

**St. Tammany Parish Library  
Board of Control Meeting  
December 11, 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:** Bill McHugh, Anthony Parr, Ann Shaw, Becky Taylor  
**Absent:** Jake Airey, 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. In the case of a Statement of Concern (SOC) decision, the person who filed the SOC is given five minutes to speak. Public comments were accepted by email (lboc@stpl.us) until 4:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

**1. Approval of the minutes of the meetings of the Library Board of Control that were held on October 12, 2023, October 23, 2023, and October 27, 2023**

**Discussion:**

B. Taylor asked for a correction to the minutes dated October 23, 2023, on page three in the last paragraph. The sixth sentence should be rephrased to say: "J. Airey clarified that the library does not have \$5,700,000 in undedicated savings available." There were no other suggested corrections to the three sets of minutes.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Vote:** A. Parr moved to approve the three sets of minutes with the stated correction to the October 23, 2023 minutes. It was seconded by B. McHugh. All were in favor, none were opposed, and two were absent. Motion carried.

## 2. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Financial Reports – October 2023

K. LaRocca reported that the library has received a little more than 100% in Ad Valorem taxes and State Revenue Sharing. The budget percentage for this point in the year should be 83%. Revenues are at 82.43% and Expenditures are at 82.27%. Most of the lines that are out of balance are due to expenses paid early or late in the year and will be in balance by year-end. K. LaRocca gave explanations for noteworthy lines that were over or under budget. The Health Trust line is at 96%, but reimbursements are expected from the library's reinsurance carrier. The Equipment Lease line is at 105% due to leasing a lift to perform repairs on the flag poles at the Madisonville and Covington branches.

**Discussion:** There was no Board discussion.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Vote:** B. McHugh moved to approve the October 2023 financial reports. It was seconded by A. Parr. All were in favor, none were opposed, and two were absent. Motion carried.

### B. Director's Report

K. LaRocca reported that the Maintenance Department is working on improvements to the following library branches: South Slidell, Pearl River, Lee Road, and Abita Springs. A new picnic table donated by the Friends of the Slidell Library was installed at the South Slidell Library. Maintenance purchased a new walk-behind forklift to use at the new Annex building to facilitate storage for the Friends groups, maintenance supplies, and general library storage. A new transmission was installed in the book delivery van. Exterior parking lights will be replaced at the Slidell Library.

Staff are currently being trained on the recent changes to the library card system. The new rollout date for the card system updates is January 2, 2024, which is six months ahead of the deadline.

Librarians and staff performed storytime at Marigny Elementary, Woodlake Elementary, Kinder Haus Montessori, Kidz Klubhouse, St. Margaret Mary, and Appletree. Staff provided outreach services at the following events: Trick or Treat Festival at Atkins Park in Covington, Family Fun Day, Three Rivers Art Festival, Books and Blankets event at Bonne Ecole, and STEM Quest. Staff promoted the library on The Lake and The Highway radio stations. Staff attended the following conferences: State Library Administrators Conference, YALSA Young Adult Services Symposium, Illinois State Genealogical Society Conference, and the 2023 Candid Community Train-the-Trainer Day.



The Kids' Catalog, a standalone catalog made for children's materials, launched on December 11<sup>th</sup> on the library's website and on all children's area Open Public Access Catalog (OPAC) computers. Santa and Mrs. Claus are visiting the libraries this month. Holiday concerts were held at the South Slidell and Madisonville Libraries. In November, LinkedIn Learning was launched as a new service available to patrons. The service allows library cardholders access to over 16,000 business, creative, and technology-based online courses to enhance career skills.

The library has received 26 public records requests since the beginning of November 2022. Five are currently outstanding. To date, the library has received 220 statements of concern on 173 titles since August 2022. Four titles have been rescinded by the challenger. The library board has made decisions on 22 titles and will be deciding on two titles at this board meeting. There will be 145 titles remaining.

Staff have continued working on goals to implement the strategic plan. K. LaRocca noted that there is a two-year waiting list for a bookmobile, but the library will be able to start other outreach initiatives. T. DiMaggio spoke about putting together art shows with high school students and other groups. The art shows will rotate to different branches throughout the community.

K. LaRocca reviewed the October, November, and year-to-date (YTD) 2023 service statistics. The YTD total circulation was 893,294, computer usage was 84,177, door count was 534,422, wireless internet inside was 97,322, and wireless internet outside was 87,344. A total of 7,884 patrons have registered for library cards so far this year.

A. Parr asked if there is a goal for total circulation for the year. K. LaRocca explained that there is no specific goal, but the main objectives are to ensure that we are getting resources into the hands of those who need them and to increase awareness of the library overall. A. Parr asked how many people are on the neurodiversity task force. T. DiMaggio stated that there are about 10 staff members on the committee and we will be reaching out to community stakeholders to advise us. She stated that she is hoping to have someone on the neurodiverse spectrum join the committee as well.

B. McHugh thanked Jackie Riecke for the great job she does promoting the library by producing creative and well-written material in a variety of formats. B. McHugh asked if the library cancels online resources if they are not being used. K. LaRocca confirmed that is correct and explained that they look at the cost of the database vs. patron usage to make that decision.

### **C. Alcohol Request – St. Tammany Library Foundation**

K. LaRocca explained that the St. Tammany Library Foundation will hold its annual membership meeting on Wednesday, January 24, 2024, at the Madisonville Library. It is requested that the Foundation be allowed to serve wine. The wine will be served along with food and available

only in the meeting room at the Madisonville Library. Approval is required by the Board for any alcohol served at the library, as the Rules and Regulations do not allow for alcohol without approval.

**Discussion:** There was no Board discussion.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Vote:** A. Shaw moved to approve the request to serve alcohol at the Library Foundation meeting on January 24, 2024. It was seconded by B. McHugh. All were in favor, none were opposed, and two were absent. Motion carried.

#### **D. Election of Officers**

K. LaRocca reported that all members were asked before this final meeting of the year to determine willingness to continue to serve or members wishing to serve in a new capacity, as is required in the Library Board of Control Rules and Regulations. Rebecca Taylor wishes to serve as President, Ann Shaw wishes to serve as Vice-President, and Anthony Parr wishes to serve as Secretary.

**Discussion:** There was no Board discussion.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Vote:** B. McHugh moved to approve the election of the proposed slate of officers. It was seconded by A. Shaw. All were in favor, none were opposed, and two were absent. Motion carried.

#### **E. Presentation of updated card system and Children's Catalog**

K. LaRocca presented the new card system options. She referred to color-coded handouts that explain all of the options available to patrons. The four card types are Juvenile Full Restriction, Juvenile Semi Restriction, Juvenile, and Juvenile Unrestricted. She explained the new "No Digital Access (NDA)" options for the Juvenile Full Restriction and Juvenile Semi-Restriction cards. K. LaRocca explained that digital access refers to digital downloadable material. K. LaRocca reviewed the statements regarding sexually explicit material for each card type. These statements are included on the handouts and on the back of the library card application for minors. There are now separate applications for adults and minors. The color-coded card options with detailed descriptions are listed on the back of the card application for minors.

K. LaRocca spoke about the option for a parent or guardian to grant internet permission to their minor children. When minors log into a public computer in the library using their library card,



the internal system that manages public computer access (CASSIE) will recognize the card type and will only allow access to resources permitted by their card type. For example, if a minor is not granted internet permission by their parent or guardian, CASSIE will not allow them to access the internet. CASSIE will only allow access to programs to work on papers or projects.

K. LaRocca explained that patrons will only see four card types as options, but library staff will actually be juggling 24 different card types due to the number of available combinations of options. K. LaRocca estimates that staff training will be complete next week. The new card system will be ready to launch at the beginning of January 2024. K. LaRocca noted that the library will be well ahead of the deadline, as the law requires libraries to adopt the new policies by January 1, 2024 and implement them by June 1, 2024. STPL adopted its new card policy in September 2023 and other policy updates were adopted in October 2023. T. DiMaggio complimented the staff that worked on creating the training materials for staff and the informational materials for the public.

B. Taylor asked if the application forms are retained. K. LaRocca explained that they are reviewed to ensure the correct information and selections are noted in the patron's record and then they are shredded. B. McHugh asked if the parent is given a copy. K. LaRocca said that we typically do not, but they can be given a copy. B. McHugh stated that he wants to ensure that the library is able to document what the parent has requested and authorized on their child's card in a legally reliable method. A. Parr asked if there is a way to store the scanned application in the patron's record. K. LaRocca said that there was no option for that in the past, but she will check to see if the option is now available. There was discussion about the statistics of new card types. A. Parr asked if K. LaRocca can include those statistics in future Director's Reports and she agreed to do so.

There were technical difficulties with the visual presentation of the new Kids' Catalog, so T. DiMaggio gave a verbal presentation. Bibliocommons, our website provider, built the Kids' Catalog as a self-contained separate component from the library's regular website and online catalog. Patrons cannot access the library's regular online catalog from the Kids' Catalog. Searches performed in the Kids' Catalog will only generate items in the Children's collection. T. DiMaggio gave examples of search results. J. Riecke will create a demonstration video for the public.

#### **F. Statement of Concern Decision – *Ana on the Edge***

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *Ana on the Edge* by A.J. Sass. 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. This book should be

shelved in the adult section of the library and identified as an Adult Book not a Young Adult of Juvenile [sic] Book.”

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 standard. This is a typical book from the ALA grooming agenda causing 12 year old children to question their gender.”

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher’s summary, number of print copies STPL owns (3), total circulation on all print copies (11), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Publishers Weekly*, *Booklist*, *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *Hornbook Guide to Children*. Also noted are awards featuring this title. A total of 772 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Juvenile Fiction section at STPL with J Sass 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 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 LA 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. The book does not contain any of the conduct outlined in LA R.S. 25:225 and its current placement does not violate that law’s requirements.

Summary of Committee Report: The book contains no sex acts or sexual conduct. The treatment of gender identity is age appropriate and there is no mention of romance, sexual identity, or sexual activity. Ana’s story models the importance of being honest with one’s self and with others, especially parents. Ana’s anxiety about friendship, her identity, coming out to her mother and coach, money, the pressures of skating, and her relationship with her estranged father are all age-appropriate and is portrayed realistically for the tween audience.

Options for the Board: Keep the book in Juvenile Fiction, move to Young Adult Fiction, move to Adult Fiction, put behind the circulation desk, or remove the book from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book should remain in the collection and is appropriate in its current location in Juvenile Fiction.

**Public Comment:**

Connie Phillips, the patron who submitted the Statement of Concern for *Ana on the Edge*, was offered five minutes for public comment. C. Phillips was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.



Rachel Rhodes – Mandeville, LA. Thanked the Board. Spoke positively about the book *Ana on the Edge* and stated that it contains nothing inappropriate. Stated that it is about gender identity and the struggle of having to hide in secret out of fear of what others will think. Stated it was written to educate. Stated she will continue to fight for all voices to be heard.

Ashlie Chatagnier – Folsom, LA. Stated that it is important to actually read the book rather than searching online and reading other people's opinions. Stated the book was very good and relatable. Stated there is nothing sexual or inappropriate in the book.

Joan Simon – Covington, LA. Thanked the Board. Stated that Kelly's Director's Report shows just how much the library offers. Stated the book is a coming-of-age story, not offensive, and should stay shelved in Juvenile Fiction. Asked for others to stop being tribal and culturally divisive.

Lisa Rustemeyer – Covington, LA. Stated that she appreciates the Board and library staff. Stated that she trusts librarians to select materials that represent everyone. Stated that C. Phillips does not understand the difference between sex and gender. Stated that the book is sweetly written and promotes empathy and understanding. Asked for the book to remain in Juvenile Fiction. She then spoke positively about *The Fighting Infantryman*. Asked for the book to remain in Juvenile Non-Fiction.

Devin McGee – Mandeville, LA. Spoke about the concept of generative themes and their use and purpose in transforming the American education system. Stated that activists are using these works as tools to radicalize children into becoming social, political, and queer activists. Spoke of the difference between the terms gay and queer. Spoke about "Queer Theory" and that it is not rooted in hate towards gay people. Stated that age restrictions are not bans.

Terri Lewis Stevens – Covington, LA. Stated that approximately one million library items circulate each year and noted that the three copies of *Ana on the Edge* have been checked out 11 times. Asked to keep those statistics in perspective. Noted that the book has not been challenged prior to C. Phillips' complaint. Noted that C. Phillips is not in the audience. Stated that the book does not violate LA R.S. 14:91.11 and is not a threat to anyone.

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. Stated that he did not read the book, but stated that it belongs in the Juvenile section. Asked for C. Phillips and others to consider rescinding their challenges to save taxpayers' time and money so the library can focus on important things.

**Discussion:**

B. Taylor stated that the book does not violate LA R.S. 14:91.11. Stated she is in favor of keeping the book in the Juvenile Fiction section. A. Parr and B. McHugh agreed. B. McHugh stated it is not a book about transgender ideology and that the author notes that it is about gender dysphoria. Stated it is well written and engaging.

**Vote:** B. McHugh moved to affirm the committee's recommendation for *Ana on the Edge* to remain in the Juvenile Fiction collection. It was seconded by A. Parr.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion carried.

### **G. Statement of Concern Decision – *The Fighting Infantryman***

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *The Fighting Infantryman* by Rob Sanders. 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 request only section as this book violates the The [sic] Harmful to Minors Statute in particular R.S. 94:91:11 [sic] in particular section 3. 'The material is offensive to the average adult applying contemporary community standards with respect to what is suitable for minors.' Transgenderism is rare, sexual disorder with mature subject matter. Books of the nature should be shelved in a 'Upon Request' section of the library."

Reason given: "Mature subject matter that does not comport with the value systems of the citizens of St. Tammany Parish. There should be no effort to 'normalize' this confuse children about their sexuality."

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 (5), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Kirkus Reviews*, *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, and *Booklist*. Also noted are awards featuring this title. A total of 191 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Juvenile Non-Fiction section at STPL with J 306.768 San as the call number. This title was purchased to fulfill a patron request.

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 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 LA 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. The book does not contain any of the conduct outlined in LA R.S. 25:225 and its current placement does not violate that law's requirements.

Summary of Committee Report: The book contains no sex acts or sexual conduct. There is no mention of the main character having a romantic partner. There is no discussion of sex or sexuality in the book. The discussion of transgenderism is put into historical context. The book



is in picture book format but it is classified as Juvenile Non-fiction and shelved in the sociology section of Juvenile Non-fiction. It brings up historic opportunities for boys and girls in the mid-19th century. The themes of friendship and patriotism in the book are age appropriate.

Options for the Board: Keep the book in Juvenile Non-Fiction, move to Young Adult Non-fiction (a soon to be formed collection), move to Adult non-fiction, put behind the circulation desk, or remove the book from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book should remain in the collection and is appropriate in its current location in Juvenile Non-Fiction.

**Public Comment:**

Connie Phillips, the patron who submitted the Statement of Concern for *The Fighting Infantryman*, was offered five minutes for public comment. C. Phillips was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Cynthia Weatherly – Abita Springs, LA. Stated that stories of all people who have fought for our country should be told. Asked if we would restrict a book about Joan of Arc, who became a military leader and transcended gender roles. Suggested that D. McGee (from earlier public comment) research the other books that have been challenged on the topic of brown, black, and indigenous people of color. She stated that the hate is not just directed towards transgender people.

Rachel Rhodes – Mandeville, LA. Stated that the book is beautifully written and illustrated. Stated that the book is about Albert D.J. Cashier, who was born as Jennie Hodgers in the 1840s. It tells the story of a young transgender soldier's bravery on both the battlefield and his private battles. He fought in over 40 battles during the Civil War and no one knew his secret until 1913. Stated that transgender people have always existed. Stated there is nothing sexually explicit in the book.

Ashlie Chatagnier – Folsom, LA. Stated that the story is a part of history and really happened. Stated that taking history books off the shelves because someone does not like the history is a dangerous game. Stated that this is exactly why people are concerned about book banning.

Rebecca Bohm – Mandeville, LA. Supports keeping the book in the Juvenile Non-Fiction section. Stated that she enjoyed the book and its theme of acceptance. Stated that it does not violate LA R.S. 14:19.11. Stated that most of the content of the complaints about books were copied and pasted by the complainant.

Terri Lewis Stevens – Covington, LA. Stated that since 2020, two copies have been checked out five times and no one else has complained. Stated the book does not violate 14:91.11. Noted that C. Phillips was not in attendance, nor were any current or newly-elected Parish Council

members. Stated that was troubling to her because C. Phillips contributed to campaigns of some incoming council members. Stated that they do not have respect for the Board, as they have not shown up to discuss the books. Stated there is a recurring theme of bigotry that is focused on LGBTQ+ issues.

Sonnet Ireland – Slidell, LA. Stated that she is here as a taxpayer, a life member of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, VFW Auxiliary, and Military Order of Purple Heart Auxiliary. Stated that the same people who would challenge this book are the same people who would agree that we should salute our veterans. Stated that is not real support, it is a façade, and it discounts Cashier's heroic efforts. Stated that the earlier comment regarding Joan of Arc is on point.

**Discussion:**

A. Parr stated that the book was very interesting and provided a glimpse into a soldier's life during the Civil War. He noted that the National Park Service, the State of Illinois, and several historians have provided more information on Cashier, in case anyone is interested in learning more. He stated he agrees with the committee's recommendation. B. Taylor stated that she also agrees with the committee's recommendation. B. McHugh stated that the kind of people who would remove books like this are the same kind of people who would remove books about black history and slavery. Stated that this book is a story of truth and that should be the focus.

**Vote:** B. McHugh moved to affirm the committee's recommendation for *The Fighting Infantryman* to remain shelved in the Juvenile Non-Fiction collection. It was seconded by A. Parr.

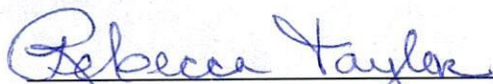
Roll call vote:

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

Motion carried.

**3. 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, and two were absent. Motion carried.

  
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Rebecca Taylor, Board President