

**St. Tammany Parish Library
Board of Control Meeting
July 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 Charles (Chuck) Branton, Vice-President. Kelly LaRocca, Director, called the roll and declared that a quorum was present.

Present (6): Chuck Branton, Glenn Baham, Councilman Patrick Burke (designated by Parish President Mike Cooper), Tamarah Myers, Dinah Thanars, Travis Thompson

Absent (0): None

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

C. Branton explained the meeting rules and the rules for public comment.

Councilman Patrick Burke and Glenn Baham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Introduction of Incoming Board Members

C. Branton introduced and welcomed newly appointed board members Glenn Baham and Travis Thompson.

2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Library Board of Control (LBOC) that was held on May 19, 2025, and special meetings held on June 16 and June 23, 2025. (Branton)

MOTION: T. Myers moved to approve the May 19, 2025, LBOC meeting minutes. It was seconded by G. Baham.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board discussion.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Abstained Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: Motion to approve the May 19, 2025, meeting minutes carried. (Yes – 5|Abstained – 1)

MOTION: T. Myers moved to approve the June 16, 2025, LBOC special meeting minutes. It was seconded by D. Thanars.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board discussion.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Abstained Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: Motion to approve the June 16, 2025, special meeting minutes carried. (Yes – 5|Abstained – 1)

MOTION: G. Baham moved to approve the June 23, 2025, LBOC special meeting minutes. It was seconded by D. Thanars.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board Discussion.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Abstained Myers: Yes Thanars: Abstained Thompson: Yes

RESULT: Motion to approve the June 23, 2025, special meeting minutes carried. (Yes – 4|Abstained – 2)

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Resolution # 25-014. Resolution amending Rules and Regulations Section 209 – Limits of Library Use – C. Other Fees - Regarding printing for United States Military active-duty service members, reservists, veterans, and members of the Louisiana National Guard and faxing for all patrons. (Branton)

C. Branton explained that veterans are required to fax documents to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) when seeking services and benefits. In an effort to help and honor the veterans of the Parish, this resolution seeks to eliminate the financial burden associated with faxing and printing by offering these resources free of charge to all service members. K. LaRocca reviewed the highlighted changes to the policy.

Military veterans in attendance from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) included First Sergeant Jay Evans, a 28-year Army veteran; Earl Folks, a 10-year Army veteran; and Major Wayne Barrett Marvin, Jr., a 28-year U.S. Marine Corps veteran.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

David Cogle – He asked if the library offers scanning capabilities. K. LaRocca confirmed that scanners are available for patrons to use free of charge.

First Sergeant Jay Evans – He expressed gratitude to the Board for approving these services. He assists veterans in receiving benefits and often meets with them at the Lacombe Branch Library. He praised the Lacombe Branch staff, stating they consistently go above and beyond in their service. He thanked K. LaRocca, C. Branton, and T. DiMaggio for meeting with him and developing a plan to provide these helpful resources to veterans.

Sonnet Ireland – Slidell, LA. She spoke in support of the resolution. She suggested extending free fax and printing services to members of the Mississippi National Guard, noting their close proximity to St. Tammany Parish.

Lisa Rustemeyer – Mandeville, LA. She spoke in support of the resolution. She brought up the issue of book challenges. C. Branton asked her to stay on topic. She reiterated that she is in favor of the resolution.

James Prentice – Covington, LA. He spoke in support of the resolution. He shared a memorable childhood experience of meeting a military veteran during a flight to New Orleans. He asked if the free services will be offered to Mississippi veterans and inquired if they are required to pay the \$30 out-of-parish fee for a library card.

Dr. Andrew Benson – Pearl River, LA. He spoke in support of the resolution. He raised concerns about non-original signatures, noting the potential for such documents to be passed on to other agencies, which could lead to abuse or fraud.

DISCUSSION: T. Myers expressed her thanks and gratitude to the veterans for their service. P. Burke thanked the veterans for their service. He inquired whether a patron's library account profile could include a designation indicating they are a veteran. K. LaRocca stated that she will look into the possibility.

D. Thanars thanked the veterans for their service. Referring to earlier comments, she asked if the Board will consider extending free services to Mississippi veterans, or will they discuss this at a later date. C. Branton suggested discussing it at a later date, as this is the beginning of the journey, not a one-time decision. K. LaRocca clarified that although the Louisiana National Guard is specifically mentioned in the policy, all United States Military veterans and service members will be eligible for free printing and faxing regardless of their state of residence.

T. Thompson thanked the veterans for their service and specifically expressed appreciation for J. Evans' efforts in assisting veterans with signing up for services.

MOTION: C. Branton moved to adopt Resolution 25-014. It was seconded by G. Baham.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: Motion to adopt Resolution 25-014 carried. (Unanimous – 6)

C. Branton and K. LaRocca presented a proclamation to the veterans, officially declaring that printing and faxing for service members are now free of charge.

B. Election of Officers

With the resignations of Ann Shaw and Pam Georges, the positions of President and Secretary of the Board are vacant. This necessitates the election of officers.

MOTION: T. Thompson made a motion to elect Chuck Branton as Board President, Glenn Baham as Board Vice-President, and Tamarah Myers as Board Secretary. It was seconded by D. Thanars.

C. Branton asked if there were any other nominations. There were no other nominations.

MOTION: G. Baham moved to close the nominations. It was seconded by T. Thompson. The motion was carried by unanimous consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Nomination for Board President (Chuck Branton):

Dr. Andrew Benson – Pearl River, LA. He spoke in favor of the nominations. He spoke of the Board's role in protecting children and using wise judgment, then went on to address broader themes of good versus evil and the struggles of life.

Sonnet Ireland – She expressed concern about a lack of clarity regarding when to submit comment cards, as well as issues related to staying on topic during public comment. She stated that she trusts C. Branton to treat everyone equally when holding individuals accountable for following the rules.

Lisa Rustemeyer – She raised concerns about holding officer elections with a newly appointed board, expressed disappointment over recent social media posts calling for Ann Shaw’s resignation, and questioned whether all members are acting in the library’s best interest or pursuing other agendas.

Jill Kesler – Covington, LA. She stated she is honored and privileged to have served on the LBOC this past year. She spoke in favor of all three officer nominations.

James Prentice – He stated that the yellow box on the comment card is too small. He spoke in favor of all three officer nominations. He expressed concern, using a metaphor from *The Lion King* to illustrate perceived attempts to discredit the new Board before they have the chance to prove themselves.

David Cogle – He spoke in favor of all three officer nominations. He stated his opinion that the opposition to C. Branton is politically motivated.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board discussion.

MOTION: The motion to elect Chuck Branton as Board President, made by T. Thompson and seconded by D. Thanars, was reiterated prior to the vote.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: The motion to elect Chuck Branton as Board President carried. (Unanimous – 6)

PUBLIC COMMENT – Nomination for Board Vice-President (Glenn Baham):

Dr. Andrew Benson – He spoke in favor of G. Baham and reiterated his support for all three nominees.

Jean Wiggan – She questioned how newly appointed board members know each other well enough to vote this soon. She responded to the earlier *Lion King* metaphor, stating she is not a “hyena.” She stated that this is not a political issue.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board discussion.

MOTION: The motion to elect Glenn Baham as Board Vice-President, made by T. Thompson and seconded by D. Thanars, was reiterated prior to the vote.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: The motion to elect Glenn Baham as Board Vice-President carried. (Unanimous – 6)

MOTION: The motion to elect Tamarah Myers as Board Secretary/Treasurer, made by T. Thompson and seconded by D. Thanars, was reiterated prior to public comment and the vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Nomination for Board Secretary/Treasurer (Tamarah Myers):

Sonnet Ireland – She questioned the need for a Board Secretary, stating that library administrative staff prepare the minutes. She noted that state law says that the Director can act as Secretary. E. Couvillon clarified that while state law does allow the Library Director to serve as Secretary, the Rules and Regulations of the St. Tammany Parish LBOC state that “the officers of the Board shall be

President, Vice-President, and Secretary/Treasurer, all of whom shall be board members." S. Ireland suggested the Board consider revising its policy, stating that the role appears to be obsolete.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board discussion.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: The motion to elect Tamarah Myers as Board Secretary/Treasurer carried. (Unanimous – 6)

C. Financial Reports – June 2025 (Branton/LaRocca)

K. LaRocca reviewed the June 2025 financial reports. The library has received all expected Ad Valorem revenue for the year. One more State Revenue Sharing payment will be received before the end of the year. The budget percentage should be 50% at this point in the year. Revenues are at 50.21% and Expenditures are at 46.31%. Tax revenue is credited in twelfths and is reflected as such on the financial report. K. LaRocca gave explanations for budget lines that were over or under 50%. Most variances are due to expenses being paid early or late in the year and will be in balance by the end of the year.

C. Branton noted that Juvenile Programming is only at 31.66%. K. LaRocca explained that this line covers only regular Juvenile Programming, while Summer Reading Programming is funded through its own budget line. C. Branton asked K. LaRocca to clarify the ages that are considered Juvenile. She confirmed ages 0 to 12 years old. At C. Branton's request, K. LaRocca gave a brief overview of the Mobile Library vehicle, Books by Mail, and Lobby Stop Service.

G. Baham commented that he was surprised to learn that the library does not currently have a Human Resources (HR) staff person and would like to see someone with HR expertise hired for the role. K. LaRocca reported that the HR position has been advertised and the library has received over 20 resumes.

MOTION: T. Myers moved to approve the June 2025 financial reports. It was seconded by T. Thompson.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

James Prentice – He asked if iPads are available to Mobile Library patrons. K. LaRocca replied they are not at this time. He asked for clarification on whether 43% of the budget goes towards salaries. K. LaRocca clarified that 43% represents the amount of the Salaries line spent so far this year. While it would typically be at 50% by this point, it is currently under budget due to unfilled positions and the timing of two three-paycheck months later in the year (July and December). J. Prentice asked what percentage of the total budget goes to salaries and benefits such as insurance. K. LaRocca referenced the 2023 Annual Report, which states that 62.58% of the budget was spent on salaries and benefits. She added that a range of 60-75% is typical for libraries.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board discussion.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: Motion to approve the June 2025 financial reports carried. (Unanimous – 6)

D. Director's Report (Branton/LaRocca)

K. LaRocca reported recent updates to facilities, technology, marketing and outreach efforts, professional development, new staff, contracts, strategic plan goals, public records requests, Statements of Concern, transition of materials, and service statistics for May, June, and the year-to-date statistics. She highlighted the Lobby Stop service visits. She spoke about the Community Input meetings in Slidell and Lacombe regarding the upcoming expansion and construction projects.

T. Myers asked what percentage of the Young Adult (YA) books have been reviewed. K. LaRocca stated that she will check the status this week and will follow up with an answer. T. Myers asked what were the top three requests from the community regarding the Lacombe and Slidell projects. K. LaRocca answered that they are still collecting information, but so far, the top requests are for a covered porch, separate children's wing with separate entrance, glassed-in teen area, and a café.

G. Baham asked if the Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) numbers are available yet. K. LaRocca explained that an SRC wrap-up report will be given at the August LBOC meeting.

E. Resolution # 25-015. Resolution amending Rules and Regulations Section 209 – Limits of Library Use – B. Overdue Fees (Branton)

K. LaRocca reviewed the highlighted updates to this policy. She explained that many of the updates were part of the library's procedures, but were not included in the Rules and Regulations.

MOTION: D. Thanars moved to adopt Resolution 25-015. It was seconded by G. Baham.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Sonnet Ireland – She asked if overdue fines for veterans will be waived. K. LaRocca clarified that printing and faxing will be free for veterans. S. Ireland suggested that STPL eliminate overdue fees, as many other libraries are fine-free for overdue fees.

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. He welcomed the new board members and spoke in favor of the resolution and the earlier resolution declaring free prints and faxes for veterans. He suggested extending the 3-day grace period to allow additional checkouts if items are overdue.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board discussion.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: Motion to adopt Resolution 25-015 carried. (Unanimous – 6)

F. Resolution # 25-016. Resolution amending the Rules and Regulations Update Section 106 – E or F Code of Conduct (Shaw)

C. Branton noted that although Ann Shaw, the original sponsor, is no longer on the Board, G. Baham will present the resolution for discussion. G. Baham expressed his appreciation and gratitude for A. Shaw's 8 years of service on the Board. He voiced interest in developing a Code of Conduct to promote civility and reduce tensions.

MOTION: G. Baham moved to postpone discussion of Resolution 25-016 until the next board meeting on August 25, 2025, to allow time for revision and refinement of the resolution. It was seconded by D. Thanars.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Devin McGee – Madisonville, LA. He spoke in favor of the postponement.

Sonnet Ireland – She spoke in favor of the postponement. She suggested the Board reach out to the State Library for help, as they are a great resource. She supports the idea of creating a Code of Conduct.

Lisa Rustemeyer – She supports the idea of having a code of conduct. She stated that the previous discussion of a Code of Conduct was uncomfortable to listen to and lacked a spirit of collegiality.

James Prentice – He was not in favor of the postponement and expressed strong opposition to the resolution.

Kevin Marino – He spoke in favor of the postponement. He suggested the Board continue to hold Rules and Regulations committee meetings.

David Cogle – He spoke in favor of the postponement. He stated that the Board is entrusted with a fiduciary duty over taxpayer money and according to LA R.S. 25:215, the Board employs the Library Director. He is concerned about the wording in the original resolution that requires the Board to ask for approval from the Library Director in order to receive requested documents.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board discussion.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: Motion to postpone Resolution 25-016 carried. (Unanimous – 6)

G. Resolution # 25-017. Resolution regarding the current disposition of challenged materials (Branton)

K. LaRocca explained that there have been some challenged books that were moved due to Board directives, changes made to the Criteria for Selection, and the implementation of the tiered card system. This resolution directs staff to follow up with complainants when a challenged item has been moved to another collection to determine whether the change has satisfied their concern. An example of this is when a YA book is moved to the Adult Collection.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Devin McGee – He stated that relocation of offending materials behind the circulation desk is a good idea.

Sonnet Ireland – She asked for clarification on which complainants would be contacted and K. LaRocca reiterated the specifics. S. Ireland asked what happens if a complainant is not satisfied with the action taken. C. Branton clarified that the resolution applies to cases where the library has done what the complainant has requested. As an example, the complainant requested a book be moved to the Adult section and that request has been fulfilled. He further clarified that the Board is still required to review SOC's in which a complainant has requested a book's removal from the library. T. Myers asked S. Ireland whether the library where she works has a Code of Conduct available online

that the Board could review as a resource. S. Ireland responded that T. Myers can contact her privately, and she would be happy to answer any questions.

Lisa Rustemeyer – She asked for clarification and K. LaRocca and C. Branton restated the specific situations covered by the resolution. L. Rustemeyer spoke about the complainants who do not attend the Board meetings and the costs associated with book challenges. K. LaRocca explained that the primary cost is staff time, and the directives of this resolution is expected to save staff time overall. L. Rustemeyer asked additional general questions about the process. E. Couvillon provided a brief overview of the policy, including the committee review and appeals process.

James Prentice – He referenced a letter he received stating that a decision on his SOC's would be provided within 45 days unless extended by the LBOC, but no follow-up has been received. He expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Administrative Office. He formally informed Tanya DiMaggio of his intent to appeal the decisions regarding *The Librarian of Auschwitz* and *Natsume's Book of Friends*, and demanded that both titles be placed on the next scheduled LBOC meeting agenda.

Kevin Marino – He stated he had emailed the Board about his SOC's but now understands the resolution after K. LaRocca's explanation. He suggested reaching out to any complainant affected by the relocation of a book, whether they had requested its removal or relocation, noting that in some cases, moving a book to the Adult section may address their concerns.

Joan Simon – Covington, LA. She spoke in favor of the resolution and believes it will streamline the process.

MOTION: T. Thompson moved to approve Resolution 25-017. It was seconded by D. Thanars.

DISCUSSION: There was no Board discussion.

VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: Motion to adopt Resolution 25-017 carried. (Unanimous – 6)

H. Resolution # 25-018. Resolution regarding extension of time to allow for procedural due process of undecided Statements of Concern (Branton)

C. Branton and K. LaRocca explained that the 120-day extension that the Board approved in March expired on July 22nd and the Board will need to consider extending the time limit. The response time would be extended to 120 days from the date of this resolution.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Devin McGee – He spoke in favor of the resolution. He spoke of the importance of discernment and content curation when adding items to the catalog.

Sonnet Ireland – In response to the previous speaker's comments, she stated that it is illegal to discriminate against adding certain types of books to the collection. She spoke in favor of the resolution.

James Prentice – He referenced a book he had opposed in the library's collection 25 years ago and said he was given the brushoff at the time. He spoke about the Parish Council and the LBOC, then made remarks concerning a Councilman, which C. Branton noted were off topic from the resolution under discussion.

Kevin Marino – He spoke in favor of the resolution. He thanked K. LaRocca and the staff for thoroughly reviewing his SOC's and the books he challenged. He referenced the Graphic Novel resolution from February 28, 2023, and stated that his SOC's would be satisfied if the Board repeals that resolution.

MOTION: T. Myers moved to adopt Resolution 25-018. It was seconded by G. Baham.

DISCUSSION:

G. Baham – He noted that the 120 days is the maximum extension period and asked whether some of the books could be reviewed in less time, potentially before the October board meeting. K. LaRocca responded that it may not be possible to review each item before October, explaining that some books will need to be read cover to cover by both staff and the Board.


VOTE: Branton: Yes Baham: Yes Burke: Yes Myers: Yes Thanars: Yes Thompson: Yes

RESULT: Motion to adopt Resolution 25-018 carried. (Unanimous – 6)

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by D. Thanars and was seconded by T. Thompson. All were in favor, none were opposed, and no one was absent. Motion carried.

APPROVAL:



Tamarah Myers, Board Secretary/Treasurer