

**St. Tammany Parish Library
Board of Control Meeting
February 26, 2024
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: Carmen Butler, Bill McHugh, Anthony Parr, Ann Shaw, Becky Taylor
Absent: None

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. Members of the public wishing to speak must submit a comment card and their comments must relate to the agenda item specified on the card.

1. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Library Board of Control (LBOC) that was held on December 11, 2023.

Discussion: 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 December 11, 2023, LBOC meeting. Seconded by A. Shaw. All were in favor, none were opposed, and none were absent. Motion carried.

2. NEW BUSINESS

A. Financial Reports – December 2023 and January 2024

Discussion:

K. LaRocca reviewed the financial reports for December 2023. She reported that \$11,823,150.21 in Ad Valorem Revenue and \$258,515.31 in State Revenue Sharing was received in 2023. Revenues were at 99.04% and Expenditures were at 99.17%. K. LaRocca gave explanations for lines that were over or under budget. The Health Trust line was at 125%. The library is self-insured; therefore, the costs can be

higher than budgeted by the end of the year. Reimbursements from the library's reinsurance carrier are expected. The Workers' Compensation line is over budget due to paying for January 2024 coverage in December 2023. The Publication of Legal Notices line continues to be over budget due to longer LBOC meeting minutes. The Vehicle Lease line is over budget due to leasing a box truck while the library delivery van underwent a transmission replacement. As a result, the Vehicle Repairs line was over budget due to the transmission replacement. The Network Utility Software line was over budget by 2% due to a new cloud-based backup system.

The Sanitation line was over budget due to the addition of the Annex building in 2023. The Adult Programming line is over budget because the amount added in the last amendment was underestimated. The Juvenile Programming line is over budget due to supplies meant for 2024 being delivered in December 2023. Some of the Library Resource Acquisitions lines were under budget due to a delay in receiving materials. As a result of this, more Downloadable Media was purchased, bringing that line slightly over budget.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: C. Butler moved to approve the December 2023 financial reports. It was seconded by A. Parr. All were in favor, none were opposed, and none were absent. Motion carried.

K. LaRocca reviewed the financial reports for January 2024. A total of \$8,788,337.31 in Ad Valorem revenue and \$88,100.47 in State Revenue Sharing was received in February 2024. The budget percentage for the end of January should be around 8.33%. Revenues were at 8.28% and Expenditures were at 10.43%. K. LaRocca noted that there are several bills that are due at the beginning of the year, which explains overages in budget lines. The Promotional Production line is at 18.37% due to replenishing promotional items at the beginning of the year. The Maintenance Supplies line is at 19.89% due to replenishing supplies, but there are some items that can be recoded to other lines. The Office Machine and Equipment Repair line is at 39% due to a CD cleaning machine that needed repairs.

The Polaris Maintenance line is at 101% due to paying in full for the year and adding more accounts since switching to individual logins for enhanced security. The LBOC Liability Insurance line is at 113% due to a premium increase and the full payment being made at the beginning of the year. The Computer/Printer Supplies line is at 15% due to ordering toner early in the year. The PC Network line is at 70% due to purchasing new computers, as they are on a five-year replacement cycle.

B. Taylor asked about the line showing "Ad Valorem Receivable – 2021" on page two of the January 2024 financial reports. K. LaRocca stated that the CPA will correct that by making an adjustment to the years that are listed.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: A. Shaw moved to approve the January 2024 financial reports. It was seconded by C. Butler. All were in favor, none were opposed, and none were absent. Motion carried.

B. Director's Report

K. LaRocca reviewed the Director's Report.

On January 24, 2024, the Mandeville Branch received water in the building due to heavy rainfall. On February 1, 2024, someone had a medical emergency and drove their car into the brick wall surrounding the outdoor AC units at the Slidell Branch. There was minor damage to the AC and the Parish is handling the insurance claim for the repair of the wall. A new Chrysler Pacifica passenger van was purchased to replace the Ford Explorer that was declared surplus last year.

Staff offered outreach services to the Regina Coeli Head Start Child Development Center, Martin Luther King Community event, Bayou Garden Open House, Krewe du Kidz, Mardi Paws, Krewe du Pooch, and Kiwanis Club. Staff attended meetings of the St. Tammany Commission on Families, Library Foundation, and Friends of the Library meetings. Staff participated in training and workshops, such as the State Library Summer Reading Challenge Workshop, State Library Annual Report training, Innovative Interfaces' Polaris Reports A – Z, Gale Database training, and OSHA Forklift Safety training. Staff promoted the library on The Lake and The Highway radio stations. Library Con was held on January 13th at the Madisonville Branch. Attendance nearly doubled from last year to just over 800 attendees.

The rollout date for the card system update was January 2, 2024, putting us six months ahead of the deadline. K. LaRocca reviewed statistics on the juvenile cards by card type. There are 4,997 active cards for minors. The card type statistics are as follows: Full Restriction – 1,030 (21%), Semi-Restriction – 709 (14%), Juvenile – 2,032 (41%), and Juvenile Unrestricted – 1,226 (25%).

K. LaRocca noted that nine new public records requests (PRR) have been answered since the new year. A large PRR that dates from August 2023 with over 100,000 results is in the hands of the District Attorney's office for review and redaction, but was put on hold by the requester. A large number of Statements of Concern (SOC) were rescinded in December 2023. There are now 39 active SOCs on 36 titles.

T. DiMaggio gave a strategic planning update. She reviewed the goals and explained what has been done to implement them. The card application has been translated into Spanish. The Accessibility Working Group toured the 22nd Judicial District Court's Kidsense Room for ideas on a possible calming room at the Covington Branch. The library will pilot a Books by Mail program marketed to clients of COAST's Meals on Wheels program. There will be a community art show at the South Slidell branch from March 9th through April 6th. A committee has been formed to address marketing and communications. Gallagher Consulting continues to work on the salary study. Library administration has developed a job description for a human resources generalist.

A. Parr asked for a schedule for the next outreach meeting. A. Parr asked for an update on the elevator at the Annex. K. LaRocca explained that the funds were approved in 2023 and became available in January 2024. The next step is for the Parish President to assign an architect for the project.

K. LaRocca reviewed the service statistics. In December 2023, there were 425 patron cards registered, total circulation was 70,961, and the door count was 40,834. For the full year of 2023 there were 8,307 patron cards registered, total circulation was 982,980, computer usage was 90,455, door count was

575,421, the wireless internet inside was 103,739, and wireless internet outside was 93,947. Of all items circulated, 61% were physical items and 39% were virtual items. K. LaRocca reviewed the circulation by type, circulation by branch, door count by branch, computer usage by branch, and wireless internet inside and outside by branch. There were 2,713 programs with 44,718 people in attendance. K. LaRocca reviewed graphs showing the statistical trends for 2021, 2022, and 2023. In January 2024, there were 742 patron cards registered, total circulation was 80,155, and the door count was 43,168.

B. McHugh complimented library staff on the work they are doing on the strategic plan. He asked for an explanation of a calming space. T. DiMaggio explained that it is a space for individuals with neuro-atypical qualities, such as autism, ADHD, or sensory-related sensitivities. They can utilize the calming space if they are feeling overwhelmed and need to wind down and collect themselves. T. DiMaggio stated that the goal is for families and individuals to feel welcome to come to the library.

B. Taylor let the board members know that they can take a brief recess if needed.

C. Report – Transition of materials in the Children’s and Teen Collections

K. LaRocca explained that the library’s card system complies with LA R.S. 25:225, allowing parents the option to restrict their minor’s access to sexually explicit material. We are required to have a library card system that requires a minor’s parent or guardian to select whether the minor is permitted to check out sexually explicit material physically available in the library. K. LaRocca noted that the Juvenile Full Restriction card provides this restriction.

According to library policy, materials in the Children’s Collections shall not contain sexually explicit material as defined by LA R.S. 25:225. Going forward, our Collection Development policy states that we will not purchase items that are sexually explicit for the children’s collection. In order for the currently owned Children’s Collection to comply with our policies and the law we had to move some books (particularly those dealing with puberty) to the Adult Collection under the call number for parenting. A list of the children’s titles that were moved to the Adult Collection before the end of 2023 was included in the board meeting packet.

K. LaRocca explained that the Young Adult (YA) collection is different. YA collections shall not contain materials that have been deemed sexually explicit by the LBOC as defined by LA R.S. 25:225. The LBOC deems these items as sexually explicit during an open public meeting using the reconsideration process, as stated in LA R.S. 25:225. The Board was prepared to review all of the YA titles that were challenged. However, with the recension that took place at the end of December, there are now 69 titles that staff is aware of that might have sexual conduct but no mechanism for the Board to review these titles. We have conducted a cursory review, not evaluating for obscenity or context, but purely whether there is sexual conduct as described in LA RS 25:225. Some items will require further review. As a matter of transparency to the public and the Board, a list of all titles that will move to the Adult Collection or that will be evaluated further was provided in the board meeting packet.

K. LaRocca explained that during the first implementation of the card policy in November of 2022, all YA Non-fiction titles were treated as adult materials as they had Adult Collection call numbers and were shelved with adult titles. We have begun the process of moving the YA Non-fiction items that do not

have sexual content back to the YA collection to improve access to materials for teens. Some examples of these books are cookbooks, craft books, and ACT and SAT study guides.

K. LaRocca noted that some YA Graphic Novels (GN) qualify under the new card system to be moved to the Adult Collection. K. LaRocca explained that rather than having a series of GNs across two collections, any series of GNs that have at least one item with sexual conduct will move to the Adult Collection to make room for the new YA Non-fiction collection.

K. LaRocca asked for feedback from the Board and the public.

Public Comment:

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. Disappointed that books are being moved from the YA section. Stated that the law does not require them to be moved. Stated that moving GN series as a whole makes sense. Asked for the books to be placed in their appropriate sections. Commended the work discussed in the Director's Report.

Lisa Rustemeyer – Mandeville, LA. Expressed concern about moving the books. Stated that the law does not require the library to relocate materials and the library has decided to exceed the law with their collection policy. Asked what is the process of evaluating the materials. Stated that children and teens will suffer from lack of knowledge. Spoke about Louisiana having the highest teen pregnancy rates. Stated that most of the books that were moved were about LGBTQ topics and people of color.

A. Parr asked K. LaRocca to review the process of determining which books should be moved. K. LaRocca explained that the collection policy states that we will guarantee, to the best of our ability, that the juvenile section does not have any items with sexual conduct as defined by LA R.S. 25:225. K. LaRocca stated that the library made the commitment to review the juvenile collection and the thirteen listed titles are the result of their review. K. LaRocca confirmed that the materials were only evaluated to determine if they had sexual conduct as defined by LA R.S. 25:225.

E. Couvillon stated she has worked with K. LaRocca on addressing complaints from the public since the beginning of the point at issue. Members of the public complained about the SOC decisions, yet most complainants did not appeal the committee's decisions to the Board. The policies were changed and the responsibility of the SOC decision-making process shifted to the Board. Now the library is back to making more nuanced decisions about books in the Children's and YA sections. E. Couvillon reminded everyone that the Challenged Materials Policy works both ways and patrons can submit a SOC if they think an item is shelved incorrectly. She stated that the staff is doing their best to work within the confines of the law while addressing community concerns, and the ultimate goal is how to best serve the community.

B. McHugh asked for clarification on what the Board is being asked to do regarding the 25 YA Fiction materials that are listed as under review. K. LaRocca explained that those titles are "caught in the middle" and need further review. In an effort to be fully transparent, we would like to get feedback from the Board and the public.

B. McHugh asked how will we inform the public of any changes after the 25 titles are reviewed and he asked for clarification on who will make the decision on the 25 titles. K. LaRocca explained that the books will be reviewed by staff and moved to the adult collection if sexual conduct as defined by LA R.S.

25:225 exists, as our policy states that we will do so if we become aware of such titles. K. LaRocca stated that she should have a report by the next LBOC meeting and noted that the shelf locations of the books are always specified in the online catalog. K. LaRocca stated that if the Board would prefer to have final approval over the location of the books, she could have a recommendation ready for the next meeting.

B. McHugh stated that he trusts the judgment of the professional librarians and does not feel the need to approve what the professionals evaluate and decide. He suggested creating a section on the website that states which books have been moved to comply with the law and note where they are now located.

B. McHugh asked for clarification that the library is under no obligation to review the tens of thousands of books that are on the shelves to try to find books that are not in compliance with the law. E. Couvillon confirmed that is correct. She also redressed B. McHugh's earlier statement that we are moving the books to comply with the law and clarified that is not correct, as the library is currently in compliance with all of the laws that were passed. E. Couvillon explained that the process that the library is undergoing is being done to address community concerns and is above and beyond what is required by Louisiana law.

B. McHugh spoke of emails sent to the LBOC, the Parish Council, and state legislators claiming that someone went to the library and found a book in a section where it is not supposed to be located. He stated that this is an obvious attempt to foment opposition and influence decisions during the upcoming legislative session. B. McHugh asked for a statement from K. LaRocca regarding how the library is responding to those emails.

K. LaRocca explained that the initial emails were specifically about items that were in the YA section that were part of the group of titles that were rescinded. K. LaRocca stated that she replied with an explanation that those titles were "caught in the middle" and the Board would be discussing it at this board meeting. She also received emails regarding YA titles that were not previously challenged. She replied and explained that anyone who has concerns about an item can file a Statement of Concern and the Board will review the item and will render a decision in an open public meeting. B. McHugh noted that the complainants are not following that procedure, which was established by the State of Louisiana, and are instead blasting emails to public officials.

Additional public comment cards were received after the public comment period closed. B. Taylor permitted the acceptance of additional public comment.

Roxanne Newman – Mandeville, LA. Noted that the library is not required to move the material from the YA section and suggested establishing a separate part of the YA section for the restricted materials. Parents can steer their children away if they do not want them perusing that section, but it would allow access to those with permission. Parents decide if they want to allow their child to check out the materials based on the library card type they have chosen for their child.

Ruth Terry-Sipos – Stated that this is a "lose-lose" situation and that the library is "caught between a rock and a hard place." Stated that the Board has assured the public that they will do everything they can preemptively to follow the law. Stated that she may not like books being moved, but can appreciate why it is happening. Stated that if this pours oil on troubled waters, then it is worth it.

Becky Bohm – Asked if the sex education books about puberty can be moved back to YA if there is a SOC asking for them to be returned. K. LaRocca stated that she could submit a SOC and the Board would make a decision. K. LaRocca clarified that library policy says that we are not going to have materials containing sexual conduct in the juvenile section.

A. Parr asked if we are in compliance with our own policy by following those steps. K. LaRocca reiterated that library policy for the juvenile collection states that we will not have materials with sexual conduct as defined by LA R.S. 25:225 in the juvenile collection. Staff have done their best to ensure this. If someone files a SOC and the Board determines that the item did not need to be relocated, then the Board can decide to move it back.

B. McHugh asked if a parent asks staff where books on sex education are located, where would they be directed. K. LaRocca explained that staff would look up the call number and let them know where it is shelved. Parents can also search the online catalog by subject and find the call number.

D. Statement of Concern Decision – *Red, White, and Royal Blue*

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *Red, White, and Royal Blue* by Casey McQuiston. The statement was submitted by Frances Smith, representing the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project. K. LaRocca read the statement aloud.

The recommended action by F. Smith 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 statutes [sic] for minors. 2021 Louisiana Laws Revised Statutes Title 14 - Criminal Law Not suitable for minors.”

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher’s summary, number of print copies STPL owns (5), total circulation on all print copies (105), total circulation on E-book (131), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Booklist*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Library Journal*, and *Shelf Awareness*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. A total of 1,768 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Adult Fiction section at STPL with Fic MacQu 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.

Summary of Committee Report: There is reference to sexual activity that is normal in a romance novel written for adults. The sexual activity is not described in detail and is mostly inferred. The intended audience for this book is adults. The bisexual theme may not be appealing to some members of our

community, but only teens with parental permission may check it out. The book shows a diverse group of new adults in a positive light. It shows a biracial and blended family in a positive way. It also shows how conflicts in relationships can be worked out.

Committee Recommendation: The book does not contain any of the conduct outlined in LA R.S. 14:91.11 and its current placement does not violate that law's requirements. While there is activity described in LA R.S. 25:225, the book is already shelved in Adult Fiction and is not accessible to minors holding a restricted or semi-restricted card.

Public comment:

Frances Smith, the patron who submitted the Statement of Concern for *Red, White, and Royal Blue*, was offered five minutes for public comment. F. Smith was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Jamie Segura – Covington, LA. Noted that F. Smith was not in attendance. Asked for the LBOC to require complainants to read the entire book. Noted that this book appears to be challenged solely because of LGBTQIA subject matter. Reminded the LBOC and council members that the U.S. Constitution has 4,543 words in it, none of which are God, Jesus, Christianity, or Bible. Stated that the Founding Fathers' intent was freedom of religion, not control by religion. Stated that she is a lesbian and did not learn to be who she is by reading about it in the library.

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. Stated the book is in the adult section and should stay in the adult section. Stated that the next book, *Little and Lion*, is in the YA section. Realizes that if it has sexual conduct the Board will need to move it to the adult section. Asked the Board to put books where they belong, trust the librarians' judgment, and do not be influenced by censorship attempts that have been made. Asked the Board to follow the law, but do not go beyond the law. Asked for F. Smith and others to rescind their SOC's.

Jean Wiggan – Concerned about why the library has to go through this process for an adult book. Stated that it infuriates her that this person is wasting all this time. Does not want anyone telling her what she can and cannot read.

B. McHugh stated there is no factual basis to justify this SOC, as it is already shelved in Adult Fiction. B. Taylor stated that it is an adult book written for adults and has always been in the adult section.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to affirm the committee's decision for the book *Red, White, and Royal Blue* to remain in the Adult Fiction section. It was seconded by A. Parr. All were in favor, none were opposed, and none were absent. Motion carried.

E. Statement of Concern Decision – *Little and Lion*

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *Little and Lion* by Brandy Colbert. The statement was submitted by Frances Smith, representing the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project. K. LaRocca read the statement aloud.

The recommended action by F. Smith is: "Restrict from minors from reading this book. It should be in a restricted area with only parental guidance."

Reason given: "A young teenager should not read this book. It promotes bad behavior for teens. Sex, drugs, and bad language."

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 (17), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Kirkus Reviews*, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, *BookPage*, *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, *Shelf Awareness*, and *Hornbook Guide to Children*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. A total of 1,523 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the YA Fiction section at STPL with YA Colb 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.

Summary of Committee Report: The focus of the book is relationships within a family and having a sibling with a mental illness. Includes brief descriptions of sexual activity that includes the normal explorations of older teens. There is not a lot of explicit detail in the descriptions and is less explicit than many television shows and movies. The book is about trust and shows when it is important to tell parents about a sibling's self-harm. The book portrays a multi-racial family without any negative stereotypes.

Committee Recommendation: The book does not contain any of the conduct outlined in LA R.S. 14:91.11 and its current placement does not violate that law's requirements. However, there is activity described in LA R.S. 25:225 (B)(3)(C). Therefore, the book should be moved to Adult Fiction where it is not accessible to minors holding a restricted or semi-restricted card.

Public Comment:

Frances Smith, the patron who submitted the Statement of Concern for *Little and Lion*, was offered five minutes for public comment. F. Smith was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Rachel Colonna – Stated that the book is a coming-of-age novel about love, family, and loyalty. Stated that the reason the book is being challenged is because it discusses gender identity and people of color. Stated that the book is appropriate for teens aged 14 to 17. Stated that she would like to honor Nex Benedict, a 16-year-old non-binary high school student, who was beaten and killed in a hate crime on February 8th. Asked for the book to remain in the YA section.

Jamie Segura – Covington, LA. Reiterated again that F. Smith is not in attendance. Stated that the novel is about a bisexual teen dealing with her brother's mental illness. Spoke of Nex Benedict's death and stated that if anyone thinks this cannot happen in St. Tammany Parish, they should read the news.

Stated that the threats are happening here, but people would rather hide books that might help children understand what is going on in the world.

There were two public comment cards from people who did not wish to speak and they were both in favor of the book remaining in the YA section.

A. Parr stated that the author did a phenomenal job of tackling so much in one book. He disagreed that the title should be moved. B. Taylor stated that she trusts the staff and professional librarians who are charged with following the law and agrees that it should be moved. B. McHugh agreed with B. Taylor and stated that it should be moved according to the law.

K. LaRocca clarified that the library is required to move the book if it is deemed sexually explicit by the LBOC in an open public meeting. E. Couvillon confirmed that is correct. K. LaRocca stated that if it is not deemed sexually explicit in an open public meeting, then it does not have to be moved. A. Parr asked if LA R.S. 25:225 was cited in the complaint. E. Couvillon stated that the complaint pre-dated the law, but we still have to comply with LA R.S. 25:225. A. Parr noted that we are complying with the law via the card policy. E. Couvillon confirmed that is correct. K. LaRocca confirmed that the library has a juvenile card type that does not allow the borrowing of YA materials.

E. Couvillon clarified that LA R.S. 25:225 does not require the title to be moved to the adult section if the Board deems it sexually explicit. The law only requires that the library have a card system in place that would restrict items for any parent who does not want their children to have access to materials that have been deemed sexually explicit by the LBOC. However, the LBOC did pass a policy that states that it would not include any sexually explicit materials in the Children's and YA sections.

B. McHugh asked for K. LaRocca to specify which passages in the book raise the concerns. K. LaRocca read some of the passages aloud. The text mentions groping through clothes and touching breasts. K. LaRocca noted that the committee initially did not think there was sexually explicit text as defined by LA R.S. 25:225 in the book, but after reading through some of the passages they decided that some text could fit that definition. B. McHugh spoke about this being a situation where one sentence out of 300 pages disqualifies the book as YA item. B. McHugh stated that the library is already in compliance with state law by having a restricted card system.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to counter the committee's recommendation and proposed that *Little and Lion* remain shelved in the YA section. It was seconded by A. Parr.

An additional public comment card was received after the public comment period closed. B. Taylor permitted the acceptance of additional public comment.

Roxanne Newman – Mandeville, LA. Suggested that the online catalog system could indicate that a particular book is ineligible for checkout based on the minor's card type restrictions, rather than moving the book. Stated that there are technological ways to make decisions for individual books.

B. Taylor restated the motion made by B. McHugh and the second by A. Parr. Roll call vote:

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

Motion carried.

F. Millage Renewal Request – Date and Rate

Discussion:

K. LaRocca reported that the library millage will expire on December 31, 2024. The millage term is 15 years. We currently receive 5.78 mils; 4.91 mils are used for operations and .87 mils are used for capital improvements to library buildings. The library's construction bonds that funded the construction of the Madisonville Branch will be paid off at the end of the current millage term. The library will also finish receiving funding for the capital projects list that was originally presented to the Parish Council. This means that we will no longer need approximately \$425,000 of bond payment each year and \$1,600,000 of capital improvement funding. We will reduce our millage a total of \$2,025,000 a year and ask for our renewal at a reduced millage rate of 4.91. The Board will need to pass a resolution requesting that the Parish Council put us on the ballot for the November 5, 2024, general election along with the reduced millage rate.

B. McHugh noted that over a 15-year period this would reduce the library's income by at least \$30,375,000. Stated that this is a strong move that shows good stewardship of public funds, as we are not going to ask for money that we do not need.

Public Comment:

Lisa Rustemeyer – Mandeville, LA. Spoke of the statistics being so impressive. Spoke of having library programs that adapt to the needs of parish residents. Concerned about the millage election being in November. Asked if there is a plan in case of low voter turnout.

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. Supports the change in the millage. Stated that he thinks the Board and library staff are doing a great job. Stated that he thinks it is a good idea to be on November ballot, as it saves taxpayers even more money.

Jamie Segura – Asked why we would reduce the millage. Stated that the average cost of a home in St. Tammany Parish is \$250,000 - \$300,000. Spoke of people complaining about crime going up after they vote against millages. Spoke of the growth of the Parish and how it will be a challenge to get a new tax if the library finds that more money is needed in the future. Stated it is time for the public to stand up and start paying for the services they receive.

Joan Simon – Covington, LA. Commended the Board and library staff for doing so much and being very reasonable. Stated that she has concerns, but she understands the situation and reasoning behind doing this.

K. LaRocca read the resolution aloud.

Vote: A. Parr moved to adopt the resolution to request a millage renewal at the November 5, 2024 general election at a reduced millage rate of 4.91 mils for 15 years. It was seconded by A. Shaw.

Roll call vote:

Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

G. Report - Cost Estimates for 2024 update on FF&E and capital projects

K. LaRocca reviewed the cost estimates for furniture, fixtures, equipment (FFE) and other projects. She referenced estimates provided by Denelle Wrightson, a library planning and design consultant. Projects listed were Causeway FFE, Covington storytime room acoustic work and rearrangement of areas, new Lacombe library building, Madisonville maker space, Mandeville FFE, Outreach FFE, Slidell FFE. K. LaRocca noted that the budgets were higher than the estimates in 2021 due to high inflation in furniture and shelving costs.

B. McHugh asked for K. LaRocca to describe what a maker space is for anyone who is not aware. K. LaRocca explained that it is a community resource allowing people to be inventive and creative by making things that they cannot make at home. Some examples of items in a maker space are sewing machines and 3D printers. T. DiMaggio toured East Baton Rouge Parish Library's maker spaces and she shared that they have a recording studio, laser cutter, a robust 3D printer called a work horse, sewing machines, circuit machines, a t-shirt heat press, and a button maker.

K. LaRocca referenced the cost estimate for an outreach vehicle. The information was provided by Michael Swendrowski with Specialty Vehicle Services. K. LaRocca described how it would be used to efficiently provide services to facilities while allowing patrons to have the option to select their own materials. This need was identified via feedback received from COAST. K. LaRocca reviewed the general features of the vehicle, which includes a hydraulic lift, five book trucks with covers, modular worksurface, LED lighting, WiFi, and a 360-degree camera system with DVR. The estimated cost is \$125,000 to \$135,000.

H. Report - Establishment of Outreach Service

T. DiMaggio reported that COAST will be the library's pilot partner for the beginning of outreach services. The two services are Books by Mail and Lobby Stop Service. Books by Mail is where books will be delivered by mail for those in the Meals on Wheels program who are homebound. The books will travel by U.S. Mail in pouches. The service will be at no cost to the recipient.

A. Parr asked when this will go into effect. T. DiMaggio estimated it will start later this year and explained that we still need to staff the outreach service facility and purchase furniture. For the Lobby Stop Service, the library will partner with COAST by bringing selections of materials for seniors to choose from to check out. This will be on a larger scale than the previous work that has been done with milk crates and personal vehicles. The new service will utilize an outreach vehicle, as previously discussed. T. DiMaggio referenced a preliminary diagram of the floor plan of the new outreach vehicle. It will take time to acquire the vehicle, as it will have to go through the bid process.

I. Resolution regarding fines, fees, and replacement costs for outreach service

Discussion:

After discussion and feedback, library administration decided that it will be necessary to waive fines, fees, and replacement costs for these two services. A resolution of the Board will be required for this. The cost of postage, supplies, furniture, the outreach vehicle, and an opening day collection have been added to the budget. T. DiMaggio read the resolution aloud.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: A. Parr moved to approve the resolution to waive fines, fees, and replacement costs for materials borrowed through the Books by Mail and Lobby Stop outreach services. It was seconded by A. Shaw.
Roll call vote:

Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

J. Designation of Capital Funds – Land for Lacombe Replacement

Discussion:

K. LaRocca reported that one of the major projects on the library's Capital Plan is the replacement of one small branch. The current Lacombe Branch building is made of sheet metal that is rusting and compromising the integrity of the building. Lot 83 of Lacombe Park Subdivision is a piece of vacant land available on the south side of Highway 190 and it backs up to the Tammany Trace. It is near both the Chahta-Ima Elementary School and Bayou Lacombe Middle School. The lot is rectangular and would be able to support a 6,000 – 7,000 square foot building with ample space for outdoor areas. K. LaRocca provided the Board with the appraisal of the land and additional relevant information. The appraisal price is \$180,000. K. LaRocca noted that we would offer the appraisal price but set aside \$10,000 for any closing costs. A total of \$190,000 would need to be dedicated to this capital purchase. K. LaRocca referenced the Capital Projects spreadsheet and the Capital Funds balance sheet, showing that there are sufficient capital funds for this purchase.

Joe Impastato, St. Tammany Parish Councilman for District 7, was in attendance and requested to speak. Stated that he has enjoyed the library since he was a child. Stated that the people of Lacombe love their library and will be grateful for this project. He complimented the Lacombe library staff. Stated that K. LaRocca did an amazing job presenting the budget to the Finance Committee and that she was complimented by Parish Council members who were in attendance. Spoke in favor of the sensory rooms. Commended the Board on their approach to addressing the millage renewal and stated that it was the right move. Reiterated that Lacombe will be eternally grateful for a new library and he appreciates the Board's consideration.

B. Taylor stated that the land is perfect, has beautiful trees, and is very visible on Highway 190. A. Parr agreed and noted that it is in a great flood zone. B. Taylor thanked J. Impastato for bringing the land to their attention. B. McHugh asked what will happen to the existing site and could it be sold to offset some of the costs. J. Impastato explained that they are trying to create a master plan for that entire area. Stated he would like that property to tie into the Recreation District, if possible. He noted that Lacombe lacks opportunities for kids. B. McHugh referenced the 51 pages of documentation that the Board has reviewed in relation to this new property and assured the public that it has been thoroughly analyzed.

Public Comment:

Kevin Marino – Agrees that it is a great property in a great part of town that will help revitalize the community. Asked how this will be funded going forward with the reduced millage in mind. Spoke of the Bedico Creek and Terra Bella areas being far from the Madisonville Branch and hopes that funds would be available in the future to continue to serve all parts of St. Tammany Parish.

In response to K. Marino's question regarding how this project will be funded with the reduced millage, K. LaRocca explained that all of the funding for these items on the Capital Projects list are based on receiving the library's millage from property taxes that are due at the end of 2024. This will fund the library's operations through the end of 2025, even if the millage renewal does not pass in November 2024. K. LaRocca stated that it is important to be a good steward of the funding that we are given and to make sure that we can complete the projects that we have planned.

Ruth Terry Sipos – Abita Springs, LA. Spoke highly of this project. Spoke about libraries being such a critical resource after Hurricane Katrina, but branch replacement plans did not pan out at that time. Stated that it is marvelous that Lacombe will get a new branch.

Vote: A. Parr moved to adopt the resolution to purchase 2.07 acres of vacant land, being Square 83, Lacombe Park Subdivision, St. Tammany Parish, LA. It was seconded by A. Shaw. Roll call vote:

Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

K. Spring 2024 Budget Amendment

Discussion:

K. LaRocca presented the 2024 Spring Budget Amendment. She noted that the original 2024 budget was produced in July of 2023. This amendment adjusts based on how the library ended the 2023 fiscal year, increased supply costs, and projects such as a new Outreach Branch/Service. Most of the increases and decreases in the individual budget lines are due to these activities. K. LaRocca gave explanations for each budget line adjustment.

K. LaRocca forecasted an increase in revenue of \$170,784 due primarily to more Ad Valorem funds as part of normal growth and an increase in fines and fees. The 2024 Spring Budget Amendment shows an increase in expenditures of \$410,750 over the original budgeted expenditures for 2024 to cover the increased costs of supplies, health insurance, costs associated with the addition of the outreach facility, and a planned usage of savings to get the new outreach service off of the ground. K. LaRocca noted the outreach furniture, vehicle, and opening day collection that was discussed earlier under Long-Term Capital Expenditures. Aside from the planned usage of savings, the operational portion of the budget is balanced.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

K LaRocca read the resolution aloud.

Vote: A. Parr moved to adopt the Spring 2024 Budget Amendment resolution. It was seconded by B. McHugh. Roll call vote:

Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

L. Alcohol Request – Slidell Art League

Discussion:

K. LaRocca reported that the Slidell Art League will hold a reception on May 10th at 7:00 p.m. where the art that has been on show throughout the month of April will be evaluated for awards. The Slidell Art League is requesting that they serve wine. A certified bartender will be in charge of the wine. A vote of the Board is required to allow the request for alcohol. B. McHugh asked what branch will host this event and what day of the week will it be held. K. LaRocca stated that it is at the Slidell Branch on a Friday night when the branch is closed.

Public Comment: There's no public comment.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to approve the alcohol request for the Slidell Art League. It was seconded by A. Shaw. All were in favor, none were opposed, and none were absent. Motion carried.

M. Surplus Property Resolution

Discussion:

T. DiMaggio reported that in November 2023 a new truck for the Maintenance Department was purchased. It replaced an older vehicle that was purchased in 2008. The vehicle is in fair condition. A resolution is required so the item can be sold at the Government Surplus auction on March 14, 2024, at ServCorp Auctions in Slidell, LA.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

T. DiMaggio read the resolution aloud.

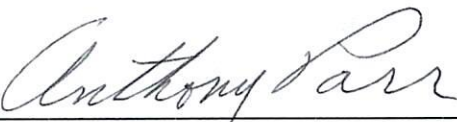
Vote: C. Butler moved to adopt the resolution to declare certain moveable property surplus and to authorize its disposition. It was seconded by A. Shaw. Roll call vote:

Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

3. Adjournment

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



Anthony Parr, Secretary