

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Lafayette Public Library Board of Control

November 15, 2021

The regular meeting of the Lafayette Public Library Board of Control was held in the meeting room on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Main Library at 301 West Congress Street on November 15, 2021. Robert Judge, President of the Board, called the meeting to order at 5:17 PM.

**I. Roll Call and Invocation**

Board Members Present: Robert Judge, Board President; Landon Boudreaux, Vice – President; Joan Wingate; Doug Palombo; Stephanie Armbruster; James Thomas

Board Members Absent: Adele Blue

Other Staff Present: Danny Gillane, Library Director; Terry Roy, Library Administrator; Larry Angelle, Library Operations Manager; Danielle Breaux, Director’s Executive Secretary

Members of the Public: Jean Menard, Cindi Fox, Jarred Breaux, Mary Lib Guercio, Lynette Mejia, Theresa Gielissen, Michael Smith, Rick Swanson, Anne Swanson, William Thiele, Matthew Humphrey, Nell Hahn, Rachael J. Clayton, Lena Selph, Gabriel Juárez, Madison Manuel, Avi Weill, Michael Clayton, Susanna Garcia, Stefan Trienekens, Emma Menard, Mike Menard, Cadence LeBlanc, Chris Adams, Katherine Hurst, Laurel Greenway, Nureaka Ross, Cara Chance, Sharon Patterson, Brittany Whitfield, Marja Broussard, Michael Lunsford, Ed Gauthier

The invocation was led by Robert Judge.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Robert Judge led the board in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **III. New Business**

#### Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2021 Regular Board Meeting was made by Landon Boudreaux and seconded by Joan Wingate.

Yeas: Judge, Boudreaux, Wingate, Palombo, Armbruster, Thomas

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Blue

### **IV. Comments from the Library Board**

Joan Wingate announced that the Lafayette Public Library Foundation completed its educational and informational campaign to raise community awareness. The Foundation will be beginning a new wave of activity with committee assignments and they are working toward their spring event.

The Friends of the Lafayette Public Library will be hosting a Mini Book Sale entitled Christmas, Cookbooks, & Children at the South Regional Library on November 19-20 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Perpetual book sales are held at Main and the South Regional Library.

### **V. Director's Report and Comments**

Staff changes were announced to the Board.

The library has cut approximately \$3M from capital and approximately \$317,300 from operations thus far.

The Governor's mask mandate has ended. The Library staff are required to wear masks when in public areas of the library. Patrons are not required to wear masks.

The Library held its full-staff meeting this morning, albeit at five different locations. In addition to staff training which varied by location, staff service was recognized, and the election results were discussed.

Director was interviewed by the Acadiana Advocate editorial board.

Director was interviewed by Abby Breidenbach, KATC.

Director was interviewed by Eric White, 106.7 FM.

Director was interviewed by Shawn Murphy, 102.1 FM.

Director was interviewed by Claire Taylor, Acadiana Advocate.

Director was interviewed by Victor Jorges, KATC.

Director was interviewed by Patsy Douglas, KADN.

Director was interviewed on Passe Partout.

Director attended a meeting of the Bayouland Library System.

The library has received more calls about library materials and their placement in the library. There have been two requests to reconsider library materials submitted to the library. A decision has been made to incorporate the teen nonfiction collection into the adult nonfiction collection. Not all Louisiana libraries have separate teen collections. This particular collection does not circulate as heavily as teen fiction. The State does not collect separate statistics on teen collections.

The Library was open at full capacity in October 2020. Computer usage was up 13% compared to last year. Library visits were up 12% compared to last year. First-time checkouts were up 6% compared to last year. Library program attendance was up 106% compared to last year. Year-end Statistics: The Library was open at full capacity in 2020-2021. Computer usage was down 13% compared to last year. Library visits were down 4% compared to last year. First-time checkouts were up 4% compared to last year. Library program attendance was up 35% compared to last year.

Director thanked the Friends, Foundation, PAC, Board members and former Board members, and city and parish council members who showed support for the renewal.

Danny Gillane singled out Landon Boudreaux, who seemed to have spent all of his free time talking to people about this election and helping the Director to navigate many different municipalities and elected officials.

BookTalks were included in packets.

## **VI. Facilities Update & Financial Report**

Architectural services contract amendment for the Main Library Roof Replacement project has been executed. Documents have been sent to Public Works and MBSB Architects. The library is waiting on a notice to proceed to be issued by Public Works to start the first phase of the project.

Updated pricing estimate based on the revised scope of work and alternates for the South Regional Upgrades were received but not yet reviewed in detail. Non-Fiction shelving units at the South Regional Library have been replaced.

The library is currently waiting on an updated pricing estimate based on the revised scope of work and alternates for the North Regional Library Upgrades.

The lease amendment to reduce the square footage and establish a new lease for the Library Warehouse is still pending legal review while the library pays on a month-to-month basis.

Financials were included in packets.

Larry Angelle stated that library revenues for FY 20/21 (November 1, 2020 – October 31, 2021) were at 10.8M and expenses were 11.1M. Additional expenses are expected to be expended in FY20/21 during the accrual process.

There is nothing to report at this time for FY21/22 (November 1, 2021 – October 31, 2022).

Parish Ordinance PO-063-2021 states that due to the change in election date, a portion of the election expense budget will be moved from FY20/21 to FY21/22 and a portion will be expensed in FY20/21 and FY21/22.

## **VII. New Business**

### **A. Discussion of Election Results**

Various Board members thanked the public, library staff, and parish council members for their support of the millage renewal.

## B. Northeast Library Exploratory Committee

Landon Boudreaux stated that the committee will be comprised of five community members, Azadeh Yazdi, Nureaka Ross, Alton Trahan, Maisha Chargois, Lynette Mejia; four board members, Robert Judge, Landon Boudreaux (chair), James Thomas, Doug Palombo; and two staff members, Danny Gillane and Larry Angelle.

The committee hopes to hold its first meeting before the end of the year. The committee will look into right-sizing the budget and providing library services to a part of the community that does have physical barriers preventing them from access.

Robert Judge reminded the public of the three-minute rule for public comment. Terry Roy was asked to remind patrons when the timer was at 2:45. He asked that public comment be restricted to the subject matter described in the agenda without derogatory comments about any person, but simply to state factually what the speaker's concerns are.

Jean Menard asked if there would be a reconsideration of the Gale Analytics contract to find out where the needs most are in the parish and how they could best be served.

## C. Appeal of Reconsideration Committee Decision

Stephanie Armbruster gave a recap of the committee meeting to the board. The two librarians on the committee suggested the book, *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson, be moved to the teen section of the library and she did not find this satisfactory. She stated that the content of the book was disturbing and diminished the value of the human person. She stated that the book is promoted as sex education yet it is unnecessarily explicit and graphic and promotes the objectification and exploitation of children. She expressed concerns with the author's promotion of sex apps usage and pornography usage by minors, as well as the downplaying of STDs and HIV. She stated that the book's use of slang and silly words rather than anatomically correct terms undermines the claim that this information is worthy to be considered for a health section. This book can be purchased by a patron who wants the book or can be obtained by interlibrary loan. She concluded by saying that she will not support the distribution of material that sets up children to be abused, exploited, and victimized and that she was deeply disturbed to see that librarians that have the responsibility of selecting materials to be purchased in the LPL system advocate for this material.

A motion was made by Stephanie Armbruster that the library remove the book immediately, discard the book, and ensure that the book is not replaced in the collection going forward. This motion was seconded by Robert Judge.

Robert Judge reiterated that each speaker would be allowed three minutes to state their comments, questions, or concerns on the item being considered for adoption by the Board.

Jean Menard stated that parents are fully allowed to monitor and have oversight over what their underage teens can access. Some may decide that they have freedom to read and some may decide to censor that information. She thinks this is a parental choice and not a choice for a Library Board or a public library to make. She stated that the public library serves everyone, censorship has no place in the public library, and that some decisions cannot be undone.

Jarred Breaux stated that once censorship starts, there is a slippery slope. He stated that there may be retaliation or that many others will challenge books.

Mary Lib Guercio congratulated the board on the millage renewal. She recounted her time as a member of the Lafayette Parish School Board and spoke of her experience with censorship. A group of parents who primarily homeschooled complained about books in the neighborhood schools. She said the difference was that when she was making the decision as a School Board member, there wasn't a motion and a second before hearing public comment, and that questions and concerns were allowed. The School Board allowed for two weeks to read the books and follow up. She did not find the book as objectionable as described. She stated that this book was needed as a resource, and disagreed with removing the book from the library.

Lynette Mejia stated that the book cautioned on the use of apps and how dangerous they were. She said that it was a parents' choice to determine what their children read. She said the focus now should be on building a library on the northeast side of town. She stated that she will file suit with ACLU if the book is removed from the library.

Robert Judge stated that this vote was the Board following library policy.

Theresa Gielissen said that if the Board votes to ban this book, they are putting their name next to censorship. She asked that the Board listen and consider public comment.

Michael Smith quoted author & speaker Meg Medina. He urged the Board to reject this motion and to repudiate any attempts to remove books from this public library.

Rick Swanson said that he disagreed with cancel culture and that a library should have diverse viewpoints and opinions. He stated that the standard was to allow everyone to have access to ideas in a library because censorship is un-American and unconstitutional.

Anne Swanson stated that she was there to support the librarians and their professional opinion to make the right decisions for the community.

William Thiele asked that the Board not overturn the reconsideration committee's decision. The library's mission statement states, in part, that it meet the need and expectation of a diverse community. LGBTQ youth need material that states they haven't done anything wrong.

Matthew Humphrey stated that the LGBTQ youth growing up in fear need this book.

Nell Hahn stated that removing the book would be illegal censorship and that the Board had no right to withhold the information from someone else. Banning will result in litigation. Parents should be responsible for the choices of their children. She stated that the Board had no right to withhold public resources from the parents that do want their children to have information. She urged the Board to uphold the committee's decision.

Rachael Clayton stated that books such as this are the reason some people are still alive today. She urged the Board not to ban the book, as these books matter for the life of the children that read them.

Lena Selph stated that books such as these give people the courage to come out to their parents. Comprehensive sex education leads to less STDs, less unwanted pregnancies, and less bad experiences in general. She said that whether or not the book is offensive to some was irrelevant to the conversation at hand. She said that censorship does not belong in public libraries.

Gabriel Juárez stated that the words heard in opposition to the book resembled a church sermon. He said that this book comes off of a list put out by MassResistance, a Wyoming-based hate group. He stated that bigots censoring information holds back the state of Louisiana. Queer children are constantly searching for media in which they are represented. Books such as this provide valuable resources.

Madison Manuel stated that the presumptions of LGBTQ youth are dangerous, and books such as this are one step toward making this better.

Avi Weill stated that people fear coming out for fear of being oversexualized. She believes this book important for homosexual youth to have.

Michael Clayton stated that he trusts the librarians to do what they are trained to do. He stated that freedom of speech and the separation of religious bigotry from state-funded institutions is paramount.

Susanna Garcia stated that to thrive, everyone needs love and acceptance. She claimed that people need access to good information. She stated that book removal will threaten lives.

Stefan Trienekens quoted the book of Romans, saying that love is the fulfillment of the law. He questioned whether the Board was fulfilling the law in proposing denial of access to information. He stated this would be denying people growth and life. He asked that the Board review this passage from Romans before making their vote.

Emma Menard stated that Louisiana does not require sex education in school, so many teens rely on peer and internet information. She said that LGBTQ youth are more likely than their straight peers to commit suicide, mostly from lack of acceptance. The books in question show representation and save lives.

Mike Menard stated that the book is informational. He said there is a large LGBTQ community in Acadiana. He said the library should be actively seeking out more books like this, and implored that the Board not keep this information from people.

Cadence LeBlanc stated that sexual education in school is embarrassing. She was taught have sex, get STDs, and die. She stated that teens will have sex and the only way to protect them is education.

Chris Adams spoke in support of keeping the book in the library. He stated that he wants his four-year-old daughter to have choices and for everyone to have choices and access to information.

Katherine Hurst stated that the young people that spoke gave her hope for Lafayette. She asked that the Board not take the hope away from the youth.

Lauren Greenway stated that she would be ashamed if the library would get rid of information and further oppression. She questioned the restriction of information.

Nureaka Ross stated that veterans serve to protect the constitution and against tyrannical government. She said that the removal of the book was un-American.

Cara Chance asked who the Board members thought they were to deny those taxpayers with different moral values the right to resources that they and their children may want. She stated that librarians are absolutely opposed to censorship and to ask them to censor is to ask them to violate their code of ethics.

Sharon Patterson stated that representation in literature changed her life. She claimed that exposure to those different than yourself makes people better.

Brittany Whitfield stated that the book was an own-voices book that was written by someone with experience. She believes in anti-censorship and providing books for every constituent in the parish. She said it is the parents' right to make the choice.

Marja Broussard shamed the Board members for censorship.

Robert Judge asked patrons to keep their comments about the matter at hand.

Danny Gillane read the committee decision to the Board.

Here is the conclusion of our discussion about the request. Anna and I would like to move the book from the Social Sciences section to the Teen Health section because we feel it more suited there. The decision reflects our understanding of the collection development policy and the material itself. Stephanie would like the book to be restricted or removed from the collection entirely based on some of the book's content. Moving the book to the Adult Social Sciences section was discussed but that is not a comfortable compromise for all three of us.

James Thomas asked how many people were on the Reconsideration Committee. As outlined by the Collection Development Policy passed by the Board in August of 2019, the committee was composed of two library staff members and one Board member. He was also told that the book has been in the library since 2015 for two of the copies, 2019 for the third copy. The book is currently held in the teen nonfiction section.

Doug Palombo asked for clarification of the original request. The request was to remove the book from the collection. A decision has since been made to incorporate the teen nonfiction collection into the adult nonfiction collection.

Joan Wingate asked if a four-year-old could come into the library and check out the book. Director confirmed that this could happen.

Landon Boudreaux asked for clarification as to where the Social Science section was in relation to the Sex Health section. Katelin LeBleu stated that in teen non-fiction, these sections were about a shelf apart.

A proposed amendment that the book be reshelved to the adult nonfiction collection along with the rest of the teen nonfiction collection was made by Landon Boudreaux and seconded by James Thomas.

Stephanie Armbruster clarified that a person of any age can check out any book. She also clarified that if the book presented only heterosexual topics in the same manner, she would still have the same request.

Danny Gillane stated that the definition of censorship varies. He stated that once a book is in the collection, removing the book is considered censorship.

If the book is no longer in the LPL collection, patrons may request the item through Interlibrary Loan.

Robert Judge read from the book in question and pointed out the author's endorsement of a 15-year-old being groomed by an adult and that when the boy turned 16 the adult engaged in sex with the boy. In the state of Louisiana this is statutory rape. The adult was also reported as a married man so the account describes statutory rape and adultery. The book uses slang terminology to describe body parts and incorrectly describes the function as opposed to those accepted as proper medical terminology. Mr. Judge also read from a medical dictionary, excerpts from the CDC, and the Louisiana Revised Statutes that describe illegal activity encouraged by this book, as well as risky behaviors that increase the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV.

Landon Boudreaux retracted his amendment to the original motion.

If the book is not removed from the library system, the book would be moved to the Adult Nonfiction section.

Doug Palombo clarified that the Director has made a command decision to integrate all Teen Nonfiction into the Adult Nonfiction section.

James Thomas retracted his second to Landon Boudreaux's amendment to the original motion.

Yeas: Judge, Armbruster

Nays: Boudreaux, Wingate, Palombo, Thomas

Abstained: None

Absent: Blue

The motion did not pass.

#### D. Library Book Discards September – October 2021

A motion for the library to discard 4,924 books having been out of use for over a year due to the books being superseded, obsolete, unused, or otherwise unnecessary was made by Landon Boudreaux and seconded by James Thomas.

Michael Lunsford questioned how many books were being discarded. He asked how many people were upset that the library was censoring these books.

It was explained that there is limited physical space to shelve books, and that professional library staff regularly reviews items in the collection to ensure that they continue to meet patron needs. Books that have not been touched in over a year are discarded according to Louisiana statute and offered for free to members of the public. Books are removed based on condition, lack of use, or being outdated. Collection Development Policy specifically outlines weeding.

Rick Swanson stated that weeding was not censorship, as it was not based on the content of the material. He requested that the board consider any objection come only from a Lafayette Parish citizen.

Stephanie Armbruster thanked the Director for helping the Board to better understand the discard process.

Yeas: Judge, Boudreaux, Wingate, Palombo, Thomas

Nays: None

Abstained: Armbruster

Absent: Blue

### **VIII. Announcements**

- A. Reminder that the next Library Board meeting will be Monday, December 20, 2021.
- B. Reminder that yearly ethics training and sexual harassment training must be completed before December 31, 2021.

**IX. Comments from the public on any other matter not on this agenda**

There were no comments from the public.

**X. Closing Prayer, Adjournment**

Joan Wingate led the Board in a closing prayer.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Danny Gillane, Secretary