Mr. Maben or Mr. Garman speak as well. The date is January 6, 2023 at 11:45 at Enterprise Mill.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Incident Report: Mr. Mitchell discussed two (2) incident reports; one involved a formerly banned patron caught eating in the library, and the other a harassing phone call received at one of the branches.
- b) Bookmobile-Shelving Funding: Mr. Mitchell included the invoice in the board packet. The total cost is \$28,309.00. He delivered the book mobile to Greensboro, N.C. on Saturday, November 12th. It will take 10-12 weeks to complete. Mr. Mitchell asked the Board to decide which library account should be used to pay for the shelves. Mr. Cherry moved that funds from the YMLA account be used to pay the cost of shelf installation. Mr. Gardiner seconded. All voted in favor.
- c) Holiday Closure Schedule (Amendment): Mr. Mitchell requested an amendment to the 2023 holiday schedule, adding the day after Christmas. The Blue Book states that staff is given Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the day after Christmas as holidays. Ms. Garman moved that the holiday schedule be amended to reflect the change. Mr. Gardiner seconded. All voted in favor.
- d) Partnership with Dr. Marain (Expungement Program): Ms. Morain requests use of a meeting room, the second Friday each month, from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm by appointment. Mr. Cherry moved to allow Mr. Marain meeting room space for expungement purposes. Ms. Brown seconded. All voted in favor.
- e) Appleby Renovations: No update
- f) Friedman Plaque: the plaque has been ordered, waiting on delivery and the City is paying for it.
- g) Reminder Diamond Lakes Closed November 21-23, 2022: closed for lighting upgrades.
- h) Board Meetings Schedule for 2023: Mr. Mitchell included a schedule of where the Board will be meeting in 2023. It was approved by the Board.
- i) Library Retreat 2023: retreat date needs to be selected in January 2023.
- j) Staff Holiday Mixer (Select date in 2022): Mr. Mitchell requests that the Board and library staff attend the County holiday party on Saturday, December 17th at 7:00 pm at Bell Auditorium.
- k) Library Staff Pay Increases: Library Board voted in favor of the staff 1.5% pay increase as approved in the budget request for 2023.
- l) Flooring for Headquarters (the agenda was amended by Mr. Cherry to add this item): Mr. Mitchell attended the bid meeting, and has had a total of five (5) vendors look at the flooring.

NEW BUSINESS (New Business was discussed following the Treasurer's Report)

Policy Discussion-

Mr. Mitchell contacted ARCPLS Attorney Steve Sanders regarding an employee matter. While reviewing the personnel matter, it brought attention to the ARCPLS Grievance Policy, which requires revising so the Board has a more defined procedure in place when addressing personnel problems. Mr. Sanders suggested the Board be informed about, and understand the protocol for addressing library employee issues. After discussing the personnel matter with Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Sanders determined there was no need for a closed session in this particular case.

Mr. Sanders reviewed the statutory justification for going into closed session: Unless the Board is discussing disciplinary action of an employee, evaluating staff for compensation, or hiring and firing a meeting is to remain open. In this particular case, an ARCPLS employee had questions about the Library Director's accrual rate, and how his clocking in and out should be treated. The employee contacted four (4) board members, and because the ARCPLS procedure is unclear on how address such a personnel matter, Mr. Sanders was asked to advise. Mr. Sanders stated that there was no violation of the policy, but it did need to be clarified to better guide employees in the grievance process, in the future.

Mr. Sanders further discussed the personnel policy, and addressed each point on the agenda. He noted that he has copies of all the information being referenced during the policy discussion, and will make the information available to the Board through Ms. Reeves.

Mr. Sanders referenced the 2-page introduction in Chapter 11 (The Library Board & Library Personnel) of the Georgia Public Trustees Handbook. He suggested the Board review this section of the handbook to understand the duties and responsibilities of each party, and how they differ, who is responsible for what. The section details a director's responsibilities versus the board's responsibilities.

Mr. Sanders discussed the following policy points on the agenda:

- a) **Appeal Process for Staff:** According to the ARCPLS Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual (Blue Book), specifically **Grievances, Discipline, and Appeals** ARCPLS uses the Augusta-Richmond County Human Resources' Grievances, Discipline, and Appeals Policy and Procedures sections as a guideline. However, the ARCPLS has its own provisions governing some of the policy, which causes confusion. For example, the grievance process is defined step-by-step in the ARCPLS policy for employees who do not report directly to the library director, however for those who do report directly to the library director there is no grievance process. Mr. Sanders recommends clarification from the Board on what that process is, as it is not stated in the personnel policy. See discussion below
- b) **Library Director Vacation Accrual Rate:** Mr. Mitchell asked for Board clarification concerning his vacation accrual rate. He is currently accruing 5.55 hours of annual leave according to Richmond County Human Resources. The Library has set his accrual rate at 4.62. Mr. Mitchell requests the rate of 5.55 in writing. Mr. Porter moved that the county rate of 5.55 be set in writing. Mr. Gardiner amended the motion to make the rate permanent. Ms. Tarver seconded. All voted in favor.
- c) **Library Director Exempt Status:** In speaking with HR, Mr. Mitchell learned that he is the only employee at the director level who clocks in and out. Mr. Mitchell referenced the Fair Labor Standards Act, and stated that

according to the Act one holding exempt status is paid for the result of one's work, and not the hours. Richmond County assigns an employee to clock directors in and out. Mr. Mitchell requests that Board allow him to discontinue clocking in and out, and assign an employee to post his hours in ADP. Mr. Mitchell showed the board his ADP record which showed he worked over 500 hours in less than three months, far exceeding the requirements and he will continue to do so.

Ms. Garman asked who would be responsible for keying in his time into ADP. Mr. Mitchell said he would assign a library employee. Ms. Tarver asked if it was Richmond County policy for all county employees to clock in and out. Mr. Mitchell replied yes, but none of the managers or directors working for Richmond County are. They are assigning county employees to key the time in. It is not against Richmond County policy to have others clock managers and directors in and out.

Mr. Gardiner stated that if the Richmond County HR policy requires Mr. Mitchell to clock in and out, then the Board's hands are tied, and he has to use the time clock.

Ms. Garman moved that Mr. Mitchell be allowed to choose an employee to key in his time into ADP.

Ms. Tarver expressed reservations about a subordinate being responsible for keying in the Library Director's time. She believes it places the subordinate in an untenable position should there be a conflict. Board members described situations in which it could become a problem for both the director and the subordinate. Ms. Tarver suggested GPLS be consulted.

Ms. Reeves recommended that Mr. Mitchell continue to clock himself in and out. Ms. Garman withdrew the motion.

Ms. Garman moved that Mr. Mitchell continue to clock in and out, but if necessary he can ask a subordinate to key in his hours on a time by time basis. Mr. Cherry seconded. All voted in favor.

- d) Developing an official statement for the Board of Trustees when a concerned employee contacts a Board of Trustees member(s):** Mr. Sanders recommended using the ARCPLS Board of Trustees Handbook as a guide for crafting an official statement to present to staff who contact the board members with concerns. He is also happy to craft a statement the Board can refer to as well. Mr. Tarver moved that Ms. Sanders craft a statement for the board to present to staff when contacted with grievances or concerns. Mr. Porter seconded. All voted in favor. See below for discussion.

What follows is discussion around items a and d:

Ms. Reeves noted that the concerned staff member spoke with four (4) different board members, which could have led to four (4) different responses, a problem for both the Board and the employee. Having a grievance process in place for staff who report directly to the library director will prevent this from happening again. Mr. Sanders stated that he is available any time to answer questions about library policies and procedures.

Mr. Mitchell suggested the Board vote on an official statement which will establish a procedure when staff do contact the Board. This will prevent the Board from becoming involved in the daily operations of the library, which is an overstep of their authority, according to Georgia Public Library Service. Only under unusual circumstances should library boards

be involved in the daily operation of a library. Moving forward, Mr. Mitchell recommends the Board vote on an official statement, and establish an appeals committee for handling grievances.

Ms. Tarver asked if the policy speaks to an employee who reports directly to the director. Mr. Sanders replied no, that is where the gap is. It's unclear. He went on to say that there is a step-by-step, clear process for staff who do not report directly to the library director, but not for those who do.

Mr. Sanders suggested the intent of the Library personnel policy is to borrow Richmond County Human Resources processes, but there are other levels of administration within the library where county procedures don't apply. In the situation of grievances from staff that report directly to the library director, Mr. Sanders recommends a personnel committee set up by the Board. According to Mr. Sanders, using Richmond County Human Resources to handle Library personnel matters is not good practice. Mr. Mitchell stated that the assistant director is responsible for library human resources. That person wears the HR hat for the library so if someone reports the director or other staff, it is handled by the assistant director, and he/she contacts the board members to determine if this merits a personnel committee. In the recent matter, there was no disciplinary action, there was no violation.

Ms. Tarver moved that Mr. Sanders craft an official statement for board members to present when contacted by staff about personnel issue. The official statement will be incorporated into the policy. Mr. Porter seconded. All voted in favor. See **item d** above.

Following the vote on the official statement, Mr. Sanders addressed the gap in the Grievance Policy. For staff who reports to the library director, Mr. Sanders asked the Board what they want the policy to say. Ms. Tarver recommended a committee be established to review the grievance policy and address the gap. Mr. Cherry, Ms. Brown, and Mr. Gardiner will serve on the committee. Mr. Cherry is chair.

- e) **Board Member Attendance:** Ms. Reeves requests board approval to send a letter to Mr. Mulliens who has missed (unexcused) three board meetings, which is grounds for removal. Ms. Garman moved to approve a letter be sent to Mr. Mulliens. Mr. Cherry seconded. All voted in favor.

New Business continued

- a. **Library Positions Posted for Hire** (discussed during Director's Report)
 - i. **Assistant Library Director** – closing date November 11, 2022
 - ii. **Library Assistant II (Friedman)** – closing date November 10, 2022
 - iii. **Library Assistant (Substitute)** – closing date November 7, 2022
- b. **Library Documents submitted to the auditor**
 - i. **New Procedure for End-of-Year:** after consulting with other library directors in Georgia and GPLS, Mr. Mitchell decided on new closing procedures for the Library books.
- c. **Library Budget 2023:** The Library received a budget increase of \$298,110.00. Ms. Reeves thanked the Board for all they did to make the increase happen, particularly meeting the Richmond County Commission members one-on-one.
- d. **Library Financial Training (February 13-16, 2023) with Christopher A. Evans, GPLS:** As a new director, Mr. Mitchell is required to participate in two (2) trainings; one on December 6th, the same day as the meet-and-greet for the new mayor and incoming commissioners. Mr. Mitchell will drive back to attend the meet-and-greet. It's open to the board members as well. Mr. Mitchell sees the meet-and-greet as an opportunity to say thank you to

the mayor and commissioners for the Library budget increase. Mr. Mitchell will attend the mandatory financial training with Christopher Evans (CPA with GPLS) on February 13-16, 2023 in Athens, Ga.

- e. **Wallace Branch Golden Blocks – Block-Health/Resources Party:** This event takes place Saturday, February 11, 2023 from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. Instead of closing Laney Walker, Mr. Mitchell suggested using the Wallace Branch parking lot, and Tabernacle Baptist Church’s parking lot for the block party. He’ll follow up with the committee.
- f. **G.E.E.R. Grant from Governor Kemp – 87 Chrombooks, 21 Hotspots, 35 Launch Pads:** Governor Kemp approved 2.26 million for Georgia libraries. Julie Walker, State Librarian has ordered the Chrombooks, hotspots and launch pads. Half will be used on the book mobile.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Garman moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Gardiner seconded. All voted in favor. The ARCPLS Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 6:29 pm.