Augusta Richmond County Public Library System

Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

Friedman Branch Library

Monday, September 15, 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 5:31 pm by Board President, Morris Porter.

II. ROLL CALL

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

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Porter called for a motion to approve the agenda as written. Ms. Reeves made the motion, Ms. Best seconded the motion. The motion to approve the agenda as written was passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Siler requested a change to the June minutes as she was not listed as present, and she was. Mr. Porter called for a motion to approve the June minutes with the change listing Ms. Siler as an attendee, and the August minutes as written. Ms. Gibbons made the motion. Ms. Best seconded the motion. The motion to approve the June minutes with the correction listing Ms. Siler as an attendee and the August minutes as written was passed unanimously.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Mitchell drew attention to Line 31 Full Time Salary for August 2025 - $116,094.74, Line 41 Part Time Salary for August 2025 – $14,298.08, and Line 44 Collection of Fees, Fines, and Meeting Rooms for August 2025 - $6,421.00. Mr. Mitchell opened the floor for questions. There were none.

Mr. Mitchell then went on to note that the Community Foundation sent in their monthly statement on the day of the meeting so they did not make the report. The interest made in the foundation for one month was $8,000.00. Mr. Mitchell will email the statement out to The Board.

Mr. Porter opened the floor to questions or comments on the Treasurer's Report. There were none.

VI. REPORTS

A. President's Report: No report

B. Director's Report:

- Mr. Mitchell reminded the board that the library's fiscal year runs from July of the current year to June of the following year. This puts us in the third month of our fiscal year. This differs from the county's fiscal year, which runs congruent to the calendar year.
- The budget request gets submitted to the county in the middle, towards the end of, August. It was submitted and approved.
- The 2026 budget request is on the agenda for the Board Retreat in October.
- The library now has a financial expert that works with the library.
- There were concerns with the request to cut all departments by 10%. Mr. Mitchell informed them that we cannot cut 10% from our request. That would amount to $288,000.00. That cut would lead to the removal of all of our part-time employees, a reduction in hours, and, possibly, the closing of a location. Mr. Mitchell explained that the libraries are strategically placed near schools to foster a strong relationship with RCSS. Cutting hours and closing locations would have a negative effect on that relationship that the library has worked so hard to build with the school systems and their students.
- Mr. Mitchell gave them suggestions on how we can reduce costs. Our biggest cost is State Health Benefits, which will run close to $725,000 starting in January.
- It runs the Library $70,000 a month to pay for health care, and that money comes from the commission.
- If the library became part of ARC, it would cost the commission $40,000 a month. That would save over $280,000.
- The commission would need to vote on it to make it happen.
- Mr. Mitchell has a work session on September 30th to discuss how the library functions and provide the commission with all of the information they need to make their decision. Mr. Mitchell is requesting the Board to be present on the 30th to answer any questions the commission might have.
- Mr. Mitchell has closed out FY25 for our audit.
- The engagement letter has been signed and the auditors plan to come out to visit this month.
- Mr. Mitchell handed out polished 2024 annual reports.
- The 2025 Annual Report has been finished and the raw data was included in this month's Board Packet.
- We planned for a 10% increase, and we have exceeded that.
- We have 93,000 current active card holders. Active card holders are designated by checking out materials within the last 2 weeks.
- We are seeing an increase in all formats, online, Websites, Wi-Fi, digital, and in person. We even have patrons in California using out materials and knowledge kept in the Augusta Room.
- The Augusta Chronical is amongst the highest usage in the state.

- We also have a partnership with Atlanta Constitutional, allowing patrons to view and read it for free online with a library card.
- State Budget was submitted and allocated. They gave us an additional $146,000 for our collection
- Our partnership with RCSS is well established and strong. Not only are the students using our facilities, the school board is also using them.
- Mr. Porter opened the floor for questions and comments.
- Ms. Rookard asked for a follow up on the library joining Augusta's Benefits.
- Mr. Mitchell had conversations with the Administrator and the Deputy Finance Director and brought hard numbers to them.
- Ms. Rookard asked for a copy of those numbers and Mr. Mitchell said he would send them to her.
- Ms. Reeves asked about Ms. Wagner leaving at the end of the year and if anyone else was planning on leaving.
- Mr. Mitchell informed that Ms. Moesha Jenkins is leaving the 19th and Ms. Cristal Hannah resigned earlier this month. Ms. Hannah did put in her two weeks, but due to the sensitivity of her position, her resignation was effective immediately, and she was paid out her two weeks.
- A new staff member started the day of the meeting, Ian Baskett, as our marketing and PR person.
- Once construction on Telfair is complete, Mr. Mitchell is looking at a Book and Beats project to bring music in.
- We are also pushing the TechHub
- Ms. Reeves asked about Wallace Library
- Mr. Mitchell said that Wallace is doing well. Numbers are increasing and we are seeing an uptick of children creating "good problems". Wallace is busy from 3 pm to closing most days.
- Ms. Reeves asked who the manager is. It is Ms. Abby Jessup, who is a librarian and media specialist.
- The staff is growing and Mr. Mitchell is imparting that numbers need to continue to increase.
- Ms. Reeves asked about overflow from the sister library.
- Mr. Mitchell replied that we have been seeing an increase in overflow from Columbia County going back six months. As Columbia County reduces their children's section, we are increasing our children's collection.
- Ms. Garman asked for a follow up on Living in Purpose.
- Mr. Mitchell informed her that an email granting Living in Purpose Library Partner Status was sent to them within two days of the last Board Meeting. That email ended up in their spam folder. Not knowing their request was granted, they looked elsewhere and found a different space. They were told that the decision would still be honored on our end if they wanted to use our facilities. The director of Living in Purpose did send a letter, that Mr. Mitchell sent to the Board, acknowledging that the approval letter went to her spam folder.

C. Committee Report: There are no active committees at this time

D. Friends of the Library Report

- Friends has reopened and will continue with Thursday-Saturday hours from 10am-4pm. They will run for more days of the week if they can find volunteers.
- Fall Booksale is the second weekend in November, the 7th and the 8th.
- Had one workday with a great turn out.
- They are doing weekly assessments. They are receiving a lot of tech books as donations.
- Ms. Garman asked, as a representative of FOAL, if there were any ideas for the influx of foreign language books, primarily German and Spanish. Ms. Gibbons has some ideas for where those books might be able to go.
- Ms. Best asked if there was a graphic for the Fall Booksale. Mr. Garman replied that it should be done this week and he will email her a copy when it's finalized.
- Mr. Porter opened the floor for comments or questions. There were none.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Incident Reports
   a. Two teenagers got into an argument at Wallace Library. The parents showed up and handled the situation without the need of Richmond County Police. Richmond County School Police were informed.

b) Website OCR Update
   a. There is still no news as we are still awaiting OCR staffing changes to approve our compliance.

c) Appleby Update
   a. Pre-bidding meeting is planned the morning of October 13th. Which is also Staff Day.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

a) Board Chair appoints Nominating Committee
   a. It's time to create a committee to nominate the new President, Vice President, and Treasurer.
   b. Mr. Porter asked for Volunteers. Ms. Rookard and Ms. Rhodes volunteered.
   c. The new term starts in March and Elections will be in January

b) Begin Library Director's Evaluation
   a. It's time to begin the Library Directors Evaluation.
   b. Mr. Porter asked for a volunteer to run it. Ms. Gibbons volunteered.

c) Repair for Chiller Motherboard

a. The server room and fire alarm chiller motherboard need to be replaced. The estimated cost is $6,028.45.
b. Mr. Porter asked for a motion. Ms. Reeves made a motion to approve the cost to replace the chiller motherboard. Ms. Gibbons seconded the motion. The motion to approve the cost to replace the chiller motherboard passed unanimously.

IX. Public Comments

a) New Board Member
- Ms. Marsha Cole has joined as the newest member of the Board. She is a retired teacher born and local to the Augusta area. She is representing the 7th district.

b) Mr. Porter announced that Ms. Reeves is running for Mayor of Blyth, Georgia.

c) Ms. Reeves gave public thanks to Mr. Mitchell for supplying goodie bags for the Rotary for their library card sign up event.

d) Ms. Gibbons has been using the TechHub for her podcast. Her use of the equipment has increased knowledge to the public that we offer those services.

e) Ms. Gibbons mentioned that Augusta Partnership for Children has Children's Week Coming up, September 29th- October 4th, and they have a list of activities on their website. They are bringing back the Teen Maze. They are also looking for Board Members.

f) Ms. Rookard brought up the question of a committee to help raise funds for the library outside of FOAL.
- Mr. Mitchell is trying to reactivate the Augusta Richmond County Public Library Foundation as a long-term solution.
- Ms. Rookard suggested more music series, and more music in general, outside of the Summer Music Series as a way to raise money.

g) Ms. Best asked if there were Halloween or Fall Festival plans in place.
- Mr. Mitchell responded yes, and that it's all on the public calendar and we are hoping to host a Trunk or Treat at each Library Branch.

h) Mr. Porter shared that the Afro-Caribbean festival has been rescheduled for Oct 4th at the old YMCA Soccer Field.

i) The Board Retreat was rescheduled for Sunday, October 12th, from 2-4.

j) Mr. Porter opened the floor for additional questions or comments. There were none.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The ARCPLS Board of Trustees regular meeting adjourned at 6:23 pm.