

WATAUGA COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD

Minutes

Thursday, May 1, 2025

4:00 p.m.

Present: Laura Johnson (arrived after agenda item 6); Margaret Love; Mary Stolberg; Patricia Swartzbaugh (chair)

On Microsoft Teams: Hollis Smith, Laura Johnson

Present for the library: Ingrid Hayes (Adult Services); Tammy Holston (Appalachian Regional Library Finance Director & Co-Interim Director); Laura McPherson (Ashe County Librarian & Co-Interim Director)

Absent: Claire Olander (ex-officio); Emily Greene (Watauga County Commissioner); Natalie Harkey; Wendy Jessen; Candice Trexler; Cheryl Angel; Monica Caruso (County Librarian)

1. Call to Order & Welcome

Patti Swartzbaugh called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes – May 1, 2025

There was no quorum at the beginning of the meeting, so minutes' approval was tabled until after agenda Item 6. At that time, Mary Stolberg moved to approve minutes. Laura Johnson seconded. Minutes were approved.

3. Correspondence and Communication – None to report

4. Report of the Watauga County Public Library – Ingrid Hayes for Monica Caruso

Ingrid reported on behalf of Monica:

- We are awaiting the Town of Boone and Watauga County budget proposals.
- Renovation concept plans are out on the library floor to see.
- 2024 staff evaluations will be finished soon; staff are creating new evaluations for next fiscal year
- The Friends of the Library Tea Party scheduled for May 3rd is booked to capacity
- The Friends Annual meeting is scheduled for May 17 and will feature the Junaluska Heritage Society.

5. Report of the Interim Co-Directors – Tammy Holston & Laura McPherson

Administrative: Laura reported that the new Adult Services Manager in Ashe begins work on May 16

- In Watauga County a Youth Services Assistant and a Youth Services Manager are still needed.
- All positions are currently filled in Wilkes County.
- 2024 staff evaluations are due by June 30th, as well as work & development plans for FY 2026.
- The unemployment claim mentioned in a previous meeting was dropped before the hearing date.
- Update on the Director of Library search: the search committee has fielded 18 applicants and conducted 9. Regarding Director interviews, 2 candidates subsequently withdrew. The position has been posted on all the usual sites. Almost half of the candidates have not met preferred requirements. Another interview is scheduled for Monday May 5th. The search committee is holding a meeting next Tuesday to discuss who might be able to come for a second interview.

Grant updates: The ARL has received the full \$402,000 grant from the N.C. Department of Information Technology and has spent \$357,000 of that funding. The tech department will start distributing laptops in mid-May to community members affected by Hurricane Helene. A status report of grant resource use was due by April 30th, including a monthly expense report. Kilby is working on the next phase of ordering.

- The NC Department of Commerce Grant work must be completed by February 2028.
- All 3 libraries submitted grant applications to the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA); results of those applications are expected by June 5th.
- There is concern about the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant process, with the probability of a federal freeze. The most significant issue would be if funding is removed or if state aid changes. The original Senate budget has reduced state aid by \$500,000 and made a separate line for NC Cardinal for \$1.5 million. Some libraries don't participate in NC Cardinal, so they would not be pleased. The bulk of NC Cardinal is paid for by IMLS funding – so all the resource sharing outside of ARL would be affected. (*see director's report*)
- There are some different options – The ARL system had 3,641 unique users in 2023-2024 and borrowed over 30,000 items, making this library system the fifth highest user out of the 52 systems that use it. This is a very high usage compared to our size. We borrow more than we loan.
 - Option 1) Pause resource sharing (option we would choose)
 - Option 2) Decide with whom we will share – all of cost would fall on member libraries. If they had to divide that money up from state aid, we would lose about \$50K, but if they split it up between libraries, it would be over \$80K on us.
 - Silver lining: Creativity opportunity to make the program more sustainable for everyone.
 - Question from Mary Stolberg: Would it be useful to send a letter on behalf of the ARL Board to the NC legislature?
 - We will know about IMLS funding before we know about the state aid budget.
 - Will add letter to regional board meeting agenda.
- *Policy & Governance*: 3 policies will be discussed at the next regional board meeting – meeting room, personnel, and per-transaction rate increase for Square credit card processing. These revisions will be discussed at the regional meeting.

6. Financial Report – Tammy Holston

Tammy reported that the only change to the budget was income from a \$7,880 donation received for Digital Watauga salaries. A cash donation was made towards the staff luncheon; Western Watauga Friends gave \$500 for professional services programming

7. Report of the Friends of the Library – Ingrid Hayes on behalf of Claire Olander

- The Friends of the Library Tea Party scheduled for May 3rd is booked to capacity
- The Friends Annual meeting is scheduled for May 17. The Junaluska Heritage Association will be present as guest speakers, including Susan Keefe & Roberta Jackson. Doris Isaacs (book sorting coordinator) has been nominated for the Hugh Hagaman Volunteer Service Award and will receive the award at the meeting.

8. Friends of Western Watauga Branch – Patti Swartzbaugh on behalf of Cheryl Angel

- The WW Friends have rescheduled the planned basket raffle fundraiser for fall. They will decide at the next meeting when that will be.
- A car has been donated! The value of the vehicle is about \$20,000. The WW Friends want to give it to someone who lost their car in the hurricane and has established a subcommittee to legally handle that. (taxes, etc.) They will have a raffle for it.
- A \$10,000 donation has been received from an anonymous donor.
- There will be a Community BBQ celebration – date TBA
- The WW Friends are working with the senior center to start a community garden.
- There is discussion about purchasing some Internet hot spots. Tammy asked some questions regarding distribution, functionality, and feeds, and suggested that the Friends ask Kilby questions about it.
- The next WW Friends meeting will be June 26th.
- Warren Wilson College is distributing musical instruments for the lending library.

- Dementia support group is ongoing, and is still closed to new members.
- *Ingrid Hayes on behalf of Jackie Cornette:* The dementia project will hold a stuffed animal adoption event on May 20th. There will be a performance by the students participating in the Mabel School dulcimer project on May 8th at 1:00, followed by a reception. The WW Friends will also be adding \$600 in books on Appalachian Heritage to the Mabel School collection.
- Jackie & crew have finished outreach visits for Valle Crucis School students at the Valle Crucis Conference Center and CCC&TI. Sarah and Justin from Adult Services have been helping every week.
- Western Watauga's summer reading program kicks off on June 16th.

9. Old Business – None to report

10. New Business – Patti Swartzbaugh

A few addenda were contributed to the general reporting:

- Laura Johnson reported that the Reading and Rolling program is starting.
- Ingrid Hayes reported that the VITA tax assistance program is finished, with 300 patrons helped. A huge thank you to ASU is due for their assistance with this year's VITA.
- Repair Hub will be held on May 10th from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Monica has asked that the county add a ramp and a handrail to the back of meeting room.

11. Adjournment – Patricia Swartzbaugh adjourned the meeting at 4:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret L. Love