

**St. Tammany Parish Library  
Board of Control Meeting  
April 28, 2025  
St. Tammany Parish Council Chambers  
21490 Koop Dr.,  
Mandeville, LA 70471  
6:30 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

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

**PRESENT (6):** Charles (Chuck) Branton, Councilman Jeff Corbin (designated by Parish President Mike Cooper to serve in his stead), Jill Kesler, Tamarah Myers, Ann Shaw, Dinah Thanars

**ABSENT (0):** None

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

T. Myers led the Pledge of Allegiance.

A. Shaw acknowledged the successful renewal of the library's millage, which secures funding for the next 15 years. She expressed gratitude to the voters of St. Tammany Parish, as well as Library Administration, staff, and Library Board of Control (LBOC) for their efforts in educating the community.

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. Comments on procedural motions are limited to one minute. In the case of a Statement of Concern (SOC) decision, the person who filed the Statement of Concern is given five minutes to speak.

**1. Recognition and thanks for service to the Library Board of Control – Rev. Robert Belknap, Carmen Butler, Pam Georges, Carole Gillio, William McHugh, Anthony Parr, Rebecca Taylor**

A. Shaw recognized the service and contributions of past board members. In appreciation of their dedication, each was presented with a commemorative plaque. Each former board member shared brief remarks.

Rev. Robert Belknap expressed that it was an honor to serve on the Board and emphasized the importance of public service. He extended his gratitude to K. LaRocca for her time and effort, and remarked that the library system is among the best in the country. He complimented the Genealogy section at the Covington Branch.

Carmen Butler expressed gratitude to God for the opportunity to serve. She shared that she was blessed with parents who led by example. She thanked former Parish Council member T.J. Smith, Jr. for appointing her to the LBOC. She thanked K. LaRocca, staff, and the LBOC for their professionalism, hard work, love, and kindness.

Pam Georges expressed gratitude for her time on the Board, noting that touring the library branches opened her eyes to all of the valuable services and programs offered, especially in rural areas. She hopes that both sides of recent issues can work together. She stated that A. Shaw has been a wonderful driving force on the Board, and described K. LaRocca as absolutely incredible.

T. Myers accepted Carole Gillio's plaque on her behalf. A. Shaw stated that C. Gillio was unable to attend, but hopes to serve again in the future.

Bill McHugh stated that it was an honor to serve on the Board and a privilege to cover the meetings during his time writing for *The St. Tammany Farmer*. He praised the library for its institutional integrity. He commended K. LaRocca for her skills in managing the library amidst tremendous challenges, and he hopes this will be duly recognized during her annual evaluation. He urged the Board to set aside their personal beliefs to ensure that the library remains an unbiased, apolitical, and unrestricted resource.

Anthony Parr expressed gratitude for the recognition of his service on the Board. He spoke of working alongside library staff to ensure that the library remains a sanctuary of learning and community connection. He emphasized that diversity strengthens us and stories help bridge divides. He accepts this honor as a symbol of what he and others have accomplished together.

Rebecca Taylor reflected on her 25 years as a librarian and 16 years on the Board, describing the experience as enjoyable, fulfilling, challenging, and at times painful. She acknowledged how exceptional the St. Tammany Parish Library system is today. She read the library's mission and vision statements, reminding the Board of their duty to remain politically neutral and to act in the best interest of the library. She praised the Library Director and the Assistant Directors for their professionalism, years of experience, and dedication to the betterment of the library.

## **2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Library Board of Control meeting that was held on March 24th, 2025**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Sonnet Ireland – Slidell, LA. She complimented the thoroughness of the minutes. She referenced D. Cogle's mention of C. Branton's qualifications at the last meeting and appreciated that he recognized the importance of having a Master's in Library and Information Science (MLIS) and relevant experience. She noted that the three individuals who manage the library all hold an MLIS and have years of experience. She complimented K. LaRocca's leadership and millage renewal efforts, noting that some of the speaking engagements K. LaRocca attended included individuals who actively wished her harm.

A. Shaw reminded S. Ireland that her comments must be related to edits or corrections to the minutes. J. Bolner stated that it is appropriate to tailor comments to the subject on the agenda, which is whether or not the minutes accurately reflect what took place at the prior meeting. S. Ireland asked why D. Cogle was not stopped from speaking at the last meeting when he spoke about a situation with a newspaper and believes that everyone should be held to the same standards.

Becky Bohm – Mandeville, LA. She referenced a comment that C. Branton made at the last meeting regarding posting nasty comments on social media. She agreed with him and showed a poster and t-shirt containing recent negative social media posts aimed at her and others who attend the LBOC



meetings. C. Branton raised a Point of Order, stating that B. Bohm's comments were not related to corrections to the minutes. A. Shaw concurred, restored order, and asked for discussion from the Board.

**DISCUSSION:** There were no suggested corrections to the minutes.

**MOTION #1:** J. Corbin moved to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2025, LBOC meeting. It was seconded by C. Branton.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** Branton: Yes Corbin: Abstained Kesler: No Myers: Yes Thanars: Abstained Shaw: Yes

**RESULT:** Motion failed due to lack of a majority of affirmative votes. (Yes – 3 | No – 1 | Abstained – 2)

**MOTION #2:** C. Branton moved to postpone approval of the minutes until the next board meeting. It was seconded by J. Kesler. A. Shaw asked if there were any discrepancies in the minutes that need to be corrected. J. Kesler answered yes.

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

**RESULT:** Motion to postpone carried. (Unanimous 6-0)

### 3. NEW BUSINESS

#### A. Financial Report – March 2025

K. LaRocca reported that no additional Ad Valorem Revenue or State Revenue Sharing has been received since February. Two more payments of State Revenue Sharing are expected before the end of the year. K. LaRocca noted that the Ad Valorem Tax is restored in this report, as the millage was renewed and funds will be collected for 2025. Ad Valorem Revenue and State Revenue Sharing funds are credited to us in twelfths on the report, though all expected Ad Valorem Revenue has been received.

J. Kesler asked where the Donations came from. K. LaRocca answered the Friends of the Library and the Library Foundation donated money for the musical flowers at the Covington Branch, signs, mailers, and banners for the millage renewal campaign.

K. LaRocca reviewed the revenues and expenditures. The budget percentage for this point in the year should be 25%. Revenues are at 25.18% and expenditures are at 23.36%. K. LaRocca gave explanations for any lines that were over or under 25%. Some lines are expended early or late in the year, depending on when the expenses are due, but they will be in balance by the end of the year. Noteworthy expenditure line explanations are as follows: Workers Compensation Expense is at 42.79% due to paying the first portion of the year. The Utilities-Gas line is at 43.03% due to cold weather in the early part of the year. Vehicle Repairs is at 37.49% due to purchasing new tires for one of the vehicles. The Plumbing, Heating, and A/C line is at 51.73% due to paying for the HVAC annual contracts for the Madisonville, Covington, and Slidell branches. The Consultants line is at 64% due to the book hauler vehicle consultant and for millage renewal consulting with Sam Caruso.

C. Branton asked if Sam Caruso is paid in full and K. LaRocca confirmed that is correct. The Web Design Consultant line is at 89.33% due to paying for the majority of our website maintenance for the year. The

Lease/Purchase Books line is at 96.19% due to paying for the leased books for the year. Half of the Juvenile Reference books have been purchased for the year. The Microfilm line has been expended for the year. The outreach vehicle has been purchased.

C. Branton asked if the vehicle is in use. K. LaRocca answered yes and explained that it is for the Mobile Library Branch. She would like to bring the vehicle to a board meeting for the Board to view. J. Kesler asked if a map of where the vehicle is visiting will be posted. K. LaRocca clarified that it is not a bookmobile for patrons to browse materials, but an outreach vehicle that serves COAST and nursing facilities. She also mentioned the Books By Mail service that the Mobile Library provides. T. Myers asked how facilities will access and request Mobile Library services. K. LaRocca explained that facilities will have the option to request our services and clarified that lobby stop service involves bringing carts of books into a facility's lobby to create a pop-up-style library. T. DiMaggio added that the Mobile Library Branch Manager will be proactively calling various facilities to offer services. J. Kesler asked how will staff know what topics and types of books to stock on the truck. K. LaRocca explained that COAST clients were surveyed about what books, movies, and music they are interested in borrowing. If a desired book is not available on the truck, patrons can always request it, and staff will place a hold on the item to ensure it is delivered to them.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Sonnet Ireland – She asked if there was an increase in vehicle insurance due to the new Mobile Library vehicle. K. LaRocca answered that she does not have that information but will provide it at the next meeting. S. Ireland asked about the cost of being on the election ballot. K. LaRocca explained that while \$250,000 was budgeted for that purpose, the final cost is expected to be lower since we were not the only item on the ballot. S. Ireland referenced the New Adult section and asked if there will eventually be an Elder Adult section. K. LaRocca answered no. S. Ireland asked if the library receives grants and how will they pay for certain services since the State Library can no longer pay for grants.

K. LaRocca stated that we have received grants from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH) for adult programs, and we have received grants for technology. One area that could be affected is the costs associated with Interlibrary Loans, which currently incur no shipping costs due to use of the state route delivery system. Another area that could be impacted is database access, as some databases are currently provided at no cost through the State Library. K. LaRocca explained that we would need to look at the usage statistics to determine which databases to keep.

**DISCUSSION:** There was no additional Board discussion.

**MOTION:** T. Myers moved to approve the March 2025 Financial Report. It was seconded by D. Thanars.

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

**RESULT:** Motion to approve carried. (Unanimous 6-0)

**B. Director's Report**

K. LaRocca reported that construction is expected to begin on the elevator at the Technical Services building in the next couple of weeks. For National Library Week, the library will hold its Food for Fines



promotion, allowing patrons to donate non-perishable items to pay for overdue fines at a rate of \$1 per item.

Marketing and Outreach – Staff promoted the library on The Lake and The Highway Radio stations. Staff provided outreach to the American Legion Post 16, GenFest 2025, Bayou Lacombe Republican Women's Luncheon, Bayou Lacombe Museum Earth Day, "Fairy Tale Day" at Whispering Forest, Our Lady of Lourdes Easter event, "Ready, Start, Grow" event, Pinwheel Walk, and the Special Needs Expo. Staff performed storytime at A-Z Preschool, Mayfield Elementary School, Lacombe Mandeville Headstart, Chahta-Ima Elementary, and Apple Tree Preschool & Learning Center.

Professional Development – Staff attended Computers in Libraries, A.I.-Driven Networking, Security, and Data Summit, Leadership Northshore Environmental Day, Leadership Northshore Judicial System Day, Faye B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival, and a "Confidence in the Workplace" webinar.

The Mobile Library is piloting the "Lobby Stop" service to COAST facilities before expanding to assisted living and nursing facilities across the parish. The Friends of the Slidell Library held a tree planting in conjunction with Keep Slidell Beautiful and broke ground on the reading garden at the Slidell Branch. The St. Tammany Library Foundation held their annual Distinguished Speaker Series event on April 6<sup>th</sup>.

K. LaRocca reported on contract renewals. The library received six new public records requests since the last board meeting. Four were answered, one has been turned over to the District Attorney's Office, and one is being collected. Two new statements of concern were filed, bringing the total to 112 SOC's on 109 titles.

Strategic Planning Update – T. DiMaggio reported that the Sensory Calming room is set up and open to the public at the Covington Branch. She described the features of the room. J. Corbin asked whether staff will be monitoring the room's usage to assess its return on investment, given that it is a valuable space. T. DiMaggio answered yes, the Reference Librarian and staff monitor the area. She clarified that the calming room will be piloted for one year, after which it can revert to a study room if deemed unnecessary.

J. Corbin was granted a moment of personal privilege to express concern about a sign displayed by an audience member that, in his view, personally attacked him by name. He questioned its permissibility and requested its removal, but after discussion, it appeared that no further action was taken. The meeting resumed with A. Shaw calling it back to order and K. LaRocca proceeding with the Director's Report.

K. LaRocca gave an update on the transition of materials. Two books were moved to Adult Fiction due to sexual conduct, and 89 books will remain in Teen Fiction due to not containing sexual conduct. K. LaRocca reviewed the March 2025 and year-to-date service statistics. She noted that the original packet contained incorrect statistics for March, but has since been corrected.

### **C. Capital Projects Report**

K. LaRocca gave a report on upcoming capital projects. She reviewed the capital projects spreadsheet and gave a summary of each project. The following projects were completed or are currently under construction for 2025: Covington Branch exterior renovations, Technology upgrade (people counters),

and the elevator installation at the Technical Services building will begin soon. The following projects remain on the capital projects list: Mandeville renovation, technology upgrade (RFID – Radio Frequency Identification), Lacombe replacement, Slidell expansion/renovation/roof replacement. K. LaRocca reviewed the details of remaining projects.

Mandeville Branch renovation – Originally budgeted at \$200,000 in 2022, planned improvements include carpet, data lines, restrooms, and ADA front entrance upgrades. After architectural review, additional funds are needed, with the lowest bid at \$290,000. Carpet replacement may be deferred, but entrance flooding remains a priority with no cost-saving options for that task. K. LaRocca noted that \$49,000 in unallocated funds from higher 2024 interest income may help cover costs, and the Board may consider reallocating unused millage election funds once the final invoice is received from the Secretary of State.

Technology upgrade (RFID) – Originally slated for 2020 but was delayed due to COVID. The Board approved the project in February 2022 and it was later added to the Parish Capital Budget. Due to the timing and uncertainty of the outcome of the millage renewal election, this project was put on hold but can now move forward. Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) enhances library operations by using embedded tags inside books and other materials for item identification, check in/out status, security, and improves staff accuracy and efficiency. Streamlining the materials flow process will reduce routine tasks, allowing staff to focus more on direct patron service and will support redirecting staff to other initiatives, such as the Mobile Library. RFID provides an easy self-service option, reducing wait times during busy periods and offering flexibility in areas like the Children's section after storytime. The estimated cost is \$945,201.80, including contingency funds to offset inflation. K. LaRocca noted cost-saving adjustments, such as reducing workstation pads, and confirmed the only recurring cost is an annual licensing fee that can be absorbed in the library's operations budget. She also emphasized the importance of replacing the aging electromagnetic security gates for improved item protection and to ensure the integrity of the library's tiered card system. The original RFID report was included in the Board packet.

J. Kesler asked if the RFID tag is traceable and if it has the capability to track a person to their home. K. LaRocca answered no, it is only active while inside the library. Once the item is checked out and/or leaves the library through the security gates, it is inactive.

C. Branton asked if the previous Board has already approved the project. K. LaRocca answered yes, it was approved by the Board and Parish Council and was added to the Capital Budget. C. Branton expressed concern that the cost figures are three years old and asked if we will get updated numbers. K. LaRocca explained that it was anticipated that it would take a while for the project to happen, so money for contingency was included in the budget. C. Branton asked if it is still accurate that the licensing fee will be the only recurring cost, since the information is from 2022. K. LaRocca clarified that the bids will be for both the equipment and licensing.

C. Branton asked about the extent of theft in the library, expressing concern about the return on investment given the project's potential cost of over \$1 million. He asked if the system will lead to savings in salaries. K. LaRocca explained that it is not currently possible to know how much has been taken from the library, but the new RFID system will be capable of ensuring a full inventory check. She stated that the Genealogical Society has expressed concerns about the genealogy collection, as it contains irreplaceable items. She noted that some challenged items were stolen from the library and



photos of them were posted online. She noted that RFID technology has been in use for over 20 years and that the library is somewhat behind, still using barcodes. Other Louisiana systems—including Livingston Parish Library, New Orleans Public Library, Jefferson Parish Library, Lafayette Public Library, and Ouachita Parish Public Library—have already upgraded. Regarding salaries, K. LaRocca stated that no staff reductions are planned, as staff will be reassigned to support expanding services such as the Mobile Library, the new Lacombe Branch, and the expanded Slidell Branch.

C. Branton asked if Carson Block Consulting is still our consultant. K. LaRocca stated that she can inquire about their continued services. C. Branton expressed concern that the consultant's report, dated Summer 2020, is outdated and suggested obtaining an updated version to support informed decision-making. K. LaRocca noted that the remaining portion of the consultant's contract is to review bids and confirmed the consultant was paid \$7,000 in full. C. Branton added that updating the report would be a worthwhile use of funds, as he is uncomfortable making decisions based on outdated information. K. LaRocca stated that she would be happy to speak with Carson Block again regarding an updated report. C. Branton suggested adding the topic to a future meeting agenda to allow time to gather more accurate numbers and assess current possibilities in light of technological changes since the original report.

J. Kesler asked about the ongoing quality control and upkeep of the system. K. LaRocca explained that the RFID tags would go inside each new book instead of a barcode. The gates and checkout pads would need to be maintained. A. Shaw asked for clarification on whether this project is in the pipeline with the Parish. K. LaRocca answered yes, but noted that she can speak to the Parish about putting a hold on the project if the Board prefers. "She explained that if the Board chooses not to proceed with the project, a resolution to remove it from the Capital Budget would be required, along with approval from the Parish Council.

C. Branton stated that he would like to postpone the implementation of the RFID project pending receipt of current financial information, which should include not only the project cost, but also tangential costs related to the project. He is not in favor of moving forward with the project as it presently stands and thinks it could be a potential misuse of taxpayer dollars. He requested that the RFID project be tabled pending receipt of the updated information and stated that he was prepared to make a motion if needed.

K. LaRocca stated that she will speak to Carson Block about refreshing the numbers. C. Branton emphasized that we also need to know what can be done now that was not included in the 2020 report and 2022 update. He explained that the cost of technology does not always increase; sometimes it decreases. He requested that K. LaRocca provide information to justify the expenditure, including how the project will benefit patrons and staff, details on any cost savings, the estimated amounts, and the timeline for when those savings would be realized. K. LaRocca agreed to provide the requested information.

Lacombe Library Replacement – The current Lacombe Branch, a 1,500 sq. ft. sheet metal building with rust damage, is slated for replacement. A centrally located parcel on Hwy 190, near local schools and the Tammany Trace, was purchased in 2024 to accommodate a new 6,000–7,000 sq. ft. facility with outdoor space. The branch was the most visited small branch in 2024. \$300,000 has been budgeted for architectural and design services, with remaining funds applied to construction. The architect, to be selected by the Parish President, will gather input from the community, staff, and Board. The allocation does not cover total project costs.

C. Branton asked A. Shaw if he could make a motion at the conclusion of the report. A. Shaw informed him that one item remained.

Slidell Branch Addition – The Slidell Branch at 555 Robert Blvd., the system’s most heavily used branch, is a 22,000 sq. ft. facility built in 1989 with future expansion in mind. Plans include adding 4,000–6,000 sq. ft., depending on the cost of a needed roof replacement due to ongoing leaks. Interior updates will include carpeting, paint, and space reorganization. Potential additions include study rooms, a storytime room, or maker space—features found in other branches. The Parish will select an architect to address the roof and design the expansion. \$300,000 has been budgeted for architectural and design services, with surplus to go toward construction. This amount does not cover the full project cost. The architect will also revisit input gathered in 2022 from the community, staff, and Board.

**MOTION:** C. Branton moved to postpone the RFID project pending an updated consultant report with current accurate data. It was seconded by J. Corbin.

C. Branton asked K. LaRocca for specific details on potential staffing changes, including which staff can be redirected to other roles and which tasks can be handled by technology. He reiterated his concern about whether there will be a return on investment to justify a project that he anticipates will be over \$1 million. He requested that the Parish be notified that the Board does not wish to proceed at this time and that the project can be revisited at a future meeting once a new report is received.

A. Shaw asked if there will be additional charges for retaining Carson Block’s services again and if Board approval will be required. K. LaRocca explained that while there will be additional charges, the total will remain below the threshold that necessitates Board approval. She added that there are enough funds in the Consultants line to cover the cost. C. Branton asked where the consultant is located and K. LaRocca answered Colorado.

A. Shaw summarized that the project is currently on track to proceed with the bidding process; however, C. Branton is requesting that the Parish not move forward until more accurate information is received. K. LaRocca stated that she can call the Parish to facilitate that request.

K. LaRocca asked for clarification on whether the Board is allowed to vote on something if the vote was not listed on the agenda. C. Branton stated that the Board can do so if the vote is unanimous. A. Shaw asked if there was unanimous agreement to add the item to the agenda and asked for clarification on whether the Board needed to vote on that motion first. C. Branton confirmed that as correct.

Although the procedure was discussed, no formal motion was made, no second was offered, and no vote was taken to add the item as an off-the-floor amendment.

A member of the audience asked if there must be a one-minute public comment period due to the procedural motion. J. Bolner clarified that public comment should be limited to the topic of adding the item to the agenda as an off-the floor amendment, not the substance of C. Branton’s proposal.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. He advised the Board against voting yes, stating that the topic should not be added as an off-the-floor item due to an already full agenda. He stated that the project has been thoroughly vetted and does not need to be reviewed.



Sonnet Ireland – She opposed changing the agenda, stating that the project has been thoroughly researched and that the bidding process will provide the necessary pricing information. She noted that the most reasonable bid will be chosen anyway. She does not feel that paying for a consultant again is a good use of taxpayer money.

Prior to proceeding with the roll call vote, A. Shaw revisited the motion previously made by C. Branton and requested clarification on whether it had been seconded. It was confirmed that J. Corbin seconded the motion. A. Shaw clarified that the motion and second was for the Board to put a hold on the RFID project. C. Branton further clarified that the Library Director will follow up with Carson Block Consulting to obtain updated figures and report to the Board with cost information, including potential offsets through staffing adjustments or tasks that the RFID system can handle.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** A roll call vote was conducted based on the motion to postpone the RFID project, made by C. Branton and seconded by J. Corbin.

Branton: Yes Corbin: Yes Kesler: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Shaw: No

**RESULT:** Motion to postpone the RFID project carried. (Yes – 5 | No – 1) Note: Please refer to the minutes of the next LBOC meeting, held on May 19, 2025, for detailed discussion of the procedural error that occurred during this meeting in relation to this motion.

#### **D. Resolution No. 25-010 Regarding Request for Attorney General’s Opinion (Branton)**

C. Branton explained that LA R.S. 25:225, the statute regarding sexually explicit materials, is referenced often in board meetings. The statute says that the legislative intent is to restrict access to sexually explicit materials to minors. He noted that the statute defines several terms, but it does not define the word “access.” He is asking the Board to approve a resolution to submit a request for a legal opinion from the Louisiana Attorney General (AG) for guidance on the interpretation of the term “access” as used in LA R.S. 25:225. He acknowledged that former AG and current Governor Jeff Landry had issued guidance for libraries, which was provided to the State Library in September 2023. He stated that the guidance is not a formal legal AG opinion, but rather consists of answers to questions proposed to the AG’s office. He stated that the answers do not address the issue. He referred to Question 5 in the guidance, which asks “Does LA R.S. 25:225 require that a library restrict a minor’s access to library materials prior to check out?” The response provided was “No,” but C. Branton expressed the view that “access” means more than just checking out materials. He gave an example of a small child in the library who sits and reads a book for two to three hours without checking it out, then leaves. He questioned whether one could reasonably say the child did not have “access” to the book.

C. Branton stated that, in his opinion as a lawyer, the Board needs guidance on this matter and should seek a formal opinion from the AG. He reminded those who might object to the resolution that, one year ago, the Parish Council restructured the Library Board based on AG opinions. He asked the Board to formally adopt the resolution to request a legal opinion from the Louisiana AG regarding the term “access” in LA R.S. 25:225.

**MOTION #1:** A motion was made by C. Branton and was seconded by J. Kesler to adopt Resolution 25-010.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Devin McGee – He stated that clear definitions are critical and spoke in favor of the resolution. He used an example of cigarettes only being sold from behind the counter so that they are not accessible to minors. He stated that Jeff Corbin has slandered his constituents. A. Shaw reminded D. McGee that personal comments are not the topic of the agenda item. D. McGee stated that access in the context of a library means that a minor would be able to pick up a book and flip through it. He compared the materials in question to a gateway drug. He stated that erotica should be behind the circulation desk or in a room with controlled access.

Jamie Segura – She is opposed to the resolution and stated that C. Branton can research the issue and see that legislative actions have already addressed his questions. She stated that if C. Branton has questions about the statute he can ask K. LaRocca, as she is an expert in what “access” means in terms of library materials. She praised the library’s robust card system that is being replicated in other library systems in the state. She stated that the library has taken every step possible to protect children, emphasizing that it is ultimately a parent’s role to protect their children in the library.

Joan Simon – Covington, LA. She is opposed to the resolution and considers it a waste of time. She feels that this is a thinly veiled excuse to bring up this issue. She questioned the validity of claims that children are running around the library looking for smut and porn, which she says does not exist in the library. She stated that the library is for everyone in the community. She spoke of the tiered card system being the model for the whole state.

Sonnet Ireland – She asked if any board members would like a copy of the 2023 guidance from Jeff Landry that C. Branton referenced. J. Corbin asked for a copy. S. Ireland stated that Jeff Landry worked hand-in-hand with Senator Cloud to craft this law. She stated that AG opinions are not binding and noted that the AG can refuse to give an opinion. She recommended that the Board consult with the Deputy State Librarian or Assistant State Librarian.

Becky Bohm – She is opposed to the resolution and stated that Jeff Landry already addressed this in his statements from 2023. She stated that the library has already set limits for access via the tiered card system, and noted that library staff now monitor the stacks full-time. She feels it is incorrect to say that a child can sit in a library for two hours reading a book without the staff noticing. She stated that 55% of voters approved the library’s millage—the only item on the ballot to pass—demonstrating community support. She stated that the attacks on J. Corbin are immature.

Kevin Marino – He is opposed to the resolution, stating that it is not needed and referenced the Implementation Guide by Jeff Landry. He stated that Jeff Landry spent a lot of time working on getting this law in place and the guide is written based on what he believes this law means. He noted that there were many amendments made before this bill was passed and believes that if they meant to define “access” as cordoning off sections to restrict books, they would have written that into the law. He added that doing so is against the First Amendment.

Lisa Rustemeyer – Mandeville, LA. She is opposed to the resolution and suggested that certain people were dissatisfied with the legislation and want further restrictions. She acknowledged the possibility that C. Branton is seeking clarification on how the law works. She noted that she has not heard of parents or librarians raising concerns about access. She stated that the law does not require the library to relocate any materials, and noted that the library has gone above and beyond in taking such actions.



There was one public comment from an individual who did not wish to speak and they are not in favor of the resolution.

**DISCUSSION:** A. Shaw asked J. Bolner to explain the rationale for requesting an opinion. J. Bolner stated that AG opinions are often requested to get clarity for public bodies when they are concerned about an issue. He noted that he cannot weigh in on whether the Board should ask for an opinion, but added that AG opinions are advisory and serve as sources of guidance.

A. Shaw asked K. LaRocca whether there have been any problems with children accessing books in the library that they should not. K. LaRocca answered that she is not aware of any instance where a child has read a book from the shelf for several hours and noted that staff would have had to witness such an event and inform her of it. She added that staff are actively supervising all areas of the library.

A. Shaw asked whether clarification of the term “access” would be helpful and questioned what it would provide beyond what is already known. J. Bolner acknowledged that it was a valid point but hesitated to respond, concerned about giving his personal opinions on the matter. He advised that it is important for the Board to understand that requesting an opinion may result in being bound by the response. While some AG opinions are disregarded, he expressed uncertainty about whether it would provide as much clarity as a judge's interpretation or court decision.

C. Branton stated that the library's policy has to comply with the law. He quoted the legislation: “It is the intent of the legislature to require libraries to adopt and implement policy language to limit the access of minors to sexually explicit materials.” He reiterated that legislation often has sections that define some of the terms they use, but this statute does not contain a definition for “access.” He stated that the library is acting based on a document that contains answers to written questions that lack legal analysis. He believes it would be beneficial to seek further clarification, noting that requesting guidance from the state's top legal advisor is a routine practice and part of due diligence.

T. Myers asked whether the AG could decline to respond. C. Branton stated that the AG will likely send a letter in reply, which would then be reviewed with the District Attorney's Office to determine what, if anything, could be gained from the response.

J. Corbin agreed with C. Branton's point that there is no actual written legal opinion but questioned whether one is really required. He read aloud Question 5 from Jeff Landry's Implementation Guide provided to the State Library: “Does LA R.S. 25:225 require that a library restrict a minor's access to library materials prior to check out?” He noted that the answer provided was “No,” and in his view, this suggests that the definition of “access” may be irrelevant in this context. He stated that the response appears to rely on a broad, colloquial definition of the term, as it was given without explanation or commentary.

**MOTION #2 (to postpone):** A motion was made by T. Myers and seconded by J. Corbin to postpone voting on Resolution 25-010 until the next board meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Sonnet Ireland – She stated that there have been multiple library directors that have asked questions like this and they received a letter stating that the AG refused to answer, because the word “access” is a broad term. She is not in favor of postponing and suggests voting no to the resolution.

Becky Bohm – She supports postponing the vote and stated that the Board needs to get its act together.

Joan Simon – She stated that this is all postulating for a certain audience who is not present. She stated that this is a waste of time. She believes that a vote on the resolution will result in a split vote. She reiterated that the resolution is unnecessary.

Barbara Hargrove – She stated that she is not in favor of postponing the vote.

Devin McGee – He stated that it is very telling that there is a general uneasiness around defining the term. He stated it is not a waste of time and believes it is just inconvenient for them to have to defend their claims. He disagreed with J. Corbin’s statement regarding the use of a broad, colloquial definition of “access” and stated that the terms should be clearly defined.

Alexis Smith – She asked about the Board’s plan if the current AG provides an opinion that differs from or aligns with the previous AG. She questioned whether they would suddenly change their minds or choose to disregard either opinion. She stated that small children with attentive parents are not going to walk across the library alone, find a book that might contain vulgarity or porn, locate it within the book, read it, and absorb the material.

Stephanie Nuccio – She stated that she takes her two children to the library every week and trusts the library. She expressed frustration and stated that she was tired of the ongoing situation. She stated that the resolution is ridiculous, noting that she has never seen children running around the library reading porn. She urged the Board to vote against the resolution and move forward.

Kevin Marino – He spoke against tabling or postponing the item, stating that it appears the Board frequently delays action when faced with difficult decisions. He noted that the board packet was posted a week prior, giving members ample time to consider the matter. He urged the Board to focus on getting real work done and considers this a waste of time.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** Branton: No Corbin: No Kesler: No Myers: No Thanars: Yes Shaw: No

**RESULT:** Motion to postpone failed. (No – 5 | Yes – 1)

**MOTION #1 (restated):** The original motion to adopt Resolution 25-010, made by C. Branton and seconded by J. Kesler, was restated for consideration.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** Branton: Yes Corbin: No Kesler: Yes Myers: Abstained Thanars: No Shaw: No

**RESULT:** Motion to adopt failed. (No – 3 | Yes – 2 | Abstained – 1)

#### **E. Statement of Concern Decision – *Crank***

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins. The statement was submitted by Frances Smith. K. LaRocca read the statement aloud.

The recommended action by F. Smith is: “Put it up where the teens can't read it.”



Reason given: "The book as a whole is over and over sex and drugs."

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher's summary, number of print copies STPL owns (0), books on CD (1), E-audiobooks (1), total circulation on book on CD (13), total circulation on E-audiobook (7), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. A total of 1,658 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Adult Fiction audiobook section with CD FIC Hopk 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.

Summary of Committee Report: The committee noted that STPL originally had four print copies that were all lost, in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2020. Because of waning interest in the author, the title was not replaced after 2020. The print copies had circulated a total of 162 times. The committee found that the book is a morality tale that encourages teens not to get involved in drugs and honestly portrays the consequences of drug use.

Options for the Board: Keep the book in the Adult Fiction section, move the book to a restricted area of the library, or remove the book from the library.

Committee Recommendation: The committee recommends that the book continue to be shelved in the Adult collection.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Frances Smith, the individual who submitted the Statement of Concern for *Crank*, was offered five minutes for public comment. She was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Devin McGee – He spoke about the book not being appropriate for a children's library. He stated that the topic of the book is drug addiction and sexual escapades. He read passages aloud and stated that they were not taken out of context, noting that 27 of the 500+ pages contain similar content. He stated that these types of books can be purchased from a retailer and that his taxes should not be used to pay for them. He acknowledged that the book is located in the Adult section but stated that he intends to highlight the presence of a broader movement to make such materials accessible to young minds.

Johanna Miner – Mandeville, LA. She stated that she is speaking on behalf of Fran Smith. She read a letter provided by F. Smith aloud. A copy of the letter will be included with the public comment cards on record. J. Miner asked why K. LaRocca will not identify who is purchasing the books and stated her belief that it is T. DiMaggio.

Sonnet Ireland – She noted that the book is in the Adult section. She stated that, as someone who has suffered sexual assault, she finds it concerning that anyone might be turned on by the content of the book. She stated that the book addresses bad things that can happen and emphasized that it is not intended to be titillating. She noted that drug use is not covered under obscenity laws and added that books can help readers recognize themselves and where their choices in life can take them.

Becky Bohm – She noted that the SOC claims that the book is in the Children’s section and needs to be moved, but it was never in the Children’s section. She stated the book should stay in the Adult section or be moved to the New Adult section. She acknowledged that the book addresses sensitive topics and noted that with 1 in 3 women experiencing sexual assault in their lifetime, the book may help those who have endured such an experience.

Lisa Rustemeyer – She noted that the complainant was not in attendance. She stated that the book is a cautionary tale for teens and noted that the author wrote the book based on her daughter’s addiction. She stated that the book was in the library for 16 years in the Teen section. She stated that the book does not glamorize drug use or promiscuity. She questioned the necessity of the Board making decisions about a book in the absence of the complainant and also questioned the need to review materials already located in the Adult section.

T. DiMaggio addressed L. Rustemeyer’s statement, clarifying that the book was not located in the Teen section and that all Teen or Young Adult (YA) books on CD were shelved in the Adult section prior to the implementation of the new card system. She further explained that there was no YA audiobook section for CDs due to space limitations. Both the YA books on CD and YA non-fiction books were shelved in the Adult section, with labels indicating they were intended for a YA or Teen audience.

Alexis Smith – Pearl River, LA. She stated that *Crank* was one of the first books she checked out from the library when she was a teen. She stated that the book scared her and compared its impact to that of the Scared Straight program. She stated that she gained more from this book than she did from the D.A.R.E. program. She reiterated that the book was never in the Children’s section.

Kevin Marino – He stated that, according to current library policy, any book containing sexual content belongs in the Adult section. While he disagrees with the policy, he noted that the book is shelved appropriately under its guidelines. He stated that the book is written for teenagers and, although it contains disturbing concepts, it is relatable because of the very real drug problem in St. Tammany Parish. He read aloud a statement about the book from author Ellen Hopkins.

There were four public comments from individuals who did not wish to speak and they were in favor of the book remaining in the Adult section or moving to the Teen section.

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

**MOTION:** J. Kesler moved to affirm the committee’s recommendation for *Crank* to remain in the Adult Fiction collection. It was seconded by T. Myers.

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

**RESULT:** Motion carried. (Unanimous 6-0)

#### **F. Statement of Concern Decision – *Identical***

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *Identical* by Ellen Hopkins. The statement was submitted by Rosalind Murr. K. LaRocca read the statement aloud.



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

Reason given: "This is breaking child"

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher's summary, number of print copies STPL owns (1), number of electronic copies available (2 – Overdrive and Hoopla), total circulation on all print copies (184), total circulation on all electronic copies (33), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Publishers Weekly*, *School Library Journal*, and *The Horn Book Guide*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. A total of 1,967 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title was originally shelved in YA Fiction, but is now shelved in the New Adult section of the Adult Fiction collection with NA Hopk 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.

Summary of Committee Report: The book was moved in 2023 to Adult Fiction to conform to the library's tiered card system and LA R.S. 25:225. All of Ellen Hopkins books in the YA section have been reviewed and those with sexual conduct have been moved to Adult Fiction per Library Board of Control Rules and Regulations.

Options for the Board: Keep the book as part of the Adult collection, move the book to a restricted area of the library, or remove the book from the library.

Committee Recommendation: The committee recommends that the book continue to be shelved in the Adult collection.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Rosalind Murr, the individual who submitted the Statement of Concern for *Identical*, was offered five minutes for public comment. She was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Devin McGee – He read the Publisher's Summary for the book *Identical* aloud. He stated that he assumes the main focus of the story is heavy drug use and sex and noted that the intended audience is ages 14-17. He stated this points to a broader issue with our culture and asked why the books are being recommended to 14-17-year olds. He asked the board to be honest in their book reviews and not to be intimidated by activists.

Lisa Rustemeyer – She noted that the complainant was not in attendance and she feels it is a waste of time for the Board to review the book. She noted the book was originally in the YA section for many years without a complaint. She asked what criteria would have to exist for the Board to consider actually removing a book from the library.

Sonnet Ireland – She stated that the content in the book depicts rape, not sex, and stated that referring to such an act committed against one's will as sex is comparable to calling burglary an involuntary donation. She reiterated that the book is not meant to titillate, but rather to horrify and teach empathy. She reiterated that the book is in the Adult section.

Becky Bohm – She stated that the book should be in the New Adult section of the Adult collection, as it is written for 14-17-year olds. She agreed that the content is not meant to be sexually arousing.

There were three public comments from individuals who did not wish to speak and they were in favor of the book remaining in the Adult section or returning to the Teen section.

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

**MOTION:** T. Myers moved to affirm the committee's recommendation for *Identical* to remain in the Adult Fiction collection. It was seconded by J. Kesler.

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

**RESULT:** Motion carried. (Unanimous 6-0)

#### **G. Statement of Concern Decision – *Lawn Boy***

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison. The statement was submitted by Rosalind Murr. K. LaRocca read the statement aloud.

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

Reason given: "This is breaking child"

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher's summary, number of print copies STPL owns (4), total circulation on all print copies (24), number of electronic copies available (4 – via Overdrive, Cloud Library, and Hoopla), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and *Shelf Awareness*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. The title is shelved in the Adult Fiction collection with Fic Evis 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.

Summary of Committee Report: At the time of the committee's review, two SOC's had been submitted for the title—one by Rosalind Murr and one by another individual. Although the other individual rescinded her SOC, the committee had already reviewed the book based on both submissions. The book is shelved in Adult Fiction and has always been shelved in Adult Fiction. Because the other individual cited the Louisiana Criminal Law Revised Statute 14:91.11, the book was evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the statute. The committee did not find a violation of the statute. In compliance with LA R.S. 25:225, the STPL card system does not allow any minor with a Restricted or Semi-restricted card to check out the book from the library.

Options for the Board: Keep the book in the Adult Fiction section, move the book to a restricted area of the library, or remove the book from the library.



Committee Recommendation: The book should remain in Adult Fiction where it is restricted to minors by parental or guardian choice with our card system.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Rosalind Murr, the individual who submitted the Statement of Concern for *Lawn Boy*, was offered five minutes for public comment. She was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Devin McGee – He stated that books like this are often defended as works intended to provide representation for marginalized voices. He stated the book contains profanity and descriptive sexual encounters. He referenced queer theory, stating his belief that it aims to influence young readers to adopt queer lifestyles and become radical change agents. He began discussing drag queens and storytime, at which point A. Shaw reminded him to stay on topic, noting that the discussion did not pertain to drag queens.

Rachel Rhodes – Mandeville, LA. She spoke in support of all the books on the agenda. She acknowledged that the books explore mature and complex themes and noted that they are located in the Adult section. She stated that teens are sexually educated by computers, phones, and friends. She stated that if these books are moved behind the counter, then the Bible should be treated the same.

Lisa Rustemeyer – She noted that the complainant was not in attendance. She clarified that there are two books titled *Lawn Boy*—Jonathan Evison's is in the Adult section and Gary Paulsen's is in the Children's section—and noted that this may have caused confusion among those who mistakenly believe Evison's book is in the Children's section. She reiterated that this is a waste of time, as the book is in the Adult section.

Sonnet Ireland – She spoke about the confusion of the two *Lawn Boy* books and the erroneous claims that this book is located in the Children's section. She suggested that the Board adopt a resolution stating that books already placed in the Adult section should not be subject to review.

Becky Bohm – She stated that she, too, was initially confused by the two *Lawn Boy* books and questioned whether those who implied Evison's book was in the Children's section may have done so intentionally. She reiterated that the book is in the Adult section and should remain there.

There were three public comments from individuals who did not wish to speak and they were all in favor of the book remaining in the Adult section.

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

**MOTION:** D. Thanars moved to affirm the committee's recommendation for *Lawn Boy* to remain in the Adult Fiction collection. It was seconded by T. Myers.

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

**RESULT:** Motion carried. (Unanimous 6-0)

**H. Executive Session for the Annual Evaluation of the Director pursuant to La R.S. 42:17(1)**  
**\*2/3 majority vote of members present required to go into executive session.**

**MOTION #1:** D. Thanars moved to go into Executive Session. It was seconded by T. Myers.

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

**RESULT:** Motion carried. (Unanimous 6-0)

The Board members went into Executive Session.

The Board members returned from Executive Session.

**MOTION #2:** D. Thanars moved to return from Executive Session. It was seconded by T. Myers.

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

**RESULT:** Motion carried. (Unanimous 6-0)

A. Shaw stated that no action was being taken that required a vote by the Board. A. Shaw complimented K. LaRocca on her exemplary job performance, noting her success in passing the millage renewal. She praised K. LaRocca for being proactive, dedicated, flexible, and highlighted her ability to work well with her staff. A. Shaw also commended K. LaRocca for her exemplary fulfillment of fiduciary responsibilities and acknowledged D. Cuevas' assistance to K. LaRocca in achieving clean annual audits.

**4. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by general consensus.

Ann Shaw, Board President