



APPALACHIAN REGIONAL LIBRARY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Watauga County Public Library

Thursday, November 21, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.

Attendance: Doug Butler, Patty Swartzbaugh, Jan Noffsinger, Becky Ball, Mary Stolberg, Karen Moll, Kyle Hall, Jennifer Chatham

Absent: Margaret Love, Brenda Dobbins, Arnold Lackey, Camilla Lovette-Day

Present for the Library: Tammy Holston, Laura McPherson, Suzanne Moore, Monica Caruso

Guests: Brady Combs and Emily Reynolds of Combs & Tennant & Carpenter, P.C., Natalie Harkey, WCPL Board member

1. Call to Order

a. Doug called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

Introductions were made.

Doug introduced Mary Stolberg, our newest board member, who will serve on the finance committee. Welcome to Becky, a former board member, who was substituting for Brenda Dobbins. Natalie Harkey is observing today and is considering filling a vacancy.

2. Additions/Deletions and Approval of Agenda

We added under Finance: "Accept Digital Champion Grant"

Karen made a motion to accept the agenda, Jan seconded and all approved the agenda.

3. Audit Report by Combs, Tennant & Carpenter, PC. Vote of approval requested.

Brady pointed out a couple of pages from the audit. There were no major differences. Things went very well as usual.

He noted the revision page on page 4; the independent auditors report on page 5 and the first paragraph as being an unmodified opinion, the highest level of reporting that they can give; by government auditing standards, we received a clean opinion; the comparative information on p. 12 with FY 23 vs FY 24; the summation as a whole and balance sheet; the split of federal, state, and local detailed information on revenue.

A question arose about pensions: Brady said that they consider the state's percentages and where we are in proportion to larger state funds.

The schedule on p. 42 shows the fluctuations over the last few years and contributions given.

Now 13.1% is the baseline for local government. If you are underfunded, they will increase the rate you contribute.

Approval of audit: Patty made a motion to approve the audit, Kyle seconded it, and all voted in favor.

4. Approval of the Minutes

- Minutes of the September 2024 meeting – Karen made a motion to approve these, and Jan seconded it. All vote in favor.
- Minutes of the September 2024 closed session: Following the closed session, Karen made the motion to accept these, and Jennifer seconded it. All approved.

5. **Correspondence & Communications:** none

6. **Reports: County Librarians and Regional Director**

Regional Report:

Tammy stated that since the storm hit in September, we have pivoted on projects.

We will be awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Association of Rural and Small Libraries Foundation. We will determine how to split up this amount.

Digital Champions Grant: She and Laura rewrote the grant and asked for funding to replace PCs/monitors, firewalls/security network, laptops to distribute to the community, and OPACs. They approved everything and it's now pending on ARL board approval. Patty made a motion to approve the funds and Jan seconded it. All approved.

Equipment will be purchased via two requests: one in December and then one in March. Pricing may go up. They need to be distributed asap. We'll find agencies to help us with this work.

Ashe:

Laura hired a Library Assistant, and she starts the Monday after Thanksgiving. They are still interviewing for the Adult Service Manager and Youth Services specialist positions.

Wilkes:

Suzanne stated that they have a new Circulation Manager. They are trying to find some replacements for their Local Board openings. They plan to talk to the county and town for a wrap up but will wait until they have new board members. They are fully staffed. She will be out for Light Up N Wilkesboro, on the 22nd.

They have a meeting with the County Manager to review their construction contract. They will start with the top floor after Jan 1.

Watauga:

Monica mentioned that they welcomed a new Youth Services Manager in October and are looking for a Youth Services Librarian. She mentioned Friends 50th anniversary tote bags that board members can have for free.

7. **Unfinished Business** – None

8. **Reports of Standing Committees**

Budget and Finance:

o **Approve Updated FY24/25 Budgets**

- State Aid FY24/25 Budget
- Ashe FY24/25 Budget
- Watauga FY24/25 Budget
- Wilkes FY24/25 Budget
- ARPA(SFRF) Funds FY 24/25

\$16,904: Still unsure of when the SFRF funds will be received but would like to request changing the prior approved \$250 bonuses to \$300 bonuses. Kyle motioned to approve, and Patty seconded. All approved.

Karen made a motion to approve the reports and Kyle seconded. All approved.

Regarding the Digital Champion grant, we'll put it all on a separate sheet, as it's a cleaner way to track it.

Governance:

Jacob had asked the committee to look at policies.

User Conduct and Meeting Room policies are the two they are presently evaluating.

We still need feedback from Librarians regarding those policies.

Personnel: no update

Search Committee:

Closed session with Board: The board went into closed session to discuss search committee matters regarding the ARL Director of Libraries opening.

9. New Business

o Approve 2025 Holidays and Library Closings – adding unpaid closed Saturday at Christmas

Becky made a motion to approve changes and Jennifer seconded it. All approved this change for 2025.

Discuss hours of operation for Ashe and Watauga – how long to continue reduced hours?

It was decided to begin our regular operating hours on January 2. Mary made a motion to allow Watauga and Ashe to revert to their regular operating hours (closing at 7 pm on Monday – Thursday) and Patty seconded it. All approved.

10. Adjournment

At 2:31 pm, Patty made a motion to adjourn, and Karen seconded it. All approved.

Next meeting will be January 16,2025 in Ashe County @1:00 pm (Committee meetings at 12:30 pm)