

Augusta Richmond County Public Library System

Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

Wallace Branch Library

Monday, February 17, 2025

5:30 pm

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting of the Augusta Richmond County Public Library System (ARCPLS) Board of Trustees was called to order at 5:34 pm by Board Vice President, Brenda Garman.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Member present: Morris Porter (President), Brenda Garman (Vice President), Tonia Gibbons (Treasurer), Anna Reeves, Anita Rookard, Kigwana Cherry, Christine Rhodes, Leadra Collins, Shelia Siler. Members Absent: Cher Best (excused), Kimberly Brown (excused). Ex-officio members present: Dennis Garman (Friends of the Augusta Library), Robyn Wittenberg Dudley (Friends of the Augusta Library), Commissioner Francine Scott, Emanuel Mitchell (Library Director).

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Anna Reeves moved to approve the agenda as written, Anita Rookard seconded. All voted in favor. The motion carried.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Anna Reeves moved to approve the January 2025 board meeting minutes as written. Tonia Gibbons seconded. All voted in favor. The motion carried.

**V. TREASURER'S REPORT**

Mr. Mitchell reminded the board that the treasurer's report runs a month behind, therefore the treasurer's report presented at the February 17, 2025 board meeting reflects the month of January 2025 and Fiscal Year 2025. He continues to point out the following: Line 31 Full Time Salary (Library's biggest expense)- \$110,137.82. Amount reflects retired staff and new staff members as retired staff members are at the top of the pay scale and new staff members are at the bottom. Line 41 (Part Time Wages) increased slightly to \$10,609.62. Line 44 (Library Receipts) \$7,537.28. Mr. Mitchell added that this reflects a good month for Library receipts, which includes meeting rooms, fines, and print outs. This places the Library \$21,823.79 short of its \$50,000 goal for fines and meeting rooms. Mr. Mitchell stated that the Library is doing well in that area.

**VI. REPORTS**

A. President's Report: No report

B. Director's Report:

- The Flooring Project (HQ): The bid for the Headquarters' flooring project is now closed. Headquarters is still waiting for procurement to assign the vendor a purchase order number. Mr. Mitchell informed the board that a start date cannot be declared until the number is received. A

part of the reason for this cause is FEMA. Mr. Mitchell also expressed gratitude for the Commissioners and all they have done during this process.

- Website Audit: The Office of Civil Rights approved ARCPLS' audit for the website. The next step required the Library to submit a plan on how the website would be accessible to everyone. Because of new Administration, and the structure of the Office of Civil Rights operating under the Department of Education, the Library is currently without an attorney. The Library was notified that a new attorney will be in contact, however, no one is answering the phone in the Office of Civil Rights. Mr. Mitchell added that among 17,000 others, this situation places the Library in a stagnant position.
- Jani King: Mr. Mitchell stated that from January 28<sup>th</sup> to February 17, 2025, Jani King has cleaned Wallace, Friedman, and Headquarters. After speaking with the owner, it has been concluded that areas in need of additional attention will be catered to.
- Headquarters: The Auditorium exit door was repaired on January 29, 2025. The fire extinguishers in all locations have passed inspection. FEMA repairs for Appleby, Friedman, and Maxwell are now being scheduled.
- Mr. Mitchell stated that Mr. Porter and Ms. Gibbons joined him in traveling to the Capitol Building in Atlanta to network with Senators and other members of the Augusta Delegation. Mr. Mitchell mentioned Senator Max Burns and his extensive history with the library system, including his internship at a Switzerland Library. He described him as a true lover of the library. Senator Burns diligently worked to get the ARCPLS \$900,000 for the Appleby Library Branch. Mr. Mitchell also shared that Mr. Burns is the author of Senate Bill 74, which proposes removing the exemption that prevents the prosecution of librarians and library staff in all libraries if they provide harmful material to a child, making them subject to prosecution. His stance is rooted in the desire for children to exist in a safe environment where they have little chance of encountering harmful content. Although Mr. Mitchell disagreed, he expressed that they were able to professionally discuss each other's viewpoints while agreeing to disagree. Mr. Mitchell added that networking with individuals such as these offered a new perspective of gratitude for the work that is done behind the scenes. He continued, stating that he wished Georgia Libraries had a stronger presence, however, Augusta had a great showing which included approximately 3 buses.
- Beautification Project: Starts on Monday, February 24, 2025. The first phase will include the painting of the teen's area on the second floor of Headquarters, and the Board Room. The board room chairs will be reupholstered. Mr. Mitchell is currently waiting on quotes for this. The table will remain but will be resurfaced. The end goal is to display vibrant wall colors and showcase paintings on the walls.
- Donations: The Rotary Club donated \$195.00 for library books.
- Advertising for Hiring, Retirements, and Resignations: The manager's position for Diamond Lakes has been posted after the retirement of Cathy Joseph after 31 years. The Outreach Manager position has been posted. Former Outreach Manager, Liz Mason has been promoted to Assistant Director. Interviews were conducted for Outreach Manager and Library Assistant II on February 14<sup>th</sup>, a candidate has been selected, and paperwork is being sent to HR. The Library Assistant 2 position for Outreach has been posted. Interviews were conducted, a candidate has been selected and the paperwork is being sent to HR. The Library Assistant 3 position for Maxwell had 8 applicants, interviews were scheduled for February 21, 2025. The Library

substitute position has been posted and interviews will be scheduled soon. Joshua Sheffield (Wallace Branch) has submitted his resignation after 5 years of service, his last day will be February 27, 2025.

- Events: The Kappa League reading and mentorship program, which serves a purpose to attract more youth to the Maxwell branch, has attracted 31 children and 14 adults. Kappa League has a total of 79 youth members that participate in reading to other youth to make reading fun and interesting. This has led to a partnership with A. Dorothy Hains Elementary School. March 17, 2025 will be a Night Out with A. Dorothy Hains Elementary School at the Maxwell Branch Library. They will bring approximately 100 kids. The end goal is to positively impact the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading level and to encourage them to view reading as a hobby. On Saturday, February 15, 2025, Board President, Morris Porter hosted a speech competition entitled "Know Your Rights and History". Local government officials were present, including Sheriff Eugene Gino Brantley, who also presented a speech. Mr. Mitchell shared that this serves as a testament that more people are becoming aware of the Library's purpose as the Information Hub of Richmond County. From March 4th to March 6th, 2025, Mr. Mitchell will attend Voices for Libraries, an event organized by the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, held in Washington, DC, to represent Georgia Libraries. There, he will meet with Senators and Congress members to discuss the FY26 budget. Mr. Mitchell elaborated on Governor Kemp's announcement concerning the Library's budget, stating that information concerning the budget was located under Higher Education. The Board was also informed of a new Senate Bill that proposes to make all library board meetings virtual, allowing board members who cannot attend in person to participate, which also benefits the public.

C. Committee Report

No report at this time, will report at the March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting.

D. Friends of the Library Report

Dennis Garman introduced the Friends' newly elected Vice President, Robyn Wittenberg Dudley. Robyn provided the following report: The Friends had their annual meeting in January 2025. They have supported library events such as the Summer Reading program, Arts in the Hearts, Star Wars Read, and Staff Development Day. The Friends' upcoming events include the Augusta Green Jackets game on April 5, 2025. On behalf of the Friends of the Library, Robyn asked if there is a way that they could assist with the Appleby renovation project in terms of donating books to other library branches rather than placing them in storage. Mr. Mitchell stated that while that is a great idea, all branches have minimum space to accept additional donations. He added that this may be a cause to sell part of the collection(s). Robyn concluded by thanking the board for their support.

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

a) Incident Report

- A patron made a negative post about the Headquarters Branch Library and tagged a board member. This prompted another board member to contact the individual for clarification and to explain the Library's point of view. The board agreed that their collective responsibility is to advocate for the library, its staff, and its reputation.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

a) Approve Quote for Server Room HVAC

Anna Reeves made a motion to approve Gold Mech Services' quote for the server room's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system. Leadra Collins approved. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

b) Meeting Room Software

The software is close to going live. Final pieces are expected to be done on Feb. 18, 2025. This will include linking Square, which allows patrons to pay online. Moving forward, once the meeting rooms are booked, the entire process can be completed online to promote a hassle-free process. Additionally, the meeting room's availability will be available on the website, this also includes the Board Room balcony. A week of testing will be completed before the software goes live.

c) ARC- Audit

Paper audit records have transitioned to digital. No errors have been discovered to date. Auditors will have an official visit at the Library in March.

d) Richmond County School Board – Add member to Library Board

Mr. Porter presented his recent conversations with Dr. Cobb and the president of the Richmond County Board of Education, Shawnda Stovall. A suggestion was made to potentially have a board member from ARCPLS attend the Board of Education's meeting, and in return, a representative from the BOE would attend an ARCPLS meeting. The suggestions were received as information until the Board makes a final decision.

**IX. Public Comments**

a) New Board Member Introductions

- Shelia Siler, a wife and dedicated mother of three, is a North Carolina native who graduated from Winston-Salem State University before pursuing a career in nursing. She then joined the military, serving 8 years as a med-surgical nurse at Fort Gordon, a role she loved. After her military service, she moved back to North Carolina and worked at Bowman Gray but soon found herself missing Augusta. She returned and has now called Augusta home for 30 years. Eight years ago, Shelia retired as a nurse from the Charlie Norwood Department of Veteran Affairs Medical Center, where she developed a deep passion for caring for veterans. She considers nursing her true calling and remains committed to helping others even in retirement. She views serving on boards as a valuable opportunity to continue learning, something she is always eager to do. In her role, she represents Commissioner Alvin Mason.
- Robyn Wittenberg Dudley, a retired Librarian and Augusta native, has been a lifelong advocate for libraries. Though she moved away in 1972, she returned to Augusta in 2019 with a mission—to help save the oldest standing Synagogue in Georgia from being demolished and turned into a parking lot. Her efforts were successful, and the historic building now serves as the Augusta Jewish Museum on Telfair Street. Robyn Dudley remains dedicated to supporting libraries and other community institutions as she is passionate about increasing library engagement and is committed to encouraging as many people as possible to take advantage of all the library has to offer. In her role, she represents the Friends of the Library.

- b) Anna Reeves & Anita Rookard agreed to ask current board members if they are willing to serve another year to continue contributing to the Library's growing path, especially since they currently possess knowledge of the library and its systems. President (Morris Porter), Vice President (Brenda Garman), and Treasurer (Tonia Gibbons) agreed. Voting on this decision will take place in March. Anita added that they do not want to lose the momentum that the Library Board currently has, she is hopeful that this will inspire future board members to continue the Library's growing state.
- c) Kigwana Cherry reflected on his history with the library as he discussed the approaching end of his board term. He shared that serving as a board member strengthened his commitment to advocating for both the library and the city. He assured the board that he would continue to provide updates on the process and offered his support to the library even after his term ends

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

The ARCPLS Board of Trustees regular meeting adjourned at 6:43 pm.