

# WATAUGA COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD

## Minutes

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

4:00 p.m.

**Present:** Cheryl Angel; Lisa Reynolds, FOL (ex-officio); Natalie Harkey; Margaret Love, Secretary; Mary Stolberg; Patricia Swartzbaugh (chair); Emily Greene (Watauga County Commissioner); Natalie Harkey; Candice Trexler

**Present for the library:** Monica Caruso (Watauga County Librarian); Jackie Cornette (Western Watauga Branch Librarian); Ingrid Hayes (Adult Services), Tammy Holston (Appalachian Regional Library Finance Director & Co-Interim Director), Laura McPherson (Ashe County Librarian & Co-Interim Director)

**Absent:** Wendy Jessen, Hollis Smith

### 1. Call to Order & Welcome

Patti Swartzbaugh called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

- Patti introduced Russell Taylor

### 2. Approval of Minutes – July 10, 2025

- Margaret Love moved to accept the minutes as presented; Natalie Harkey seconded. Minutes were approved.

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

### 4. Report of the Watauga County Public Library –Monica Caruso

- Monica reported that there is a part-time Shelver opening.
- Mark calendars for 11/21 @ 9:30 – annual volunteer breakfast
- Thanked Patti, Cheryl, Mary Stolberg – attended very informative Trustees workshop last week. Tammy mentioned that there is a new section on the Private Board page with the trustee manuals and training for Board members.
- Renovation committee planning events – winter gathering kickoff for public phase of solicitation. Possibly at Solarium@ Appstate as a venue. Hoping for first of year, but it could be beginning of spring to start biggest one.
  - They are considering a family fun event at a local brewery for the spring.
  - Author speaker possibility
  - 4 committees – raffles, first gala, second gala, merchandise
  - Potluck 11/3 – G.A.P.S. – women get together in the High Country and hear about a cause that they support from a speaker representing that organization
  - Stick Boy Bread Bread Company is doing a fundraiser whereby you vote for your favorite non-profit Any proceeds will go toward the renovation project.
  - Oct. 3 @ 10 – next meeting of renovation committee
- Excited about LSTA grant – 3 modular rooms will be purchased soon. Using same vendor as Catawba County Public Library.
- Jackie stated that their big event on 9/4 was very successful. Sponsored first Thursday community meal in celebration of Helene recovery – 200 people came. Some became new Friends members & there was a lot of interest in the Friends. They also delivered dinners to 15 home-bound, the majority of whom were bookmobile patrons.

### 6. Report of the Director – Russell Taylor

- 2 open positions in Ashe including an Assistant Circulation Manager.
- Vickie Milam – retired as of 9/4 – Jim Gunther stepped up as the Technical Services Manager
- Watauga – has a part-time Shelver opening
- Wilkes – new Adult Services Manager is Taylor Hazen
- Deb Becknel – moved to Traphill Branch for part time position and leaves her part-time position available
- *Grant updates:* The ARL has received the full \$402,000 grant from the N.C. Department of Information Technology and has spent \$377,000 of that funding. Over 134 laptops have been distributed to community members affected by Hurricane Helene. A second round of distribution is planned. Warranties will run out, so they need to be distributed asap. Distributions are made based on referrals from local social services agencies. Laptops are only available to individuals, not to businesses that were affected by the Hurricane. Over 200 laptops remain to be distributed.
- *LSTA Grants:* Ashe \$37.5 thousand with match– purchased new vehicle. Need to get wrapped. Watauga – will purchase three modular conference rooms
- 8/4 – Dept. of Commerce employee did a site inspection ahead of the renovation grant. Funds need to be spent by 2027.
- 2025-2026 state budget is still pending approval, so don't know anything about Cardinal, etc.
- *Policy:* Collection development policies & patron code of conduct policies. Post those policies around so that patrons know what expectations are. We will revise these next.
- *Kilby:* Shifting some from 365 → different tier? Wireless network has been updated to prevent Torrent activity.
- E-rate reimbursement for 2025-2026 – filing those right now.
- *Upgrade to Cardinal will take place in November.*
- Upgrading servers & disaster recovery systems. No noticeable down time for that.
- Russell: back and forth between libraries. 10/1 – gone to new Directors' orientation in Raleigh. Staff will rotate days and attend the October NCLA conference in Winston. ½ day – Ashe staff training 10/10 and Watauga 12/18.

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

- Budget adjustments - \$8,416 for Digital Watauga salaries; \$2k donation for Youth Books; had to adjust restricted donation that was received in July for building renovation fund because they paid for it on a credit card, so had to subtract fee of \$2.66; Adult books - \$14.50; Supply donations - \$139 for Repair Hub; Mileage line added \$250; out of America 250 grant, had written in \$500 funding to cover paper & printing and added that to Misc. supply line; NCCMT fund amount added \$154 in dividends for a total of \$43K
- Russell – regarding carpeting in conference & break rooms... we may want to use NCCMT funds to replace carpet in both rooms with wood or LVP, and to paint. Don't have an estimate for costs. These 2 rooms are not in renovation scope other than painting possibly. We'd need county approval. We'd be giving the public a preview of effects of renovations. This would be a jump-start on making some things look better.
- Patti asked if the County is responsible for these things.
- Tammy – technically yes. Emily Greene was going to ask about the process.
- Monica – will check to see if included in county maintenance budget (not line-itemed).
- Jackie said that paint was donated by New River Building Supply the last time (10 years ago). Worth asking Lowes or someone.
- Mary – the county might be more willing to help if paint & supplies are donated.
- Ingrid – back door slippery when icy, so wood/lvp might add to danger? Accessibility issues.

## **Report of the Friends of the Library – Lisa Reynolds**

- Lisa Reynolds reported – Fall Ino Books for Readers – 35 registered. Special programs and events committee. Judy Geary of HC Writers spoke about publishing; Joseph Behntanti, Hilda Downer and Jess Palmer about poetry. Jim Hamilton spoke about ginseng in the afternoon session. They will do

something like this again. Ashe has been doing this for quite a while through the Ashe County Literary Festival each September, so they want to replicate their success.

- Used book store update: we're the only used book store in town. July sales were \$2,864. In the summer, prices increased by \$.50 and they focused on marketing. Martha (FOL president) is good at marketing and they increased the social media presence.
- Still pay \$195/ month for storage and it is a big expense.
- Resolution in memory of FOL volunteers who have passed this year. Marsha Hoffman, Robert Soeder, and Malcolm Tanigawa – printed sheets to give to family members in memory.
- Renovation committee – raised 27% of budget so far, mostly in grants. \$10k came from Blue Ridge Energy grant. Donna Brightenstein & Lisa – spoke to over 100 people at the High Country Realtors Association meeting. Will be talking to civic, professional groups, etc. Will work on Individual fundraising as well, and get-togethers.

#### **8. Friends of Western Watauga Branch –Cheryl Angel for Tom Shessler**

- Car raffle went well. Quiet Givers did a lovely write-up. Focused on collaboration between FOL -WW & QG.
- Spent a little money from Friends just to register, title, gift card, etc.
- Basket raffles – 7 nicely put-together baskets. Tickets are \$2 each or 3 for \$5. Basket values range from \$180-over \$400. On display until drawing, probably in December at Christmas event. Sold 58 at barbecue dinner.
- Dementia Project has produced a new brochure. Provides resources for dementia and Alzheimer's in the county. Continues to be very successful. Trying to raise awareness for caregivers. Hope to get day care center for caregiver respite.
- Summer reading was a big success. The bridge between Cove Creek School was washed out, so not as many kids. 226 vs. normal of 315. Circulation numbers were up considerably, to over 1,700, though.
- Talking about Christmas celebration – probably 12/17.
- Still have grant money left from the \$10k. The Community garden was not workable. Looking now at rebuilding the recreation/play area at Cove Creek School that was destroyed in hurricane. Possibility of matching grant – sensory area for play area.
  - (discussion about bridge @ Cove Creek)

#### **9. Old Business – Patti Swartzbaugh**

None to report

#### **10. New Business – Patti Swartzbaugh**

- Vice President Hollis Smith moved to Raleigh so there is a spot open. Need nomination committee to find another member. Interested people will send resume and express interest. After first of year, they will meet. Natalie will be on it, as will Patti and Monica
- Need new VP. Asked to think about it.
- Conflict of Interest forms – Tammy – ethics & conflict of interest. Must sign.
- Parking lot – Russell – people are parking in the lot who are not patrons. County property in front, Town of Boone spots in back. Lots of employees from downtown are parking in the lot all day. He and Tammy wrote a letter to businesses to ask employees not to park in lot. Parking attendant only here sporadically because of need to cover here, rec center, etc. Flyer will be changed to be a little bit more forceful. Staff have seen ASU students come in, get parking pass, then wander off, etc. Will see if commissioners want to do anything further. Apparently, managers have been telling employees to park here. Natalie recommends going to Lane and telling her what's going on. The county side is the problem. Something could be put out on social media.

#### **11. Adjournment - Patti Swartzbaugh adjourned the meeting at 4:58 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret L. Love