

**St. Tammany Parish Library  
Board of Control Special Meeting / Rules and Regulations Committee Meeting  
June 23, 2025  
St. Tammany Parish Council Chambers  
21490 Koop Dr.,  
Mandeville, LA 70471  
10:00 A.M.**

**MINUTES**

The meeting was scheduled as a Rules and Regulations Committee meeting. Due to a quorum of the Library Board of Control (LBOC), the meeting was held as a special board meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Ann Shaw, President. Kelly LaRocca, Director, called the roll and declared that a quorum was present.

**Present (5):** Charles (Chuck) Branton, Councilman Jeff Corbin (designated by Parish President Mike Cooper), Jill Kesler, Tamarah Myers, Ann Shaw

**Absent (2):** Dinah Thanars, Travis Thompson

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

C. Branton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Branton expressed concern regarding the current handling of emails sent to the LBOC email address (LBOC@stpl.us). He stated that the emails are initially received by Library Administration and subsequently forwarded to board members by a staff member. He stated that such communications should be sent directly to board members without staff involvement. He was concerned that emails are screened prior to forwarding to board members. He noted that this also creates delays in the timely receipt of emails addressed to the LBOC. He questioned whether he has received all emails addressed to the LBOC since his appointment on February 6, 2025, and requested that all such emails be provided to him so he can verify receipt and identify any gaps.

K. LaRocca clarified that emails sent to a board member's personalized individual STPL email address (e.g., charles.branton@stpl.us) are delivered directly to their respective inboxes without staff involvement. Only emails sent to the general LBOC address (LBOC@stpl.us) are routed by staff. After further discussion, it was agreed that the I.T. Department would resolve the issue by configuring the LBOC emails to be routed directly to each board member's personalized individual STPL email address. Going forward, emails addressed to LBOC@stpl.us will be delivered directly to board members and will no longer be routed through Library Administration staff.

A member of the public asked if they could offer public comment even though this topic was not on the agenda. A. Shaw permitted the public comment.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Jamie Segura – Covington, LA. She stated that there is no expectation of confidentiality or privacy by a member of a public body and all emails are obtainable through a public records request. She agreed with C. Branton that the LBOC emails should be delivered in a timely manner. She suggested including a disclaimer at the beginning of meetings and on the website to inform the public on how to contact board members by email individually and as a whole.

A. Shaw explained the meeting rules and 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.

**1. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Section 407 – Statements of Concern About Library Resources**

K. LaRocca reviewed Section 407 and noted the updates highlighted in yellow, which were added based on discussion from the previous Rules and Regulations Committee meeting on June 16, 2025. She noted that the title of the resource in question has been moved to the first page of the Statement of Concern (SOC) form.

C. Branton asked if the Board is required to read the entire book if it is being challenged for sexually explicit material and the specific page numbers are noted. E. Couvillon explained that if the Board chooses to remove the book from the library's collection, the U.S. Supreme Court's *Pico* decision requires that the book be read in its entirety. If the Board chooses to move the book to the Adult section, reading the entire book may not be necessary.

There was more discussion regarding page numbers. The committee agreed to add a statement from the policy to the SOC form, placing it after the question requesting specific page numbers on page two. The statement should read as follows: "Statements of Concern that are not filled out completely or that do not cite page numbers (or scenes or sections if there are no page numbers) will not be considered and will be returned to you." There was discussion regarding the absence of page numbers in graphic novels, and C. Branton suggested adding "Graphic Novels" as one of the resource options on page one of the form.

**PUBLIC COMMENT #1:**

Jamie Segura – She agreed with the policy, particularly the suggested statement: "If the complainant does not show up to the meeting, the concern is thrown out."

James Prentice – He spoke about the psychological toll of reviewing certain materials. He noted he recently submitted five SOC's concerning graphic novels in the teen section, which he believes contain disturbing content. He raised concerns about citing content without page numbers and emphasized that disturbing material extends beyond sexual content.

Lisa Rustemeyer – Mandeville, LA. She expressed concern that board members may not have received her email and asked for confirmation. The board members confirmed they had received her email. She spoke about the potential for book bans and emphasized the importance of supporting readers' freedom to choose what they read.



Jean Wiggan – Abita Springs, LA. She appreciates the idea of dismissing SOC's if the submitter does not attend the board meeting but is concerned about its fairness in cases where someone may be out of town.

K. LaRocca explained that the policy currently allows for a written statement to be accepted if the person cannot appear themselves. C. Branton suggested setting a proposed date for SOC review and allowing the submitter a specified timeframe to respond and agree upon a date. He also suggested allowing the submitter to appoint a designated representative to speak on their behalf.

Becky Bohm – Mandeville, LA. She agreed that page numbers are helpful when reviewing an SOC but stated they should not be required, as a single page may not convey the correct context. She noted that some book concerns relate to shelf placement rather than content, and that submitters may not include page numbers if they have no objections to the book's content.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The committee discussed the input provided by B. Bohm regarding SOC's submitted for shelf placement rather than content. E. Couvillon recommended adding phrasing to the form that addresses such circumstances.

E. Couvillon noted that the phrase, "If the complainant does not attend the meeting, the concern is dismissed," is not included in the current draft of Section 407, and asked whether the committee would like it formally drafted for inclusion in the policy for Board approval. C. Branton confirmed, reiterating that if the complainant is not present on the agreed-upon date, the SOC will be dismissed unless the complainant designates a representative in writing to speak on their behalf or submits a written statement. The complainant's written statement will be part of the record and included in the board meeting packet. E. Couvillon will draft phrasing to be added to Part C2 of Section 407.

A member of the public asked if they could offer additional public comment. A. Shaw permitted the public comment.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT #2:**

James Prentice – Regarding situations in which a patron submits three or more SOC's, he asked whether the Board could review multiple SOC's at the same meeting rather than presenting each book at a separate meeting.

C. Branton suggested that multiple SOC's could be considered under a single agenda item, with the Board allocating a specific amount of time for the submitter to present their case. E. Couvillon advised that drafting the policy will take some time to ensure full compliance with Louisiana's Open Meetings law.

#### **B. Section 209 – Limits of Library Use – B. Overdue Fees**

K. LaRocca reviewed the highlighted updates to Section 209 – Limits of Library Use – B. Overdue Fees, which were added following discussion from the previous Rules and Regulations Committee meeting on June 16, 2025.

C. Branton stated that the updates are a fair representation of what was discussed at the previous meeting and indicated he had no concerns.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Jamie Segura – She expressed concern about the \$0.10 per day fines and suggested that the amount should be increased. K. LaRocca explained that we are one of the only libraries in the area that still charges fines and we do not want fines to be a barrier to service. J. Segura noted that there have been books that have been checked out and not returned or have been stolen because a patron did not like the content in the book.

**DISCUSSION:**

The committee agreed to remove the phrase “and fines addressed or paid” from the policy language in the first bullet point.

**C. Section 209 – Limits of Library Use – C. Other Fees**

K. LaRocca reviewed the highlighted updates to Section 209 – Limits of Library Use – C. Other Fees, which were added following discussion from the previous Rules and Regulations Committee meeting on June 16, 2025. Some of the updates codify procedures that have been in practice. New to the policy is the addition of fees for printing from mobile devices, the exception to fees for printing by United States Military active duty service members, reservists, veterans, members of the Louisiana National Guard, and the exception to damaged item fees or replacement costs for Books By Mail and Lobby Stop services. E. Couvillon suggested moving the Books By Mail and Lobby Stop exception to the third bullet point.

**PUBLIC COMMENT #1:** There was no public comment.

**DISCUSSION:**

A. Shaw revisited the topic of out-of-parish fees, noting the current annual fee is \$30. C. Branton proposed raising the fee to \$75–\$100. K. LaRocca is awaiting information from the Assessor’s Office on average property tax costs and reported that 275 of 80,000 cardholders are out-of-parish. J. Kesler asked if out-of-parish patrons can submit an SOC. E. Couvillon confirmed that only St. Tammany Parish residents can submit SOC’s.

T. Myers asked if the library could create signs to acknowledge and thank veterans, as well as inform them about the services the library offers. K. LaRocca confirmed yes. C. Branton requested that a presentation be added to the agenda for the July board meeting and that veterans from the VFW, DAV, and other groups be invited to attend. A. Shaw asked if the entire board could support or sponsor the resolution regarding the services for veterans. E. Couvillon explained that they could not, as it would amount to taking a vote without actually voting.

E. Couvillon and the committee discussed how to determine sponsorship for resolutions once they are drafted by Administration. C. Branton stated that while the drafting is done by Administration, the board member who suggested the idea should be considered a sponsor. E. Couvillon advised the committee to determine who should be designated as the sponsors for the resolutions drafted from today’s discussion.



Before proceeding, J. Corbin stated that he does not believe the \$30 fee for out-of-parish patrons is unreasonable. While agreeing that the primary focus should remain on St. Tammany Parish residents, he noted that since property taxes are based on a single home shared among household members, a \$30 per person fee is fair. C. Branton reiterated that the library is here to serve the citizens of St. Tammany and is not here to subsidize other Parishes' residents.

K. LaRocca stated that she will conduct further research on out-of-parish fees by speaking with the Assessor's Office and other library directors, and will report back to the Board. C. Branton agreed to be listed as a sponsor for the resolution regarding no fees for faxing and printing for veterans and active duty military.

The discussion prompted public comment.

**PUBLIC COMMENT #2:**

Jean Wiggan – She agreed with J. Corbin that \$30 is enough for the out-of-parish fee.

Jamie Segura – While she agrees there should be a fee for out-of-parish patrons, she believes \$100 may be too high and \$30 too low.

Becky Bohm – She agrees that there should be a fee, but \$100 may be too high. She suggested that college students be exempt.

Lisa Rustemeyer – She suggested making a distinction between out-of-state and out of parish. She agrees that the \$30 fee is sufficient.

Daphne Misuraca – Mandeville, LA. She agreed with C. Branton that the fee should be increased. She noted that charging \$75 for 275 out-of-parish patrons would generate \$20,625, compared to \$8,250 at the current \$30 rate.

J. Kesler suggested a \$50 out-of-parish fee as a compromise. K. LaRocca stated that the committee will continue the fee discussion at a future meeting and will proceed with drafting the other updates to present at the next regular LBOC meeting.

**2. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Section 106 – E or F – Code of Conduct**

A. Shaw presented a proposed Code of Conduct for the LBOC for the committee's review and discussion. She explained that, given the recent high turnover of board members, it is an appropriate time to propose a framework for LBOC member conduct. She noted that it is critical for LBOC members to operate within the scope of their board membership to better serve the community, the library, and fellow board members. She added that respect for each other and fellow St. Tammany Parish citizens is essential for the Board to function congenially as one body. She emphasized that the Code of Conduct is not a final version, but an initial draft open to discussion and feedback from the Board and the public.

**DISCUSSION:**

C. Branton raised several concerns with the proposed policy and stated that he is opposed to its adoption. He considers the suggestion that the Board could remove a member from the LBOC akin to a threat, noting that only the Parish Council has the authority to appoint or remove Board members. A. Shaw stated that was not her intent. C. Branton is concerned with requiring board members to submit written requests to the Director for information and requiring a resolution. He stated that it gives the impression that the Board works for the staff, rather than the staff working for the Board and the citizens of St. Tammany Parish.

C. Branton suggested limiting committee meetings to three board members so that there is no quorum of the Board. He stated that, in his opinion, this meeting constituted a "walking quorum." E. Couvillon clarified for the record that this meeting was properly noticed as a special board meeting due to a quorum of the Board and does not violate Louisiana's Open Meetings law.

C. Branton stated that all board members are already governed by a Code of Ethics. He stated that the Board serves at the pleasure of the Parish Council and that the Council should be the one to write a Code of Conduct if they believe it is necessary. C. Branton suggested the policy stifles free speech and honest conversations with the public and officials. A. Shaw stated that was not her intent in proposing the policy.

**MOTION:** C. Branton moved to postpone the Code of Conduct discussion until the July 28, 2025, regular LBOC meeting. It was seconded by J. Kesler. E. Couvillon advised that since there is a procedural motion and a second to postpone the discussion, the public comment time will be one minute per speaker.

T. Myers stated that she wanted to highlight A. Shaw's intent behind the proposed Code of Conduct and inquired about the document's origin. A. Shaw explained that the document was sent to her as a base draft intended to be expanded upon to meet the Board's needs, since it did not come from another public library.

J. Kesler noted that the proposed policy states that requests for information must be submitted in writing and will be provided upon approval. She asked what happens if K. LaRocca or A. Shaw deny a request. She is concerned about being restricted from accessing information necessary to make informed voting decisions. A. Shaw responded that was not the intent of the policy.

C. Branton stated that the policy enables restrictive behaviors that limit and eradicate free speech, and he considers this an implicit threat. He stated that the Board has no authority to threaten a board member with removal from the LBOC for failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.

J. Corbin raised a point of order, stating that there was a motion and a second on the floor to postpone, and noted that the current discussion was not related to the motion to postpone.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Jamie Segura – She agrees with the postponement. She stated that, although she and A. Shaw do not always agree, she believes A. Shaw proposed the Code of Conduct with good intentions. She stated that the LBOC is a Board, not an employer. C. Branton corrected J. Segura and referenced a portion of Louisiana law, quoting, "The Library Board shall employ..." E. Couvillon confirmed that the quote is from



LA R.S. 25:215. J. Segura agreed that board members should direct information requests to the Director rather than individual staff members.

James Prentice – He stated that he is the proud husband of Jillian Kesler. He quoted Proverbs 31:10. He stated the expenditures and policies are what the LBOC is in charge of. He stated that J. Kesler has been responsible for over 50% of the questions asked by the LBOC.

Lisa Rustemeyer – She stated that it is a good method to look at what other boards and libraries do and it is not a bad thing for the LBOC to have its own internal governing system. She disagreed that the LBOC serves “at the pleasure” of the Parish Council and questioned whether that is a legally established point.

Daphne Misuraca – She agreed with C. Branton’s comments. She stated that the Code of Ethics already contains what the Board should and should not do. She stated that while A. Shaw responded it was “not the intent,” the fact that A. Shaw, K. LaRocca, and E. Couvillon had collectively reviewed the policy suggests that it was their intent to pass the policy. She does not agree with the postponement and recommends the policy be removed from consideration.

C. Branton questioned why no other board members were involved in the discussion of this process and asked that an explanation be given to the Board and the public, since legal counsel was involved.

E. Couvillon clarified that the proposed policy was brought to the Rules and Regulations Committee for discussion only, not a vote, and that this meeting serves as the appropriate forum. She explained that her role was consistent with past practice, such as when she reviewed resolutions with C. Branton upon his appointment to the Board. She advised that it is appropriate for A. Shaw or any Board member to consult legal counsel, noting that she routinely facilitates this process for both Board and Parish Council members.

C. Branton stated that he appreciates E. Couvillon covering for A. Shaw. He acknowledged that he met with E. Couvillon to ask legal questions regarding previous resolutions. He continued to raise the concern that no other board members were involved in drafting the Code of Conduct and that the policy prohibits the Board from getting requested information. A. Shaw stated that the proposed policy does not prevent the Board from getting information, rather it encourages Board members to be considerate when asking for information.

C. Branton again asked why other board members were not included. As E. Couvillon began to respond, C. Branton stated that he did not direct his question to legal counsel and asked for A. Shaw to respond. A. Shaw stated that she was working on this herself, just as C. Branton had worked on resolutions, met with legal counsel, and then presented those resolutions.

E. Couvillon emphasized that a public forum that has been properly noticed is the proper place to have such discussions. A. Shaw stated that she has acted with the purest of intent. C. Branton asked A. Shaw if she would agree to withdraw this policy proposal. A. Shaw stated she does not agree to that at this time, but may consider it.

Maureen O’Brien – Mandeville, LA. She asked under what circumstances an LBOC member could be denied a request for information. She stated that the way it is written struck her as odd, though she

acknowledged A. Shaw clarified that was not the intent. She also questioned whether the Rules and Regulations Committee has the authority to block agenda items and suggested holding meetings in the evening to encourage greater public participation.

#### DISCUSSION:

K. LaRocca explained that the Rules and Regulations Committee meeting times depend on the availability of the Council Chambers and she also tries to accommodate board members' schedules. She explained that the committee meetings are meant to focus on refining policy language so documents can be presented to the Board in polished form, minimizing corrections during regular board meetings and allowing more time for discussion and public comment before the vote.

T. Myers asked E. Couvillon whether a Code of Conduct is necessary or if the existing Ethics policy is sufficient. E. Couvillon explained that the Louisiana Code of Ethics addresses economic interests, not conduct or professionalism. In response to further questions from T. Myers, E. Couvillon stated that previous library boards have not had a Code of Conduct, and though not required, several other boards she advises have adopted Codes of Conduct or Codes of Professionalism.

C. Branton again referenced the Louisiana Code of Ethics. E. Couvillon confirmed that it is state law and must be followed, but it differs from a Code of Professionalism. C. Branton stated that the proposed policy is framed as a Code of Conduct. He then called for the vote.


**ROLL CALL VOTE:** Branton: Yes Corbin: Yes Kesler: Yes Myers: Yes  
Thanars: Absent Thompson: Absent Shaw: Yes

**RESULT:** Motion to postpone discussion of the proposed Code of Conduct until the July 28, 2025, regular LBOC meeting carried. (Yes - 5 | Absent - 2)

#### 1. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by C. Branton and was seconded by T. Myers. All were in favor, none were opposed, and two were absent. Motion carried.

APPROVAL:



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