

# WATAUGA COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD

## Minutes

Thursday, January 30, 2025 (rescheduled due to weather)

4:00 p.m.

**Present:** Emily Greene (Watauga County Commissioner), Natalie Harkey, Wendy Jessen, Laura Johnson, Margaret Love, Hollis Smith, Patricia Swartzbaugh (chair), Candice Trexler

**Present for the library:** Monica Caruso (Watauga County Librarian), Monica Gowan (Seed Librarian), Ingrid Hayes (Adult Services), Tammy Holston (Appalachian Regional Library Finance Director & Co-Interim Director), Laura McPherson (Ashe County Librarian & Co-Interim Director), Abraham Williams (Youth Services)

**On Speaker Phone:** Mary Stolberg (Our Internet was not working)

**Absent:** Cheryl Angel (ex-officio), Claire Olander (ex-officio)

### 1. Call to Order & Welcome

Patti Swartzbaugh called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. She introduced members of staff attending the meeting (Ingrid, Monica Gowan, Abe, and Laura).

### 2. Approval of Minutes – November 7, 2024

Minutes from November 7 were reviewed - Natalie Harkey moved to approve the minutes as written/Hollis Smith seconded. Minutes were approved.

### 3. Correspondence and Communication – None to report

### 4. Guest Monica Gowan – Seed Library Volunteer

- Monica Gowan shared details about the Seed Library and requested help in spreading the word. Patrons can donate prepackaged seeds as well as select seeds for planting. One of the chief advantages of maintaining a seed library is acclimating seeds to the climate. A seed saving workshop will be offered when it can be rescheduled.

### 5. Report of the Watauga County Public Library - Monica Caruso

- Monica Caruso introduced Abe Williams, Interim Youth Services Manager.
- Monica shared that there will be a raffle basket drawing sponsored by Friends of the Library to benefit the expansion project. Tickets are \$3 or 2 for \$5. The drawing will be held on February 12.
- Abe elaborated on upcoming activities in Youth Services, including a creative writing club, a manga club, visits by the Watauga High School STEM club, a chess club, a program on "[Thinking Money for Kids](#)" (through the American Library Association, Tween & Teen hangouts, and a revival of a Dungeons & Dragons club in March. He also mentioned an Oreo Taste-Testing Contest that sounds deliciously artery-clogging.
- Monica mentioned the MyLibro app and encouraged its use.
- Monica mentioned that the LSTA grant application is due on March 1. The grant application is being written to support three privacy pods.
- Adult Services Manager Ingrid Hayes reported that the ongoing Repair Hub workshops are very successful. She said that the most popular repair item is sharpening.
- There will be a Mark Anderson watercolor workshop coming soon for Next Chapter Book Club
- VITA Tax Assistance appointments have started. Zach LaChance with the Appalachian State Accounting Department will be coordinating. The Watauga County Public Library is the only place in Boone that offers tax preparation assistance for free.

- The patio project is going well, especially with the infusion of cash from a generous donation.
- On February 4-7, the WCL will co-sponsor visits from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pack-Horse Librarians, who are offering free books.
- The Dulcimer Project is continuing, this time at Mabel School, with 4<sup>th</sup> graders. The grassroots grant-funded project will be led by dulcimer teacher Mary Greene. Children will make their own dulcimers, take lessons, and have a performance.

#### **6. Report of the Interim Co-Directors – Tammy Holston & Laura McPherson**

- Tammy Holston shared that all library positions are filled in Ashe County. Watauga County is conducting a search for a Youth Services Manager, Youth Services Specialist, and a Shelver. All positions in Wilkes County are filled.
- Evaluation templates for staff evaluations will be released soon.
- There will be an all-staff training in March, possibly with NC Cardinal.
- Laura McPherson reported that staff have been working on a meeting room policy revision; the revision will be reviewed and approved by the regional board.
- Tammy said that an NCDLT Digital Champion Grant has been awarded, and we will be receiving equipment, including laptops for community members who had losses during Hurricane Helene.
- An NC Department of Commerce Downtown Development grant for renovation funds has been submitted.
- A John Henry Eldred Jr. Foundation Grant has been received and distributed, providing LaunchPads for children and older adults in Ashe County; Seed Library programming and supplies in Watauga County; and summer reading programs and cooking programs in Wilkes County.
- Tammy and Laura attended the NCPL Directors Association in December to hear presentations from the State Library of NC and the NC Digital Heritage Center, as well as a seminar on public records requests.
- Tammy attended the North Carolina Capital Management Trust meeting in Morganton.

#### **7. Financial Report – Tammy Holston**

- Tammy reported that two restricted donations have been received, one for Digital Watauga Technicians and the other for the library expansion, as well as donations for patio upgrades and adult books.
- Other grants have been received from the John Henry Eldred, Jr. Foundation and the VITA program.

#### **Report of the Friends of the Library – Monica Caruso on behalf of Claire Olander**

- Monica reported above that the raffle basket drawing will be February 12.
- A membership marketing task force has been formed.
- The quality of sorting books for the in-house book sales has increased. Volunteers have a lot of ideas for making the room more attractive and creating more space for bookshelves.
- The December 2024 book sale was the most successful since moving the sale back to the WCL meeting room. The Friends purchased a second Square credit card reading device, which helped with getting customers through check-out lines faster. The Square devices also track information about the categories of books sold. Specially priced books are the bestselling categories.
- New bookmarks to advertise the June book sale are available.
- The FOL Annual Meeting will be held on May 17. The Junaluska Heritage Association will present a panel at the meeting.
- Membership has grown: currently 3 members are at the \$1,000 level; 8 are at the \$100-\$500 level; and the FOL welcomed 22 new members (mostly at the December book sale).
- The FOL are currently researching possibilities with the Venmo sales platform, as well as a solicitation license and a sales tax refund application.
- The FOL will appoint their executive committee at their next meeting.
- Anita Clemmer will be joining the Endowment Council as a Friends appointee.
- The ASU Community Partners Fair will be February 11. Monica will be attending.
- June 5-7 marks the next Big Book Sale.

**8. Friends of Western Watauga Branch** – Jackie Cornette on behalf of Cheryl Angel

- The next meeting will be held in March, when the rescheduling of the raffle baskets will be discussed.
- As mentioned, the Watauga Arts Council awarded a grassroots grant to continue to provide dulcimer lessons at Mabel School from March through May.
- Jackie reported that the Christmas Event was a success. The “Jingle & Mingle” event December 17-19 distributed 100 bags of goodies, with bag decorations courtesy of [Revolution Boone](#) and donated items from the Mast Store.
- The Dementia Support Group continues; a project coordinator was interviewed for a position, and there are new ASU students assisting.

**9. Old Business** – Patti Swartzbaugh

- Mary Stolberg was approved to serve on the Appalachian Regional Library Board.

**10. New Business** – Monica Caruso

- Natalie Harkey volunteered to serve on the Appalachian Regional Library Board. Margaret Love moved to accept the nomination, and Laura Johnson seconded. The motion to accept Natalie’s nomination was approved.

**11. Adjournment** – Patti Swartzbaugh adjourned the meeting at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret L. Love