

Augusta Richmond County Public Library System

Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

Virtual via Zoom

Monday, January 26, 2026

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 5:33 pm by Board President, Morris Porter.

II. ROLL CALL

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

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Porter entertained a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Reeves moved to approve the agenda with the adjustment of postponing the SkillZilla presentation to the next meeting. Ms. Best seconded the motion. The motion to approve the agenda with the adjustment of postponing the SkillZilla presentation to the next meeting was passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MINUTES

Mr. Porter entertained a motion to approve the minutes as written from the November regular meeting. Ms. Garman moved to approve the minutes as written, Ms. Best seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes as written passed unanimously.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT

- Mr. Mitchell drew attention to line 31 (full time salary) of November and December. November was \$111,268.89 and December was \$107,938.84. The cause of the change from November to December was due to staff members retiring.
- Mr. Mitchell then drew attention to line 41 (part time salary) which remained the same for November and December at \$ 14,298.08
- Mr. Mitchell then drew attention to our maintenance line. It increased in December due to a payment concern with the main custodial contractor, Jani King, and their subcontractor Walker One Solutions. Additionally, there were one-time maintenance costs made to add tinted windows on the second floor and third floor IT offices due to a neighbor's privacy concerns.

- Attention was then drawn to line 42 (county commission) to point out that that number will go down in January, if the board approves the new budget, based on 5% budget cuts from the Commission equaling \$144,000.00
- Ms. Best asked if the Chamber of Commerce's School to Work Program would assist the Library's budget through part time workers. Mr. Mitchell pointed out that we are reducing part time staffing.
- Mr. Mitchell pointed out that, based on other library systems within the state of Georgia and outside the state of Georgia, we are significantly underfunded for a library system of this size.

VI. REPORTS

- President's Report: No report
- Director's Report:
 - a) The last quarterly Library Directors Meeting was held in December. Meeting minutes and slides were included in the board packet from the meeting. One thing pointed out was an increase in employer pay-in for TRS by 2%.
 - b) We are currently waiting on a legislative date at the capital. One piece of legislation we are hoping will be on the docket is HB83 and SB74, which will exempt librarians from prosecution for harmful materials.
 - c) Mr. Mitchell has been selected to go to DC as part of the Georgia Delegation to discuss library funding for FY27 from February 24th through February 27th
 - d) We've hired a new Fiscal Officer, Melissa Hinkle. She is catching on quickly and will, in the long term, lead to cost reductions by no longer outsourcing her duties.
 - e) We have received the new contract, as well as a letter of reduction, from the county stating the budget cut for the year. The board needs to go over and approve the contract before it can be signed and sent in.
 - f) The county has requested a copy of our audit. We will have it at the end of February from the auditor. The county has been informed that we cannot submit it until then.
 - g) We are waiting for Procurement to send a PO for the Appleby project. Once the PO is sent, we can get a start date on construction.
- Committee Report:
 - a) The nominating committee will send in a report for the new officers in February. Elections will happen in March.
- Friends of the Library Report:
 - a) The FOAL Annual Meeting is Monday February 2nd at the main library from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm with speaker Mr. Gary Dennis.
 - b) Mr. Mitchell requested a copy of the flyer for our PR manager and the clerk of commission.

- c) Ms. Best asked if there was an expected attendee count, Ms. Garman replied there was not.
- d) Memberships can be renewed at the meeting.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Incident Reports
 - a) Two weeks ago, a patron followed female staff members back to their car after closing at Maxwell. Staff were informed to immediately call the police if they were seen again. The patron returned to the library and the police were called. They were given a criminal trespass warning. It was discovered this person has a prior record of stalking.
 - i. To increase staff safety, Mr. Mitchell is looking at stationing a guard at Maxwell in the afternoon and evening.
 - b) Ms. Garman asked about the woman at Appleby who fell and if she requested medical attention. The woman refused medical attention.
 - c) Ms. Reeves asked about a woman who had been emailing back and forth with Mr. Mitchell. Ms. Reeves was looking for clarity about the context of the correspondence. Mr. Mitchell explained that the woman was unclear in her emails and he is also looking for clarity.
- Website OCR Update
 - a) There is still no news as we are still awaiting OCR staffing changes to approve our compliance.
- Appleby Update
 - a) Mr. Mitchell will follow up in person with procurement in regards to the PO.
- Diamond Lakes Update
 - a) Mr. Mitchell and Ms. Gibbons met with the administrator, her staff, and their attorneys about the Diamond Lakes Agreement. We are waiting to hear back from them at this time. We have ceased payments on Diamond Lakes in the interim.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- Election of Officials
 - a) Elections will happen in march
- GPLS MOE
 - a) Ms. Gibbons asked for clarity on the MOE. Mr. Mitchell explained that we must be funded at the same level as other government department in order to maintain funding from the state.

- New FY2026 Budget
 - a) The 2026 allocation from the commission is \$2,742,600.00 which is a 5% budget cut from FY2025. A new budget was proposed to the board. The largest cuts are:
 - i. Part time: \$75,000
 - ii. Vacation buyback: \$10,000
 - iii. Reduction of staff by not backfilling positions, which reduces costs of both TRS and salaries.
 - iv. Supplies: \$10,000
 - b) These cuts leave us with a \$20,000 surplus
 - c) Ms. Garman proposed closing the headquarters library on Sundays to save costs. Mr. Mitchell informed her that closing on Sundays would not affect the budget.
 - d) Ms. Gibbons lamented the cuts to advertising. Mr. Mitchell informed her that, while the advertising budget was cut, we have contracted a PR person to help with advertising.
 - e) Mr. Porter entertained a motion to pass the newly proposed budget for FY26. Ms. Gibbons made a motion to pass the FY26 proposed budget. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The motion to approve the FY26 proposed budget passed unanimously.

- 2026 Outside Agency Contract
 - a) Mr. Porter entertained a motion to accept the 2026 Allocations Contract. Ms. Gibbons made a motion to accept the 2026 Allocations Contract from the Augusta Commission. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. The motion to accept the 2026 Allocations Contract from the Augusta Commission passed unanimously.
 - b) Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Porter will get the contract signed and sent to the commission immediately.

- Hiring Freeze
 - a) The commission has placed a 6-month hiring freeze on all non-essential employees. The freeze will lift on July 1st.

- TRS Update
 - a) The TRS update outlines the new employer rate. The rate increased by 2%

- Library Directors Meeting Summary
 - a) Meeting minutes and slides were provided to the Board for informational purposes.

- ARCPLS Survey
 - a) Mr. Mitchell took the board through the results of the 2025 ARCPLS Patron Survey

b) Ms. Best commented that future surveys should include questions on how patrons received news of events in the community so the Library can do a better job at reaching and advertising to the community.

- **New Hours of Operation**

a) Ms. Garman, Ms. Gibbons, and Ms. Best all advocated a preference to closing the library on Sundays instead of staying open for only two hours. The language to the public should elaborate that changes to library hours, including closing on Sundays, are a direct result of budget cuts from the Augusta Commission.

b) Mr. Porter entertained a motion to adopt the proposed new hours of operation. Ms. Best made a motion to adopt the proposed new hours of operation with the addition of closing headquarters on Sunday. Ms. Garman seconded the motion. The motion to adopt the proposed new hours of operation with the addition of closing headquarters on Sunday passed unanimously.

IX. Public Comments

- There were no public comments

X. ADJOURNMENT

The ARCPLS Board of Trustees regular meeting adjourned at 6:56 pm.