

**St. Tammany Parish Library
Board of Control Meeting
August 21, 2023
St. Tammany Parish Council Chambers
21490 Koop Dr.,
Mandeville, LA 70471
6:30 P.M.**

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Rebecca (Becky) Taylor, President. Kelly LaRocca, Director, called the roll and declared that a quorum was present.

Present: Jake Airey, Bill McHugh, Anthony Parr, Ann Shaw, Becky Taylor

Absent: Carmen Butler

Emily Couvillon with the Civil Division of the District Attorney's Office was also present as legal counsel for the library.

B. Taylor explained the rules for public comment. A three-minute time limit is established for each member of the public wishing to speak (for or against) an item on the Agenda. Comments must directly relate to the agenda item. If a speaker asks questions, those questions are part of their three-minute public comment period and will be noted as such. In the case of a Statement of Concern (SOC) decision, the person who filed the SOC is given five minutes to speak. Board members can request a brief recess during the meeting if needed. Public comments were accepted by email (lboc@stpl.us) until 4:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

**1. Recognition and thanks for years of service to the Library Board of Control –
Dr. Argiro Morgan**

Postponed until a later date.

2. Approval of the minutes of the special meetings of the Library Board of Control that were held on June 27, 2023, and June 28, 2023, and the regular meeting held on July 24, 2023.

Discussion for June 27, 2023, minutes: There were no suggested corrections to the minutes.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2023, special meeting. It was seconded by A. Parr. Four were in favor, none were opposed, one abstained (A. Shaw), and one was absent. Motion carried.

Discussion for June 28, 2023, minutes: There were no suggested corrections to the minutes.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: A. Parr moved to approve the minutes of the June 28, 2023, special meeting. It was seconded by B. McHugh. Three were in favor, none were opposed, two abstained (J. Airey & A. Shaw), and one was absent. Motion carried.

Discussion for July 24, 2023, minutes: B. McHugh asked for a correction on page seven, paragraph seven, third sentence. Add "because we have not had to" to the sentence after "She clarified that we have not done that."

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: A. Shaw moved to approve the minutes of the July 24, 2023, regular meeting with the stated correction. It was seconded by A. Parr. All were in favor, none were opposed, none abstained, and one was absent. Motion carried.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Financial Reports – July 2023

Discussion:

K. LaRocca reported that the library has received a little more ad valorem revenue than expected for the year. All state revenue sharing has been received. The budget percentage for this point in the year is 58.31%. Revenues are at 57.99% and expenditures are at 57.18%.

K. LaRocca gave explanations for lines that were above and below budget. Most lines that are over budget are expended early in the year and lines that are under budget are expended later in the year. These lines should be in balance by the end of the year. The Health Trust line is at 64% due to bills from last year that were paid in 2023, but will be close to 100% by the end of the year. The Workers Compensation Expense line has been expended for the year.

The Printing line is at 77% due to printing the Strategic Plan brochures. The Water line is at 67% due to increasing the amount of water delivered to the branches, as it has been a hot summer. The Building Lease Expense line has been reduced due to no longer paying a lease for the old Annex building and will be in balance at the end of the year. The Legal line is at 76%, but will

not exceed the \$15,000 that was designated for outside legal counsel. The Financial line is at 106% because the audit now includes testing on all of the Statewide Agreed Upon Procedures. The Insurance and Claims lines are expended for the year, except for the LBOC Liability insurance, which was paid in August. Beginning next year, all of our insurances will run from January to December.

The costs of toner, paper, and other office supplies have increased and those lines will be amended later this year. The Programming Supplies line is at 66% due to increased library programming and events and the need for refreshments. The Capital Outlay Library Resource Acquisitions lines will be expended as collection items are purchased at the end of the year.

A. Parr asked if the Courier/Shipping line includes local shipping or out-of-district requests. K. LaRocca explained that it consists of UPS or FedEx charges, including Inter-Library Loan (ILL) shipping. Some libraries require us to ship items back to them via UPS. If that is not required, we use U.S. mail or the State Library courier service.

Public Comment:

Lisa Rustemeyer – Covington, LA. Stated that she trusts library staff to purchase materials and to spend the budget appropriately and judiciously. Stated that \$12,000,000 divided by 269,000 residents equals \$45 per resident and is an amazing value. Spoke of the political attacks on the library and hateful words directed to staff. Stated that staff has shown their professionalism and offers outstanding service. Spoke of others comparing the library millage to the Coroner's Office, District Attorney's Office, and Sheriff's Office millages.

Cynthia Weatherly – Covington, LA. Asked how the cost of book challenges are being accounted for in the budget. Stated that in a previous meeting, Iris Gallatin said that the internet is freely accessible and that libraries are not needed. Asked how much the library spends on computers and internet access for the community. Noted that 19% of Louisiana's population does not have internet access and relies on the library.

Ruth Terry Sipos – Abita Springs, LA. Spoke about the service statistics. Stated that it shows the number of people walking in the door, what types of materials are circulating, and internet usage both inside and outside. Noted that the internet usage outside is sometimes double the inside usage. Stated that it is a critical service that the library is providing. Spoke highly of the Abita Springs Branch and the vibrant, diverse, and welcoming community.

K. LaRocca addressed C. Weatherly's question about challenged materials expenditures. Stated that \$400 per challenge is a conservative estimate. Stated that the estimate includes the cost of purchasing the material, as the library does not usually own enough copies to provide to the staff committee, LBOC members, and the newly created reference collection at Covington and Slidell branches. It also includes staff time that is spent on tasks associated with the book

challenge during the workday. Additional costs incurred after the \$400 was estimated are supplies such as dummy books (\$2,500), which are put in place of the challenged books on the shelves, and book carts to house the two reference collections of challenged materials.

K. LaRocca addressed C. Weatherly's question about the cost of computer and internet access for the community. Stated that the library pays \$50,000 per year for internet and it is listed as Data Lines on the financial report. Software such as Microsoft Office is provided on all library computers. The computers are maintained by the I.T. staff and are on a five-year replacement cycle to ensure that patrons are provided with the newest reliable technology. The library also provides printing and scanning capabilities for patrons.

B. McHugh responded to L. Rustemeyer's mention of an erroneous comment made in a previous meeting that the Library millage is higher than the Sheriff's Office's millages. He referenced data from the assessor's website that documents all of the parish-wide millages and confirmed that the Library millage (5.78) is not higher than both of the Sheriff's Office's millages combined (11.14). B. McHugh noted that the Library millage is approximately 6% of the Parish-wide Millage Total (96.91).

Jeannine Meeds – Big Branch, LA. Spoke of thunderstorms in her area the previous week. A tree near her house was struck by lightning and the damage caused her to be without internet, phones, or TV for a week. Stated that the library is the only place she could go to access the internet. Stated that the library is a blessing and that she is very happy to spend tax money on excellence in the library.

A. Parr asked what we do with old computers. K. LaRocca explained that we recycle them to use as Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) computers for patrons to search the catalog within the library. They are used until they can no longer function and are discarded properly.

Vote: A. Shaw moved to approve the July 2023 Financial Reports. It was seconded by J. Airey. All were in favor, none were opposed, none abstained, and one was absent. Motion carried.

B. 2023 Summer Reading Wrap-Up

The Board viewed a short video highlighting the Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) and events. This year's theme was "All Together Now." The Adult Programming Coordinator, spoke about the kickoff parties, community partners, and all of the adult programs offered this summer. There were 757 adults registered and 170 adult programs.

The Teen Services Coordinator, stated that the mission of the Teen Department is to instill a lifelong love of reading and community engagement. Most of the teen programs are Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, and Math (STREAM) events. There were 540 teens

registered and a total of 124 programs. There were 61 teen volunteers ages 13-18 who completed 1139 ½ hours of volunteer service. Stated that it shows that parents love and trust the library, as more teens are coming in and are participating in programs and events.

The Children's Services Coordinator, stated that it was a very exciting and busy summer. There were 6,701 children registered, which is almost double last year's registrations. There were 433 programs with 19,038 attendees. Children also enjoyed the option of participating in BINGO this year. She spoke of the exciting kickoff parties with 842 attendees at the Madisonville branch and 996 attendees at the Slidell branch. Next summer's theme is "Adventure Begins at Your Library."

C. Director's Report

K. LaRocca reported that Library Administration met with the Parish's Engineering Department to discuss the Mandeville Library renovations. The Maintenance Department has been maintaining the air conditioning at each branch to ensure patrons and staff are comfortable. The Lee Road Branch will be closed from October 23rd to October 27th for minor wall repairs, painting, and the installation of new shelving.

Staff performed Storytime at the following schools: Kidz Klub House, Kinderhaus Montessori, and Little Academy. Outreach services were provided to the Children's Museum, Open Arms Camp, Kiwanis Club of Folsom, and Back to School Fair at Lacombe Middle School. Staff attended the following meetings to promote library services: St. Tammany Parish School Librarian Meeting and St. Tammany Commission on Families. Staff promoted the library's strategic plan on The Lake and The Highway radio stations. Staff promoted Library Card Sign-Up Month, Food for Fines, and the strategic plan on an episode of Check It Out on STPG-TV's public access channel. Library Card Sign-Up Month is in September and we will offer the Food for Fines promotion where one donated non-perishable food item equals \$1 in fines waived. Staff attended various webinars.

Jessica Aucoin was promoted to Causeway Branch Manager. Ramona Elder was promoted to Children's Librarian at the Mandeville Branch. She will receive her Master's degree in Library and Information Science in December.

Reference Librarians developed a new reference program titled "Navigating STPL Mobile" to promote and educate the public about the STPL mobile app. The program will be held in September at multiple branches.

New contracts: BiblioCommons (website platform). In a continued effort to provide parents with tools to help decide what their children can access, we are implementing a Kids Catalog. It will be a separate online catalog that will search only within materials in the children's section. This will take a few hours to install this Wednesday, August 23rd, and the website will be down

from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Contract renewals: IDrive, EBSCO: Learning Express and Novelist packages, ProQuest: Fold3 and Books in Print, and iWave.

K. LaRocca spoke of receiving four new public records requests since the last LBOC meeting. Three were completed prior to the board meeting. The remaining outstanding new request and the older outstanding requests consist of extensive email searches that are in line for redaction and combinations of electronic and paper documents will need to be sorted and organized to ensure the completeness of the records. Our file clerk continues to pull and redact the needed records.

To date, the library has received 212 statements of concern on 169 titles since August 2022. The LBOC has made decisions on 16 titles and will be deciding on two titles this evening. We will then have 151 remaining.

K. LaRocca gave a Strategic Planning implementation update and reviewed the July 2023 and year-to-date statistics. A. Parr asked if the service statistics are available in the branches. K. LaRocca said they are in the board packets that are posted on the website for each board meeting. A. Parr commented that the numbers in the service statistics are wonderful.

D. Statement of Concern Decision - *Two Boys Kissing*

There were two SOC's submitted for the book *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan by the following people: Connie Phillips, representing the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project, and Rosalind Murr. K. LaRocca read the SOC's aloud.

The recommended action by C. Phillips is: "Restrict access to minors as outlined in statute above. Require parent to check out for minor. The book should be shelved in a section where minors do not have access. A separate place in the library. A room or some section where minors do not have entry without parent and minors cannot check out." Reason given: "Content violates the state obscenity statues [sic] for minors. 2021 Louisiana Laws. Revised Statutes. Title 14 - Criminal Law. Not suitable for minors. Summary of Concerns: This book contains inexplicit sexual activities and sexual nudity; alternate sexualities; inexplicit violence involving self-harm; and profanity."

The recommended action by R. Murr is: "Remove it from any children's sections, ask for ID to check out and not allowable for a minor to download." Reason given: "This is breaking child."

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher's summary, number of copies STPL owns (One in print, one Overdrive E-book, and one Overdrive E-audiobook), total circulation on all copies (Print: 34, E-book: 19, E-audiobook: 18), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, *Bulletin*

of the *Center for Children's Books*, and *Hornbook Guide to Children*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. A total of 1,911 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Young Adult Fiction section at STPL with YA Levi as the call number.

K. LaRocca reviewed the committee's evaluation of the title which includes demographics of the committee members, the committee's report, and the committee's recommendation.

Since C. Phillips cites the Louisiana Criminal Law Revised Statute 14:91.11, the book was evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the statute. R. Murr does not explicitly cite La R.S. 14:91.11. However, because the statute was implied in the complainant's recommendation, the book was evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the statute. K. LaRocca stated that legal counsel has advised the Board that all four criteria in the R.S. 14:91.11 must be true to be a violation of the statute. The committee did not find a violation of the statute.

Summary of Committee Reports: The book does not violate La R.S. 14:91.11 because it does not primarily consist of or is devoted to the sexual acts described in Part A 2. There are a few references to sexual conduct and masturbation but scenes are not explicit. There are scenes of hugging and kissing. The character Cooper's story is a cautionary tale about online dating sites and is not erotic. The descriptions in Cooper's scenes give weight to his emotions and explain his actions. The committee found that the book is a well-written portrayal of the joy and despair of being a teen, especially a gay teen. The use of the "Greek chorus" is a literary device that gives the book a historical perspective.

Options for the Board: Move the book to the Adult Fiction section, return the book to Teen Fiction, keep the book in the restricted area behind the circulation desk, or remove it from the library.

Committee Recommendation: The book is not obscene and is appropriate for older minors. Parents who are concerned about their child reading material in the teen section can use STPL's library card system and authorize a Fully Restricted card that will not allow the minor to check out the book. It should remain in the collection and is appropriate in its current location in Teen Fiction.

Public Comment:

Connie Phillips and Rosalind Murr, the patrons who submitted the SOCs for *Two Boys Kissing*, were offered five minutes for public comment. Neither were in attendance and neither appeared for public comment.

Rachel Rhodes – Mandeville, LA. Defended the book and stated that the public library is for all voices. She summarized the plot and stated that the kissing was not romantic and was just lips

touching while the characters participated in a kissing marathon. Stated that one of the dads beats his own son when he learns he is gay. Stated that what is happening with book challenges feels like *Fahrenheit 451* and is a dangerous movement. Stated that a woman was recently killed in California because she had a rainbow flag in her store. Asked for the book to remain in YA Fiction.

Roxanne Newman – Mandeville, LA. Stated that it is ironic that the challenges have caused the library to buy more copies of the books and for more people to read them. Stated that she loves hearing about how parents trust the library and bring their children and teens to SRC activities. Stated that the book is about how far gay youth have come in comparison to the travails of their forebearers. Asked for the book to remain in YA Fiction.

Cynthia Weatherly – Covington, LA. Noted that the book is considered controversial by some people based on their personal beliefs or cultural backgrounds. Spoke about homophobia and acceptance. Stated that restricting the book to adults-only can be harmful to teens who identify with the story. Stated the book provides a valuable opportunity for young readers to see their own experiences reflected in literature and can educate all teens about diversity, respect, and inclusivity.

Gary Lacoste – Abita Springs, LA. Stated he read most of the book and noted that it is for ages 12 and up. Stated that there is homosexual sex-talk throughout the book. Spoke of the character Avery and how their parents thought Avery was a boy trapped in a girl's body. Noted that Avery received hormone therapy. Stated that is confusing for teens. Spoke of California legalizing pedophilia. Asked to put all the books in question in the Adult section.

Blake Adair – Covington, LA. Stated the book pulls at many heartstrings. Stated he is not here to tell anyone who they should love. Stated that the sexual acts depicted in the book are exclusively between children and minors. Stated that masturbation is a sexual act and 17-year-olds are minors. Stated if the book was about adults it would be compelling. Asked to restrict the book.

Rebecca Bohm – Mandeville, LA. Asked for the book to remain in the YA section. Stated it addresses LGBTQ issues some may relate to. Stated the complainants' concerns are not valid, as the tiered card system can prevent children from checking out the book. Stated that the library has gone above and beyond to protect children by letting parents approve their children's reading material. Stated that it is a shame that the fear mongering minority is attacking and harassing the LBOC, library staff, and the Parish Council.

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. Thanked the complainants for recommending the book. Stated it is a good book about tough topics that kids need to hear. Spoke about teens and problems with sexuality. Stated that the masturbation in the book is not graphic. Stated that the book

portrays real stories about how difficult it is to be a child in this world. Asked for the book to remain in the YA section.

Lawrence De Quay – Slidell, LA. Stated that he read the book and the complaints and has noticed a trend where the complainants cherry-pick the most shocking parts of the books. Stated that doing that does not tell you what the book is about or what it endorses. Stated that the book is based on true stories of teenagers that the author has met. Stated that everyone needs to know what these people are going through, especially those who are not in the LGBTQ community.

Terri Lewis Stevens – Covington, LA. Noted that the book has been on the shelf for eight years until a complaint came from Connie Phillips. Stated that 11% to 13% of the population identifies as LGBTQ+ and we must respect those people. Stated that the majority of the community are the ones who show up to the meetings each month to defend the books. Noted that masturbation is the safest sex teens will ever have. Asked for the book to remain in the YA section.

Rachel Harmayer – Abita Springs, LA. Noted that the minimum age to be legally married in Louisiana is 16 with parental consent. Stated that the themes in the book are appropriate for teens. Wondered if the book would have been challenged if it was about a boy and a girl. There was disruption from the audience. E. Couvillon advised the public to comply with the rules for public comment. Stated that she is angry because it is not right. Stated the complainants have hatred and fear of the LGBTQ community, who just want to be left alone and to be treated equally in the eyes of the law.

There were seven comments from individuals who did not wish to speak. They were not in favor of restrictions.

Discussion:

B. Taylor stated that the book does not violate the statute and should be kept in the YA section. Noted that R. Murr stated that the book is located in the children's section and that is not correct.

A. Shaw asked to confirm the age ranges for books in the teen section. K. LaRocca stated they are for ages 12 and up, but any book could be more appropriate for 14 and up.

B. McHugh stated that parents are responsible for what their children read, not the library or other members of the public who are not part of their family. Stated that these books belong on the shelves so they can be freely chosen and not stigmatized for being put in a special section or behind the circulation desk.

J. Airey stated that the book is about teenagers and speculated that it would be rated PG-13 if it were a movie, though he can understand the argument that it could be rated R. Stated it may be kind of weird to have it in the Adult section if it is about teens. Stated that it is clearly not obscenity or pornography. Realizes people could have a reasonable debate on whether it should be in the Teen or Adult section.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to affirm the committee's recommendation for *Two Boys Kissing* to remain in the YA Fiction section. It was seconded by J. Airey. Roll call vote:

Airey: Yes Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: No Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

E. Statement of Concern Decision - *What Are Your Words*

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *What Are Your Words* by Katherine Locke. The statement was submitted by Connie Phillips, representing the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project. K. LaRocca read the statement aloud.

The recommended action by C. Phillips is: "Move to minor restricted area of the library. Where kids cannot have access without an adult checking out the material." Reason given: "Not suitable for children in St. Tammany Parish See La. R.S. 14:91:11 [sic]. The material is offensive to the average adult applying contemporary community standards with respect to what is suitable for minors." Cited page numbers, excerpts, and profanity from a different book.

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher's summary, number of print copies STPL owns (2), total circulation on all print copies (11), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Booklist*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *School Library Journal*. A total of 753 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Juvenile Picture Books section at STPL with E Loc as the call number.

K. LaRocca reviewed the committee's evaluation of the title which includes demographics of the committee members, the committee's report, and the committee's recommendation. Since the current complainant cites the Louisiana Criminal Law Revised Statute 14:91.11, the book was evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the statute. K. LaRocca stated that legal counsel has advised the Board that all four criteria in the R.S. 14:91.11 must be true to be a violation of the statute. The committee did not find a violation of the statute.

Summary of Committee Report: The book contains no sex acts or sexual conduct. The book does not discuss sexuality or sexual preference. The characters in the book are fully clothed in all of the illustrations. The changing use of pronouns is part of a national conversation and in St. Tammany Parish young children are hearing about it in school. The library purchased the

book to provide a resource to the community and to help parents and guardians have a conversation with their children. Another theme of the book is about respect for an individual's preference of what to be called. The book has artistic value in the bright colors of the illustrations and the portrayal of diverse representation of community members. The committee did not find a "pretext of sexuality or alternative gender ideology." The characters express how they feel and how they identify but do not explain why. To further address the complainant's claims, STPL does not subscribe to the American Library Association's (ALA) Bill of Rights. The page numbers and quotes listed in the SOC are not in this book. There is no profanity in the book.

Options for the Board: Return the book to Children's Picture books, move the book to Juvenile Non-Fiction, move the book to Adult Non-fiction, keep the book behind the circulation desk, or remove the book from the library.

Committee Recommendation: The book should remain in the collection and is appropriate in its current location in Picture Books. The committee found that the book has more story than information and is a work of fiction.

Public Comment:

Connie Phillips, the patron who submitted the Statement of Concern for *What Are Your Words*, was offered five minutes for public comment. C. Phillips was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Joan Simon – Covington, LA. Stated that the book is a simple story about gender inclusive pronouns. Stated that the complainant's objections come from religious outrage, which is not relevant to this book. Noted that in the *Bible*, God stated, "Let us create Adam in our image." Stated that "Adam" means "mankind" in Aramaic/Arabic. Stated that "our" is inclusive of both male and female. Stated that the word homosexual did not originally appear in the *Bible* and noted that it first appeared in 1946. Spoke of homophobia, ruining lives, and robbing people of the freedom to read.

Kathleen Wiley – Mandeville, LA. Stated that she listened to the audiobook. Quoted an excerpt from Proverbs in the *Bible*. Stated that God is not an author of confusion, but peace. Stated that the books that the library is bringing in through the ALA are by authors of confusion. B. McHugh noted for the record that the statement is not correct regarding acquiring books through the ALA. K. Wiley stated that the main character in the book goes back and forth with pronoun usage. Noted that "A" is an article before a singular noun or pronoun. Spoke of the words, adjectives, and pronouns being improper grammatically. Stated that the literature would never pass the editing process. Stated that suicide rates are high when gender fluidity is encouraged.

Leeann Wiley – Mandeville, LA. Stated that she is a student at Southeastern Louisiana University and is an Early Childhood Education major and has taken psychology courses. Stated that she read the book and it left her confused and concerned with the changes in identity. Spoke of today's media and celebrities exposing children to this ideology. Stated that what children read helps develop their language. Concerned that this change in identity will lead to depression and confusion. Spoke of statistics from the Newport Academy website. Quoted verses from the *Bible*.

Lisa Rustemeyer – Covington, LA. Stated that the complainant is describing the wrong book on the SOC, and it is not worth the time being taken to review it. The complainant is using the same words over and over again in each book that is challenged and none of it is true. Stated that *What Are Your Words* is a sweet book, is appropriate for children, and there is no reason to restrict it.

Cynthia Weatherly – Covington, LA. Stated that this is a library, not a church. Asked when will the books be returned to the shelves. Stated she will sue the library and this is not fair that one person gets to decide what anyone else can read. Stated that Roland Gallatin requested anti-transgender books and the library was nice enough to purchase them. C. Weatherly submitted SOC's on each of the books R. Gallatin requested.

Gary Lacoste – Abita Springs, LA. Agreed with the earlier comments about the grammar in the book being confusing. Stated that the book has links to websites related to transgender and identity. Stated that he does not judge anyone and just wants to protect the children. Spoke of the *Bible* stating that God created man, a woman came from man, and mankind is all of us in general. Stated that homosexuality is clearly a sin in scripture. Spoke of Act 436 restricting many of these books automatically.

Blake Adair – Covington, LA. Stated that every child struggles on what to call things and the early years are critical to learning. Spoke of the issue being a simple classification and does not understand why this is such a big deal. Stated that it is important to establish the basis that children were born male or female. Stated this has nothing to do with LGBTQ issues. Stated that if we teach our children to be confused about who and what they are, the consequences will be dire. Quoted a *Bible* verse.

Jean Wiggan – Abita Springs, LA. Stated that she trusts the librarians and trusts parents to make their own decisions. Asked for the Board to not waste any more time on SOC's about the wrong book. Asked for the book to remain in the Children's Picture Book section.

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. Noted that C. Phillips submitted the wrong information on the SOC, and he asked for it to be thrown out. Stated that gender and sexuality are two different subjects. Stated that gender is about he, she, and they. Stated that anyone would be offended

if they were “mis-pronounced” by someone. Explained that sexuality refers to one’s sexual orientation, such as homosexual, gay, lesbian, etc. Stated that people should live their own lives and parents can choose what their children read.

There were five comments from individuals who did not wish to speak. They were not in favor of restrictions.

A. Shaw asked about the age groups intended for juvenile books. K. LaRocca explained that the Juvenile collection serves ages 0 to 11 years old. Picture Books are meant for children who are not yet reading on their own and are to be read by a parent. They are shelved alphabetically by the author’s last name and located on easy-to-access shelving. Juvenile Non-fiction is meant for children up to 11 years old. They are shelved by the call number for a specific topic and are located on higher shelving. A. Shaw asked if there are restricted cards for Juvenile Non-fiction. K. LaRocca explained there is not a card level that restricts any particular item in the Juvenile collection.

B. McHugh stated that he sympathizes with the people who are questioning why we are considering this SOC since it is obviously based on an external source and not the submitter’s own experience. Noted that the Rules and Regulations Committee discussed sending back SOC’s that contain obvious, egregious errors with the opportunity for the submitter to correct the SOC. He stated that he wanted the public to know that they are discussing that at the committee meetings. Stated that he did not find any grammatical problems with the book and noted that the complaint was not about the grammar. Stated that no one is going to commit suicide over this book. Stated that it is a harmless, informative book and it is a parent’s choice to explain it to their children. Stated that it is neither the library’s nor the complainant’s choice.

J. Airey asked what topic would it be if it was moved to Juvenile Non-fiction. K. LaRocca stated that the committee discussed it being under basic topics such as parts of speech, pronouns, and adjectives. Another option is to put it under the Sociology call numbers (305-306) because it talks about gender. K. LaRocca noted that the committee felt that the book is more of a work of fiction rather than English learning. T. DiMaggio noted that the Library of Congress lists gender identity as the first subject heading, which is the method we usually follow when cataloging an item. Following that process would place the item under Sociology in the 300s. J. Airey stated that he did not see anything of concern in the pictures in the book. When he read the SOC he thought he was reading the wrong book because it referenced material and page numbers not in the book. He stated that if it were an item before a court, it would be rejected because the information is not correct. Stated that if there was a procedural rule for rejecting the book, he would be in favor of doing that. Acknowledged that he did not read the entire book.

A. Parr stated that it was a very enlightening exposure to pronouns and he learned something by reading it. Stated that the committee recommendation is appropriate.

Vote: A. Parr moved to affirm the committee's recommendation for *What Are Your Words* to remain in the Picture Books section. It was seconded by B. McHugh.

Airey: Abstained Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: No Taylor: Yes
Motion carried.

B. McHugh commented that the Rules and Regulations Committee has discussed the notion of leaving books on the shelves while they are being challenged and he wanted those who have advocated for that to be aware that it is under discussion.

F. 2024 Budget

Public Hearing:

B. McHugh moved to open the public hearing. It was seconded by A. Parr. All were in favor, none were opposed, none abstained, and one was absent. Motion carried. J. Airey asked if there would be a quorum if he left the meeting, as he has a prior engagement to attend. B. Taylor confirmed that there will still be a quorum. J. Airey exited the meeting.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

B. McHugh moved to close the public hearing. It was seconded by A. Shaw. All were in favor, none were opposed, none abstained, and one was absent. Motion carried.

Discussion:

K. LaRocca presented the 2024 budget. She referenced the 2024 budget explanation and spreadsheet. She noted a typo on one of the column headings that will be fixed. The first green column heading should read: "Amount Diff. between 2024 Proposed and 2023 Last Adopted Budget." K. LaRocca reviewed each line of the budget and gave brief explanations for the budget amounts and changes.

K. LaRocca reported that the revenue is budgeted conservatively based on the estimated expected revenue numbers provided by the Assessor's Office. In 2024, the St. Tammany Parish Library will operate on a revenue of \$12,438,788. The primary source of the library's 2024 income will be a 5.78 mil property tax millage – 4.91 mils for operations and .87 mils for capital improvements to library buildings. The remaining three percent of the library's income comes from state revenue sharing, fines and fees, interest, and donations. We expect to receive a little over \$200,000 more in Ad Valorem Taxes. State Revenue Sharing reflects the amount we received in 2023.

K. LaRocca stated that the economy continues to affect the availability of supplies. The strategic planning process has entered the implementation phase. The Technical Services move was

completed in 2023, but we now have Mandeville and Causeway branch updates and renovations on the horizon. Many of the increases and decreases in the individual budget lines will be due to the implications of these conditions.

Any unused money at the end of the year becomes Prior Years' Operating Revenue. The cash on hand after all bills were paid for December and the auditors made their adjustments in March 2023 was \$5,759,521. Based on the current 2023 budget, we will have \$598,412 unbudgeted savings on December 31, 2023, for a total of \$5,927,664. This figure is less than half of one year's operating revenue. These savings are dedicated to the following specific purposes: Operational reserves are needed to run the library until we receive our first significant portion of our millage from the Parish, disaster and emergency funds cover our insurance deductibles and any repairs and clean-up that may be needed in the event of a disaster, invoices leftover from the previous year, salaries from the last pay period of the year, the retirement payment for the 4th quarter, and furniture purchases for the Causeway, Mandeville, and Slidell branches.

This leaves a current Unassigned Savings of \$598,412. An increase in revenue of \$217,655 is forecasted due to an increase in Ad Valorem Taxes as part of average growth. An increase in expenditures of \$217,302 is predicted due to anticipated increased costs for employee salaries and increases in supply costs. Almost all the revenues were budgeted to be expended leaving only \$1,112 as a free balance. K. LaRocca presented a balanced operational budget for the 2024 year. Each library department was allocated the funds to enable their plans.

K. LaRocca noted that notice of the public hearing for the proposed 2024 budget was duly published in the St. Tammany Farmer newspaper on August 2nd, 9th, and 16th, 2023. A copy of the proposed budget was made available for public inspection at each library branch on and after August 2, 2023.

A. Shaw asked what is the amount left to pay for the consultants conducting the salary study. K. LaRocca explained that the study is expected to be completed by the end of 2023 and is not included in the 2024 budget. K. LaRocca clarified that the Consultants line has money in it for 2024 because it covers other services and expenses such as guest speakers for the Annual All Staff meeting, I.T. security consultants, and library consultants to help with the design and renovation of the Mandeville and Causeway branches. A. Shaw asked for clarification about the genealogy collection at the Slidell Branch and K. LaRocca clarified that it is being enhanced by our Genealogy Librarian. The library is planning to hire an additional Reference Librarian for the Slidell Branch who has Genealogy expertise.

K. LaRocca read the Fiscal Year 2024 Operational Budget Adoption Resolution aloud.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2024 Operational Budget Adoption Resolution. It was seconded by A. Parr. Roll call vote:

Airey: Absent Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes
Motion carried.

G. Designation of Surplus Property

T. DiMaggio explained that Library Administration has two vehicles for official use. The Ford Explorer and the Ford Taurus are now 15 years old and are becoming unreliable. The Ford Explorer needs repairs that are estimated at over \$1,300.00. A resolution is required so the items can be sold at the Government Surplus auction on September 14, 2023, at ServCorp Auctions in Slidell, LA.

T. DiMaggio read the resolution aloud. A. Shaw asked how much money the auction will bring in and what percentage do we pay to the auction house. K. LaRocca stated that they do not provide an estimate, but last time we received approximately \$7,000 for a truck. A. Parr asked if the funds received will roll into the budget for the next vehicle. K. LaRocca explained that when the budget is amended in October, a revenue line for those funds will be included.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Discussion: There was no further discussion.

Vote: A. Parr moved to approve the resolution to declare certain movable property surplus and authorize its disposition. It was seconded by A. Shaw. Roll call vote:

Airey: Absent Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes
Motion carried.

H. Designation of Capital Funds – Technical Services Elevator

K. LaRocca referenced the Library Capital Projects for Renovation and Preservation spreadsheet. The new Annex building will need an elevator to ease I.T. and Public Relations equipment moving from the first to the second floor. This will also provide overall ADA accessibility for the building. The architect for the building renovation and the Parish Engineering Dept. was able to give us a cost estimate. We had originally designated funding (\$120,000) thinking that we could use the remaining dollars from the renovation of the technical services building to fund the total cost of the elevator and construction (\$166,000). The original designation of \$120,000 was not presented to the Parish Council or included in our capital projects list after our October meeting last year. Rather than make an update to the old resolution, we will begin with a new resolution designating the total cost. The Board will need

to vote to include this in the capital projects list. K. LaRocca referenced the cost estimate from the Parish Engineering Office and read the resolution aloud.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Discussion: There was no further discussion.

Vote: A. Shaw moved to approve the resolution to Designate Capital Funds for the Technical Services/Maintenance Building Elevator. It was seconded by A. Parr. Roll call vote:

Airey: Absent Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

I. Designation of Capital Funds – Outreach Services Facility

K. LaRocca referenced the Library Capital Projects for Renovation and Preservation spreadsheet and pictures and a floor plan of the facility.

K. LaRocca reported that one of the major directions to come out of the strategic planning process is the formation of an outreach service. In order to begin to offer this new service, space will be needed for specialty vehicles, a small collection, and staff. The unit directly next to our technical services building has come up for sale. It has the combination of warehouse and office space needed to accommodate outreach services. The address is 68361 S. Commercial Way Unit 4, Mandeville, LA 70471. The list price is \$315,000. We would be offering the list price contingent upon the appraisal. K. LaRocca noted that the library spent approximately \$13,000 for appraisal, inspections, and closing costs two years ago to purchase the Technical Services facility. To ensure we have allocated the necessary funds to cover these costs, she suggests we add \$15,000 to the budget. Should the Board decide to purchase the property, the total funds allocated would be \$330,000. The location is turn-key requiring no renovation in order to use the space. Our Maintenance Department can add additional air conditioning to the warehouse for less than \$5,000 which could come from our operational budget. A chair lift would also need to be installed.

K. LaRocca explained that over the years, the library has offered limited outreach services. During the strategic plan focus groups, many people requested that we bring resources to places we do not currently serve and to have physical library service brought out into the community. K. LaRocca spoke of reaching rural areas of the community that do not have library facilities nearby. K. LaRocca mentioned outreach options such as mail order, vending machines, a bookmobile, and book vans. K. LaRocca described outreach services as a branch on wheels.

K. LaRocca read the resolution aloud.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Discussion:

A. Parr asked if there is an action plan being developed to make use of the space. K. LaRocca stated that there are committees that have been meeting to work on the goals of the strategic plan. Two staff members are going to the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services conference in October. Stated that an action committee or a task force will be formed just for that purpose. A. Parr asked if there is more information on the realtor and the promissory notice. K. LaRocca briefly explained the process from last time that included working with someone at the District Attorney's Office who drafted an intent to purchase type of document. She noted that it takes a significant amount of time to get from the point of designating funds to the act of sale. For example, money was designated in October 2021 and the sale was complete in March 2022.

B. McHugh stated that it is a unique opportunity, good timing, and the building is well-maintained. A. Parr stated that it is a good investment for the library.

Vote: A. Parr moved to approve the resolution to purchase 68361 S. Commercial Way Unit 4. It was seconded by A. Shaw. Roll call vote:

Airey: Absent Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by B. McHugh and was seconded by A. Shaw. All were in favor, none were opposed, none abstained, and two were absent. The motion carried.



Rebecca Taylor, Board President