

Minutes

South Mississippi Regional Board

September 22, 2023

The South Mississippi Regional Board met at 11 a.m. on Friday September 22, 2023 in the auditorium at the Columbia Marion County Public Library. Present were Mrs. Libby Aaron, Chair, Mrs. Joan Bass, Mrs. Sharon Dungan, Mrs. Patricia Norris, Mr. Carey Varnado, Board Attorney, Ms. Ryda Worthy, Library Director, Mrs. Jackie Miller, Jeff Davis County Branch Supervisor and Mona Swayze to take minutes of the meeting. Members of the community, Marion County Board of Supervisors and the media were, also, in attendance.

Mrs. Aaron called the meeting to order and opened with prayer.

The adoption of the minutes from the June 28, 2023 meeting, the August 9, 2023 Special Meeting, the August 18, 2023 Special Meeting, and the August 31, 2023 Special Meeting was discussed first. The minutes of each meeting were mailed to each Board member prior to today. Mrs. Dungan moved to adopt each of the minutes as read. Mrs. Norris seconded. Motion to adopt minutes as read was approved unanimously.

Paperwork was distributed to each board member. The agenda, herein attached, was discussed.

Old business: First, Ms. Worthy would like the Board to add C. Update on YA book review to the agenda by the library director to old business. Mrs. Bass moved to add C to old business. Mrs. Dungan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Worthy discussed adding a cafeteria plan to the state health insurance. A cafeteria plan helps reduce income tax liabilities for employers and employees; and is administered by a third party, not the library or the state. Ms. Worthy has received a quote from CAS (Consolidated Admin Services) for two (2) types of cafeteria plans: a premium only plan and a flexible spending account. There is a one-time set-up fee of \$200 for the library with no limit on how many staff can participate. The only time there is a price increase is when there is a change in the plan. There is a five (5) year review per IRS regulations. If engaged by the end of September 2023, the plan can be put in place for the beginning of the fiscal year October 1, 2023. After discussion, Mrs. Dungan

moved to accept CAS for a cafeteria plan. Mrs. Bass seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Next, Ms. Worthy gave the Board an update on the Town of Bassfield billing of building maintenance issue. The library has received bills from Roto Rooter for sewer maintenance when the library did not request the maintenance, the town did. Ms. Worthy got on the Bassfield Board of Alderman agenda so that she and Mrs. Jackie Miller could talk to the Board about the billing issue. At the Board meeting, they found that the bills had been paid, so the issue was resolved before the meeting.

Ms. Worthy then gave the Board an update on the Young Adult (YA) book review. SMRL has 1967 YA books: 1300 in Columbia, 373 in Prentiss and 294 in Bassfield. The Prentiss staff have finished reviewing their books as of today. Alison Smith will help Mrs. Jackie Miller review the YA books in Bassfield. So far, staff have reviewed 454 titles in Columbia. Progress is being made but it is slow.

New business was discussed next. Because the first three items under new business can include sensitive material and might need to be discussed in a closed session, Ms. Worthy asked if they could be moved to the end of the meeting. Mrs. Dungan moved that items 5: A, B, and C be moved to the end of the meeting. Mrs. Bass seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Worthy talked to the Board about recurring charges the library incurs, such as QuickBooks for the State Auditors office. These are charges that the library incurs yearly. She is asking for approval to have charges such as this to be directly debited from the library account. Mrs. Dungan moved to approve the request to have recurring charges directly debited from the library account. Mrs. Bass seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Next, Ms. Worthy discussed the Audit Letter of Engagement with the Board. Each year, the Board has to sign this Letter of Engagement with TMH to give them permission to begin the process of the audit for the fiscal year. Adam Smith with TMH is the library accountant. He needs this letter of engagement signed to begin the process of the audit. Mrs. Norris moved to accept the letter of engagement and for Mrs. Aaron, Board Chair, to sign the letter. Mrs. Dungan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Worthy then gave the Board a Friends of the Library Report. The Friends of the Library have not had a board meeting recently. However, they are in the library throughout the month maintaining the Friends book sale room. Ms. Worthy has spoken to two of the board members about juvenile content in the room. The Friends decided to remove all juvenile books from the book sale.

Ms. Worthy gave the Board the current financial report. The Columbia Marion County Public Library is part of a 21st Century Grant from MDE with the Columbia School District. It is called the Learn More grant. Ms. Worthy was informed by the Columbia School District that the library has \$1833.26 to spend by Monday September 25, 2023. Staff are currently working on a large order to meet this deadline.

Next, Ms. Worthy discussed the materials reconsideration with the Board. At a previous Board meeting several materials reconsideration forms were submitted. The Board has reviewed the requests and most of the material. One book is not physically in Columbia, it belongs to Prentiss and two titles are long overdue. Mrs. Dungan moved that the following books be permanently removed from the South Mississippi Library, Marion and Jefferson Davis Counties: *The Nowhere Girls*, *Story of a Girl*, *Dress Codes for Small Towns*, *What Girls are Made Of*, *Burned*, *Ready or Not*, *Luna*, *The Upside of Unrequited*, *Shiver*, *Eleanor and Park*, *All the Bright Places*, *Absolute Boyfriend*, *A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl*, *Girl in Pieces*. Mrs. Bass seconded. The vote was as follows: Mrs. Norris-yea; Mrs. Aaron- yea; Mrs. Dungan-yea; Mrs. Bass-yea. Motion passed unanimously.

Next, members of the audience, who had asked to speak to the Board, were allowed to speak. Sabrina Fortenberry was not here. Concerned Citizens for our Children: A Group in Marion County had several representatives: Rachel May asked how someone could get involved with the Friends of the Library group. And what does the Friends group do? Also, she feels that children should be allowed to check out appropriate adult books and, with consent, some books that have been moved. Could these books be flagged in the computer? Margaret Sandifer asked that the Board have a meeting after 5:30 p.m. on a week day for concerned citizens. She, also, thanked the Board for their actions. Dorothy Sweatt thanked the Board. Ramona Brumfield thanked the Board.

Lisa Singley was not here. Emily Escolas spoke next. She is a National Civil Rights Activist and a minister. She was a social worker for 10 years. She likened the current book banning to Nazi Germany. She spoke out against book banning.

Blue Green, Marion County Board of Supervisors President, thanked the Board for removing the books. He would like to ensure that protocol is followed when ordering books. Tony Morgan, Marion County Supervisor, was not in attendance. Ken Morgan, Mississippi State Representative District 100, was not in attendance.

Dave Nichols, East Columbia Baptist Church pastor, spoke next. Yesterday he sent a 15-year-old in to the Columbia library to check out a Colleen Hoover book "All Your Perfects". This book was found in the adult fiction area. He read several passages out of the book. He was testing whether or not the staff would stop a teenager from checking

out inappropriate material. He stated that at the Special Board Meeting on August 18, 2023, the library staff in attendance said that they would talk to the staff about not checking out adult material to a teen without parental/guardian consent. The staff told him that it is up to the families to police what children/teens are checking out not the library staff. Ben Whatley was not in attendance.

This concluded the regular portion of the meeting. Mrs. Bass made a motion to go into closed session to discuss going in to executive session. Mrs. Norris seconded. Meeting went in to closed session.

Mrs. Norris moved to go into executive session. Mrs. Bass seconded. The Board went in to executive session.

Mrs. Dungan moved to come out of executive session. Mrs. Bass seconded. The Board came out of executive session.

Mrs. Dungan moved to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Bass seconded. Meeting was adjourned.

On September 25, Ms. Worthy informed the board members by email of two patron incidents that had occurred in Jefferson Davis County.

1. We have not seen Ms. Antionette Young in any of our libraries for almost a year, but she has recently begun using the Bassfield library. It was reported by Supervisor Jackie Miller that the staff there are experiencing the same extreme body odor problem that was reported in Prentiss last year. As of the last communication from the library on July 6, 2022, Ms. Young had no restrictions on use of the library, but she was warned that another incident before the next Board meeting could result in restrictions of use. The question from the staff is this: does a new incident of the same behavior pick up where her last incidents left off, or (due to it being over a year since the last incident) do they start the process over?

Vote: Libby Aaron (9/26/23 by email): The patron disciplinary process for Ms. Antionette Young should start over.

- a. **Sharon Dungan (9/26/23 by email): The patron disciplinary process for Ms. Antionette Young should start over.**

Joan Bass (9/27/23 by phone): The patron disciplinary process for Ms. Antionette Young should start over.

2. Supervisor Jackie Miller was informed on 9/27/23 that, in regard to Ms. Young, since it has been over a year since the last incident, and it is in a different location, you must start the process over. You can give her a warning, along with a copy of the patron code (document what day this is done). The next incident will result in expulsion from the library for the day, then a week, then a month. Anything after that, the board will have to make a ruling.
3. Staff member Monique Hester reported being harassed by a patron. The patron accused of the harassment is one that all of the employees there have found difficult to please. The reported harassment stems from something that occurred outside the library. Apparently, the patron and Monique's brother both attend a senior center across the street from the library, and the brother won a prize that the patron felt should have come to her. Since that event, she has approached Monique (in the library) repeatedly to demand the prize be returned to her.

Discussion and vote:

Libby Aaron (9/26/23 by email): I suggest we start the process of addressing this harassment. Has she been given any warnings? If not, I suggest we start with a warning according to our policy Section 6A 6.1.

Sharon Dungan (9/26/23 by email): I agree.

Joan Bass (9/27/23 by phone): Should she file a police report, or does it not rise to that level? [The Director informed her that the staff did not feel it had escalated to that point.]

All were in favor of proceeding with a warning to the patron accused of harassing the staff. After the warning is issued, another incident will result in expulsion from the library for the day, then a week, then a month. Anything after that, the board will have to make a ruling.

Supervisor Jackie Miller was informed on 9/27/23 of this decision, as well.

Adopted by the SMRL Board of Trustees on November 8, 2023.