

Augusta Richmond County Public Library System

Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

Maxwell Branch Library

Monday, May 19, 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 President, Morris Porter.

II. ROLL CALL

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

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Mitchell announced that there was an adjustment to the agenda – William Cherry withdrew his presentation to the Board meeting. Brenda Garman moved to approve the agenda with the adjustment, Anita Rookard seconded. All voted in favor. The motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Mitchell announced two adjustments to the minutes from March and the minutes from April. Mr. Porter moved to approve the March and April 2025 board meeting minutes as written. All voted in favor. The motion carried.

At this time Mr. Porter announced there was a special presentation by Aziza Eil'Yudah of Adroit Comics, who gave a presentation of her company that produces hero comics for young readers. Ms. Eil'Yudah handed out two copies of published comics from her company for Board members to view. She explained the targeted audience for the publications is young and early readers. She explained the company has five going on six issues presently in circulation. The goal is to include the Public Library in their interactive comics this summer, called ***The Augusta Summer Adventure***. This is a free city -wide, large scavenger hunt which turns libraries, businesses and parks into living interactive chapters. Readers will unlock clues to achieve completion of a literacy packet. Each booklet will include activities for the reader to complete by locating clues placed in the participating libraries, businesses and parks, to move onto the next chapter. When completed, it will lead the reader to a specific location to complete a final activity, get a stamp in the booklet, and then collect a prize. The first families to complete the booklet will win a grand prize. Many businesses such as Putt-Putt of Augusta, the HUB, and Second & Charles have already committed to either being a location or donating prizes. Artwork will be displayed at the various "clue" locations so young readers can see the characters from the comics. Their goal is to

distribute 10,000 adventure packs through the summer camps and the YMCA. They are looking for 20 check points to host the activity and distribute the clues. Ms. Eil'Yudah is proposing a partnership this summer to support this six-week reading event. Another goal is to work with 100 children this Fall and coming Spring to determine growth through the program. Adroit Comics will supply free prizes, age-appropriate activities, handle all advertising and marketing for **The Augusta Summer Adventure** campaign, and ask for support from the Augusta Richmond County Public Library System. In return, Adroit Comics will donate 15% of the proceeds from sales of the booklets to the Augusta Library System, and highlight the Augusta Public Library in all media campaigns. Anita Rookard from the Augusta Human Resources asked about including the Municipal Building in the summer adventure project, and possibly able to donate a prize. Mr. Dennis Garman asked if families could go at their own pace to complete the booklet. Ms. Eil'Yudah answered yes, that was correct. Mrs. Brenda Garman also suggested that the Friends of The Library could provide a free book for each family that completes the challenge as well. Mr. Porter asked how many participants were confirmed, and Ms. Eil'Yudah explained there wasn't a definite number yet, but had approximately 10 businesses so far and they were waiting to hear back from others they had contacted. Mr. Porter asked about the start date and the group would like to start on June 14, 2025 to coincide with the Library's Summer Reading Program Kick-Off and end on July 26, 2025. Adroit Comics will have a booth at the Summer Reading Program Kick-Off to promote the event and give away some of the adventure packs. After the presentation, the Board discussed the project. Mr. Porter moved to approve supporting Adroit Comics and **The Augusta Summer Adventure** through the Library. All voted in favor. The motion carried. Ms. Rookard suggested having teen-age readers come in this Summer to read to the younger children.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Mitchell started with April's Treasurer's Report dated May 2025 which is actually for April 2025. Line 31 in that Treasurer's report, shows full-time staff salaries at \$105,629.30. There are some of the line items on this report that may be over, but funding will be available to make those adjustments. A full assessment on how to move forward for June will be held later. Line 41 is part-time staff, part-time went up a little due to adding more student assistants. It's gone up \$11,000.00 from the ensuing month to the present month to \$12,535.50. Fines and Fees for April is \$5,692.30. Mr. Mitchell reminded those that are new to the Board, the Library works on two fiscal years – the following year for the County, but for monetary we work on the State fiscal year which starts July 1, 2024 and ends June 30, 2025. When looking at the budgets, it is not a completion of the budget because it is not carried, have to carry that budget until the end of the year based upon what the library was given.

VI. REPORTS

A. President's Report: No report

B. Director's Report:

- I spoke to Ben today, and we are working diligently to get all staff trained to live on the interactive calendar for reservations for meeting rooms. We are going to have a soft opening on the 27th of May and that's basically for staff to understand the calendar. On that calendar you will be able to see all of the meeting rooms at once, no matter what location, and then you could reduce it to the specific room at the specific location and what its availability is. The patron can also click on it, set their own reservation for that meeting room. Then once it's approved, it will get an email and they'll be prompted to pay via the site. That is done for one, we're trying to make it easier for patrons to reserve the room, but also we're trying to limit the risk of cash handling. Not that there has been any problems, but I wanted to be proactive on it. The question was asked about the projected revenue. Mr. Mitchell answered that the room rentals have always been successful. The current revenue is \$50,000.00, and the hope is to raise

that amount to \$70,000 or \$80,000 a year in revenue. But there are a lot of factors that the Library are working on, like the construction going on in front of the Headquarters Library. A senator attended a recent event at the HQ Library and remarked on how hard it was to get to the main branch. He was pleased to see that the city of Augusta was using the infrastructure funds to improve the area. Mr. Mitchell stated that once we get the money from the State, it will be utilized like it is supposed to be.

- Mr. Mitchell also explained that there are no attorneys in the Civil Rights offices and the Department of Education presently to give us approval to move forward – no attorneys to actually submit a letter to the federal courts to show that we are in compliance, then they can close the claim. We are currently stuck, we can't do anything until they say so. Everything is done, we just have to have their stamp. All of the lawyers in the Civil Rights offices have resigned and the Department of Education have resigned. We've been going through this process for about six months now. We have gone through nine lawyers. We just have to wait, and that's every library in the continental US dealing with that website. Just know that we are in compliance and we have sent everything they needed and we're just waiting on them.
- Mr. Mitchell placed in the Board packet when the patron had the emergency at Headquarters; and basically the patron overdosed. Marshall Myers revived him and stayed with him until the EMS came. The patron didn't do the drugs inside of the library, but once he got inside the library the effects of the drugs kicked in, and he was so far gone that if Officer Myers hadn't stepped in the patron would have passed. He's actually in the picture. It took three doses of Narcan to bring him back. That was a testament to having a retired firefighter as security in the library – it could not be anything better. He was awarded the Hero Award by the City.
- The next incident report was May 12th, and Mr. Mitchell wanted to talk to this and say again that we were proactive in setting the age limit for minors in the library. There were two young girls in the library, one was either 12 and the other was 14 years old. The 14 year old had a seizure in the library and she wasn't with her parents. The protocol was to call the Sheriff's Office and call EMS. The Sheriff's Office came out, and the Marshall stayed with them until the parent came. The Sheriff's Office didn't leave until the parent showed up. They were in policy with this incident, but the fact that it actually happened. When the young girl recovered, she was able to walk out of the library with her parent. The little sister said that it happened frequently.
- May 11th had an incident at Maxwell Branch, at first thought it was employee negligence, but after viewing the footage it's a malfunction with the door – hopefully we have it fixed. Watching the staff member going to the door and actually locking it, and physically seeing them lock it. Later that night some teens came and they pulled the door, then pulled both of the doors and they opened. It didn't catch at the top to lock, and they didn't go in and do any damage. They sat down in the foyer and then heard the police and then they left. They just came in and had their bookbags but just came in to sit. So hopefully we have that fixed with the door. The Sheriff's Office didn't leave the premises until a staff member showed up.
- Great News, the Appleby renovation is well on its way, the Bid Packet has been submitted to Procurement today. The Bid Packet is over 500 pages so it is not in the Board packet, but if you want to read it there is a copy at the library. It is very specific and detailed, but this is the opportunity to get everything done, and done right, at Appleby.
- The Library Audit with Bates & Carter is done and has been submitted to the State. It was a little past due on getting to the State, but they gave us a grace period, considering we used an auditor they recommended. So, no penalties were applied. And the best thing about it was there were no findings. It was a very thorough audit, even going to our attorneys to have statements that there were no open cases, we didn't have any payouts and that we pay our bills on time. It was a good audit, they went back five years. There were many requests from the auditor, but

everything was there. There was a question about two of the checks, but it turned out that they were debit card transactions instead of checks.

- April 19th we had a Project Impact from the YMCA, a group of 35 students came and used the Tech Hub. It was a great collaboration. Jerome Lopez and Russell Liner did a fantastic job with getting them engaged with the equipment. The group is looking to come back for another visit very soon. Steven Kendrick was the sponsor with the group.
- May 1st we partnered with The HUB for May the Fourth Be With You event which is a spinoff from our Star Wars Reads Program. We are looking to partner with them, things went really well so the reason we want to partner with them is to have a larger impact on the community, with the minimum amount of revenue spent. There are some things that still need to be worked out, such as when to hold the event – ours is on the weekend, theirs is during the week.
- The main library hosted the Georgia Literacy Awards for RISE Augusta. RISE Augusta was one of ten to receive this award within the state of Georgia. It was a large crowd that attended, there were local celebrities as well as national celebrities present. An NFL Superbowl champion, Malcolm Mitchell. There were three state senators, two commissioners, the director from Georgia RESA, the State Librarian, along with a lot of delegates. It was well received. The State Librarian stated that it was the largest turnout she has seen.
- The flooring project at Headquarters has started in Children's. We have no cracks in the floor. It had to be two separate contractors that worked on the floor previously. So it's going well. The contractor said that they normally remove about a five thousand square feet a day. When Mr. Mitchell left for the day, the team had already removed half of the flooring in Children's and that department is 10,000 sq ft. That's how easy it was to go through pulling up the carpet and prepping for the tiles.
- The Library is working with the Clerk of Commission for the letter about replacing Mr. Cherry. We should have that before the end of the week. It happened on an addendum agenda, and we were just trying to track it down. Mr. Mitchell found the email requesting the letter and forwarded it on to the correct Cody (there were two Codys). That is for Slendak, it is Sean's old district.
- Great news! The Governor signed House Bill 516. Mr. Mitchell is happy about that because it only takes 50% of the Board to show up, and then you can go to either teleconference or we can log into ZOOM. We don't have to vote on it – it goes into effect July 1st. Best part about it is, it doesn't specify ex-officio Board member or voting Board member. It simply says Board member. Mr. Mitchell stated that it wasn't just our Board's problem, but a state-wide problem because some Boards only meet four times a year.
- Donations – we received \$5,000.00 from the Friends for Summer Reading. We were awarded a grant from The Dollar General for the Literacy Foundation for Summer Reading for \$3,000.00. We were awarded \$231,000.00 from the state of Georgia for the roofing project for Headquarters. This means the quote came in for the Headquarters Library at \$400,00.00. What happens is when it's paid the State returns \$231,000.00 back to the County.
- Advertising for hiring, retiring and resignations: Diamond Lakes manager position interviews are in process, the Library Assistant position for Outreach interviews in process, Library Assistant III for Maxwell Branch – interviewed and selected a candidate, just waiting for it to go through HR process, Maxwell Library Branch Manager interviewed and selected just waiting for the HR process. Library Student Assistants, hired three – two for Wallace because Wallace didn't have any and one for the Children's department was hired. Wallace, out of all of the other Branches, is 110% staffed now. They have two librarians, one is the library manager and the other is the Library Assistant but she has a MLS, they have a library associate and two part-timers. No other location outside of the Headquarters Branch has two librarians on staff. Sad part now we have

to talk about resignations. Lost Vinesha Brown, who was the Office Assistant, and also lost our Public Relations person, Kashaella Barber. Her last day is the 30th.

- Upcoming dates, the Budget calendar for Richmond County starts May 27, 2025. Augusta On Display is June 7, 2025, the last Appleby concert series starts in June. Mr. Mitchell will be sending out a flyer with all of the artists and the information. June 3rd, June 10th, June 17th and June 24th. June 24th is the last one. And the rain date is in July in case one gets rained out.
- Looking at our circulation for April of 2024 we circulated 23,574 items, for 2025 we're slightly under that at 20,178. Computer use for April of 2024 it was 3,979 and for April of 2025 it was 4,373 so computer use is just going up. Wi-Fi usage has gone up as well, for April 2024 it was 1,890 and for April of 2025 it was 1,999. Web site hits went from 8,410 to 9,477. Looking at total visits they were slightly down, but that's to be expected with everything that's going on. We had 18,636 for April of the previous year and for April 2025 it was 16,523 so that was a slight difference but everyone knows what's going on outside of the Headquarters Library, so it's to be expected. As long as Mr. Mitchell doesn't see a dip of more than 8,000, he isn't going to be upset about it because there's all type of parking issues. The Library did bridge a gap with the Public Defender's Office so now patrons and staff can park over there towards the end, as before they were towing them. and we found out that the office manager for the Public Defender's Office is a library user so Mr. Mitchell went back over and did a demonstration on Kanopy and Libby, and they think the world of us now.

C. Committee Report

No report at this time, will report at the March 24th meeting.

D. Friends of the Library Report

Dennis Garman first commented on the RISE Augusta event. They said that that was the only one outside of individuals, as a group they had previously gone to a school or something so it's something! That's the first for that kind of group, so Augusta should be proud. The Friends big news was the book sale and that was May 2nd and 3rd and things were set up. Mr. Garman was concerned about attendance with all of the construction going on and limited parking. Well in terms of money, The Friends collected \$917.00 and that is about average for their book sales. Mrs. Garman commented that they did sell a \$150 Louie Lamour book set. Before COVID, the goal was to reach \$1000.00 and they did go a couple of years over \$1000.00. Overall, they did a lot better than they thought they might, considering the circumstances. Ms. Best stated that the sale was advertised on social media and their station's web site. Signs were placed around town as well. The Friends are contemplating doing more advertising about the book sale in the future. Ms. Ashworth at Appleby Branch stated that having a sign at that location on Walton Way was noticed by many of the patrons. This has caused them to look at what type or kind of advertising really works for their book sale. Most of the regular patrons that attend the annual book sale are aware of the event, the advertising would be more for those that aren't aware of the event. They also advertise via an email list and regionally. The Friends also sent five boxes of children's and young adult books to RISE to give away. The bookstore may be closed for approximately a month for new flooring to be installed, thanks to Mr. Mitchell. The current carpet in the bookstore is 15 years old. Ms. Best commented that having a graphic for The Friends bookstore and annual sale to be placed on the web site. The Friends are also considering having the bookstore open longer during the day. This will be discussed at their meeting.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. Porter stated that the unfinished business had already been covered in Mr. Mitchell's report.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

a) Roofing

Mr. Mitchell had already covered the roofing in his report.

b) Annual Report

Ms. Best stated that the idea of an annual report was more of a meeting. She wanted to look into the possibility of the Board holding a meeting annually at the Headquarters library to recognize an individual's or a group's achievements. This would give the Board access to the people and network with them to push initiatives that would benefit the libraries. It would also open up opportunities to form partnerships with other community members. Hosting it at the Headquarters library would give others a chance to see the resources the library system has available. The Board could provide snacks, a speaker, present awards, and then share the annual report with the stakeholders. Ms. Best suggested having the annual report meeting prior to the public having access to it. The meeting could be held in July. Mr. Mitchell suggested adding this item to next month's agenda and he will write up a proposal to be submitted.

c) State Amended Budget

Mr. Mitchell presented the State amended budget to the Board so they could see all Georgia libraries and their budgets based on population. All libraries received an additional \$.10 per capita – this calculated to \$20,600.00. That's an additional \$20,000.00 for book purchases that has to be spent by June 2025. Looking at the State budget helps to explain how the library budget is derived from the State. The State gave our library a total of \$577,312.00. This is broken down as follows: \$362,175.00 for salaries, Augusta has three State reimbursed librarians. The State rewards Augusta for having three reimbursed positions by reimbursing the Director's salary and the two other positions. The SSG grant or the System Services Grant provides for all of the IT updates. The \$146,266.00 is based upon Augusta's population multiplied by .70. This money is used to pay for books, application subscriptions such as Kanopy, Galileo, all the subscriptions that the Library has.

d) Library Budget 2026

Mr. Mitchell presented the proposed budget for FY2026. It is a rough draft of what will be presented to the Commission. The health benefits are set to increase which will affect the budget. If the library system becomes a part of Augusta, then that increase will not affect the library. If that doesn't happen then the cost will be \$350,000.00 more, which adds up to \$600,00.00 and the library will have to pay that amount. This will be what it costs for 40 employees since the three reimbursed librarians will be covered by the State. Mr. Mitchell is investigating the cost for the library to be on the City's budget. The purpose of the library going to the State health benefits program was a cost-saving one for the County. Now it isn't. A letter needs to be submitted requesting to be pulled out of the County, then request to become part of the City. Mr. Mitchell pointed out that only one staff member is still a part of the old pension plan, and it could help establish that at one point the Library was a part of Augusta Richmond County. The library is also in the Teachers Retirement program which could be phased out as new hires come on board. If the existing benefit remains in place the cost will be \$3,367,438.00, and that would cover 40 employees. Mr. Mitchell reminded everyone that this is the proposed budget for 2026 and after that the Board will get to see the actual budget report that will be submitted to Finance. This is the first year that raises will not be given. Mr. Mitchell is asking the Board to approve this proposed budget. Mr. Porter moved to approve the proposed budget for 2026. All voted to approve. The motion passed.

e) Mr. Mitchell presented the Wells Fargo investment account which has \$182,000.00. Mr. Mitchell explained that the Wells Fargo account had been closed and two checks were sent – one in the amount of \$182,000.00 and the other check was a dividend check in the

amount of \$.10. In a previous Board meeting there was a discussion about the Community Foundation account. The Community Foundation account was doing well while the other account was not bringing much yield in. Mr. Mitchell suggested putting the money in the Community Foundation account which is actually yielding money. This action was originally discussed and agreed on it in a previous Board meeting six or seven months ago at the Wallace Branch meeting. Mr. Mitchell pointed out that there are two account, one that is unrestricted which allows use for anything and then the other account that is restricted that is only for capital fund projects.

- f) The Director's salary which was discussed earlier, there is a form that needs to be filled out and goes to the Board President which states the Director's salary with benefits is \$141,132.00. The Augusta Richmond County pays roughly \$26,000.00 in their budget line and everything else is reimbursed.

IX. Public Comments

- a) Mr. Mitchell stated that the Library has received a donation from Pepsi for the Summer Reading Program Kick-Off. They are going to donate 25 to 30 cases of a combination of water and soda.

ADJOURNMENT

The ARCPLS Board of Trustees regular meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.