

# WATAUGA COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD

## *Minutes*

Thursday, March 7, 2024

1:30 pm

**Present:** Sandra Basel (Chair), Braxton Eggers, Natalie Harkey, Roberta Jackson, Laura Johnson, Margaret Love, Patricia Swartzbaugh, Candice Trexler

**On Zoom:** Cheryl Angel (ex-officio)

**Present for the library:** Monica Caruso (Watauga County Librarian), Tammy Holston (Appalachian Regional Library Finance Manager), Jacob Stark (ARL Director) – *on Zoom*

**Absent:** Claire Olander (ex-officio)

### **1. Call to Order & Welcome**

Chair Sandra Basel called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

### **2. Approval of Minutes – January 4, 2024**

Patti Swartzbaugh moved to accept the minutes as written; Natalie Harkey seconded. Minutes were accepted.

### **3. Correspondence and Communication**

- Monica Caruso reported on late Library Board member Carol Deal’s funeral, which was held on February 15.
- Sandra Basel distributed packets of information, including an updated Board list and information regarding the Regional Library Board.
- Monica Caruso reported that former Board member Max Ruthless has moved out of the area, and with Carol Deal’s passing, there is a vacancy for Vice Chair. Patti Swartzbaugh volunteered to complete Max’s term as Vice Chair.

### **4. Report of the Watauga County Library/Five Year Plan Progress – Monica Caruso**

- Monica reported that the new MyLibro app is now active. New security cameras have been installed, as well as a new DVR. County staff pressure washed the back patio, and there are new canvases displayed around the library. Thanks to Donna Breitenstein and maintenance crew Kevin and Robert from Watauga County.
- The WCPL will host a shred truck on April 26 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., thanks to funding from the Friends of the Watauga County Public Library and the Downtown Boone Development Association.
- Adelia Daly and Gramm Coffman, Digital Watauga Technicians, have installed an exhibit at the Jones House titled “Tourism: Behind the Scenes” using images from the Digital Watauga collection. They will give a gallery talk on March 1.
- The new outreach van has gotten plenty of use.
- Olivia Burke, Park Ranger for the Highlands District of the Blue Ridge Parkway, returns to the Watauga County Public Library on Thursday, April 11 at 5:30 p.m. She will lead a discussion about how National Parks came to be, how they’re managed, and where the Blue Ridge Parkway fits into the mix. Light refreshments will be served.
- The library expansion committee met on Friday, March 1. Appalachian State University Communications professor Deb Paolos led a discussion on “how to be persuasive.” The silent phase of fundraising will begin on April 15, and will include contacting current prospects, building relationships with potential donors, and creating a donor management system. Various grant opportunities will also be explored.
- Planning for the summer reading programming is ongoing.

## **5. Report of the Regional Director – Jacob Stark**

- Jacob provided a goals overview, which includes building a proposal to municipalities to move to a merit-based pay system.
- \$6,000 per county has been designated towards the purchase of e-books.
- Several regional policies are being amended, including the User Code of Conduct.
- All regional libraries will be closed on April 19 for staff training at the Wilkes County Public Library.
- Capital project grants are being explored through the [NC Department of Commerce](#), including those geared towards infrastructure improvements, specifically those to meet existing building codes.
- Training on Office 365 continues for staff, which has shown advancements in cross-county collaboration.

## **6. Finance Report – Tammy Holston**

- Tammy reviewed small budget revisions for the 2023-2024 financial year. Two restricted donations were made for adult supplies and to support the shred truck (thanks to the Downtown Boone Development Association and the Friends of the Library).
- Since health insurance rates have increased by 15%, funds were moved from dental insurance expense line item to group health.
- Grant income includes an adult services coalition grant of \$1,000 which will go towards adult programming.
- For the Watauga County 2024-2025 budget, the WCPL is requesting a total budget increase of 5.5% with 5% toward cost-of-living raises, and a .5% increase to cover the increase in insurance costs.

## **7. Report of the Friends of the Library – Monica Caruso**

- Monica reported on behalf of the Friends of the Library in Claire Olander's absence.
- The storage facility where the Friends Book Sales books are held has reduced the monthly fee by \$20/month.
- The Friends are still exploring the tax implications for raising money through the book sales.
- Friends membership currently stands at 269, with 7 new members since January 2024.
- Specially priced "Fab Finds" books are exhibited in books for sale and are being listed on Facebook.
- Puzzle sales are going particularly well.
- The free book cart has helped relieve some of the backlog of unsold books.
- A new sorters' guide is being provided to volunteers.
- Student volunteers Beatrix and Austin have helped develop a sales platform for higher value items.
- Plans continue for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary gala, to be held September 21<sup>st</sup>, including honoring outstanding volunteers with an award to be presented at the event.
- The Friends also plans to host a staff appreciation lunch in the fall.
- Research has shown that the Watauga Friends of the Library have the lowest membership rates in the region; discussion is underway to raise membership costs to be more in keeping with other library systems.

## **8. Report of Western Watauga Branch – Cheryl Angel**

- The new Wi-Fi printer is up and running.
- Like the main branch, the Western Watauga branch is enjoying the new MyLibro app.
- A new audio book/book hybrid, [Playaway Wonderbooks](#), is now in stock.
- Book sales continue, and are expected to pick up in the summer.
- An eclipse event will be held on Monday, April 8, and morning story time continues on Thursday, April 11.
- Planning for summer reading is now underway.
- The book club's selection for March is [Lessons in Chemistry](#), and April's selection is [Apples Never Fall](#).
- The book club plans to go to the Barter Theatre
- Cheryl Angel is now serving as secretary.

## **9. Old Business – None to report.**

**10. New Business – Monica Caruso**

- With three openings on the local board and one opening for the regional board now looming, a nominating committee and advertisement for new board members is necessary. Natalie and Sandy both offered to be on the committee. Applications are taken through Watauga County, and board members are appointed by the Watauga County Commissioners. Monica encouraged Board members to pass along suggestions for promotion of the vacancies.
- Natalie Harkey volunteered to post opening advertisements through the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce.
- The question was raised about the dates and times of Board meetings, and whether having the meetings during the day keeps working people from applying. ***The time for meetings will be on the agenda for the next board meeting.***

**10. Adjournment** – Margaret Love moved to adjourn the meeting; Patti Swartzbaugh seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret L. Love