



WATAUGA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

Minutes

Thursday, November 4, 2021 (via Zoom and in person)

1:30 PM

Present: Cheryl Angel, Sandi Basel (Chair), Roberta Jackson, Laura Johnson, Billy Kennedy, Margaret Love, Max Ruthless, Patty Swartzbaugh

Staff: Monica Caruso (Watauga County Librarian), Jane Blackburn (Appalachian Regional Library Director)

Absent: Scott Elliott, Natalie Harkey, Melony Winkelmann, Carol Deal

1. Call to Order & Welcome

Sandi Basel called the meeting to order and welcomed new member Max Ruthless, owner of Foggy Pine Books in Boone.

2. Approval of Minutes – Meeting from September 2, 2021

Billy Kennedy made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 2, 2021 meeting. Patty Swartzbaugh seconded. The minutes were approved.

3. Correspondence and Communication – None to report.

4. Report of Watauga County Public Library – Monica Caruso (See attached for details)

Monica discussed upcoming staff training on fire safety and active shooter training, as well as an opportunity for departmental meetings. She shared that a new art installation by local artist Andi Gelsthorpe entitled *The Crooked Path of Grief*, inspired by the Buddhist tradition of prayer flags. The project is funded by an Artist Support Grant through the North Carolina Arts Council in collaboration with the Watauga Arts Council and will be on display on the Watauga County Public Library lawn until December 1.

Monica mentioned a scavenger hunt activity, using author Eric Hills' *Spot the Dog* books. The activity is in partnership with the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum, which is hosting an early literacy interactive bilingual traveling exhibit at BRAHM (*Storyland: A Trip through Childhood Favorites*).

There will be one more (virtual) orientation for those interested in volunteering with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. Contact Monica with questions. No accounting or tax experience is necessary. The senior centers will not offer the tax assistance programs this year due to lack of site coordinators. Monica hopes to expand the hours on Fridays to fill the service gap from the senior center.

Monica is translating the general library brochure to Spanish, and is working with bilingual resource staff at Watauga County Schools to develop a presentation on library services to Spanish-speaking families. The presentation will be offered on November 16.

There are two book talks coming up:

Wednesday November 10 at 5:30 p.m., the Jones House: *Remembering Boone* from the Images of America series (Arcadia Press) book talk and signing by Dr. Eric Plaag. Dr. Plaag used images from Digital Watauga.

Thursday, November 18 at 5:30 p.m., the library meeting room: *Boone before Boone: the Archeological Record of Northwest NC* by Dr. Tom Whyte from the Anthropology Department at Appalachian State University.

5. Report of the Regional Director – Jane Blackburn (See attached for details)

Jane Blackburn reports that the region is mostly fully staffed, other than a frozen Shelver position in Wilkes County and one position open in Ashe County for a part-time Adult Services Librarian.

The Watauga Board of Commissioners has voted to re-sign the interlocal agreement. Jane is waiting to hear from Wilkes and Ashe Counties.

Budgets & Finance: Jane reported that all county libraries are on track or slightly better than budgeted. Watauga had collected 35.54% of revenues, and expenditures were at 35.44%. Jane is waiting on the NC legislature to pass a budget with the state aid amounts. Fewer fines and fees revenue was budgeted for 2021, however, all counties are running ahead of fine collection by about 10-15%.

The ARL has received laptop rental and hotspot monthly service fee grant funding, and is investigating another \$40,000 Adapting Technology grant.

6. Report of the Friends of the Library – Monica Caruso on behalf of Melony Winkelmann

The Friends of the Library are in the midst of the holiday book sale which takes place in the Watauga County Library meeting room. The sale starts at 4:00 p.m. on 11/4 for Friends only and runs through 11/6.

There is a need for a Book Sale Committee to delegate the work and to assist with publicity on social media.

Holiday baskets and mugs are for sale, as well as specially priced coffee table books.

The number of social media followers has increased.

The Friends want to frame a photo of former Regional Director Beth Muller with appropriate wording, to install in the meeting room.

Future plans include building a memorial garden to honor some of the many people involved with the Friends in years past; recognizing large donations of books; and recruiting an outreach coordinator to restock Little Free Libraries with donated books.

Friends of the Library membership stands at 252. Jack James is serving as interim membership coordinator until that position is filled.

There will be no staff lunch in 2021 due to the pandemic, but the Friends has approved giving staff gift cards for the holiday, as well as for zoo passes for summer 2022.

There is currently about \$23,000 in the Friends bank account, \$18,000 of which is available. The largest revenue generator has been book sales.

7. Report of Western Watauga Branch – Cheryl Angel

Western Watauga staff wrote and received a grant to expand and refurbish the back deck. Folding chairs and tables have been purchased; other items will be ordered in Spring 2022.

At the last WWB meeting, a membership challenge to bring one or two new members was issued.

Renewal card mailing brought in \$405, with several new members and two new lifetime members. \$175 was generated in book sales from the outdoor book cart since the last report.

Goals, wish list and holiday plans are still being brainstormed, especially with community center seniors.

8. Old Business -

Vice Chair appointment: A call was made for a volunteer to step forward. Despite good-natured goading, Billy Kennedy graciously turned the position down. The appointment was not filled.

Endowment Board opportunity: A call was made for two volunteers to step forward to serve on the Endowment Board. The Board may have up to 4 board members. The appointment was not filled.

9. New Business –

A request was made to compile a list of current Watauga County Board members and their interest in and history with the Watauga County Public Library. Secretary Margaret Love will assemble the information based on comments from this meeting and forward it by the next meeting.

10. Adjournment –

Billy Kennedy moved to adjourn the meeting. Cheryl Angel seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Next meeting will be January 6, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret L. Love