

Oconee County Library Board Meeting
Minutes for July 12, 2021
4:30 p.m.
Bogart Library

The following members of the Board were present: Chairman Mark Campbell, Vice-Chairperson Rubielen Norris, Secretary Laura French, Fred Lutz, Angela Moss-Hill, Jonathan Kirkpatrick, Deanna Craft, Rachel Watson, Mike Eddy, Daphne Norton. Members absent from the meeting included: Soraia Santos-Felgenhauer, Mandy Marable.

Oconee County Library and Athens Regional Library System members were also present, including Valerie Bell, Toby Mayfield, and Donna Butler.

Upon motion by Mr. Lutz, seconded by Mr. Eddy, the minutes of the April 2021 meeting were approved, with one correction to the spelling of Ms. Craft's name.

Ms. Mayfield gave a report to the Board regarding region operations. A copy of the written report "2021 July Librarian's Report to Library Board" was given to all Board members.

Ms. Butler provided a report to the Board regarding library programming and usage. The community's use of the library is increasing, well beyond 2020 numbers, but is still below 2019 figures. A few in-person events for children have been held outside. Summer reading club is in full swing. The library has begun in-person events for teenagers and adults. Social distancing can be maintained due to the numbers of patrons participating.

Ms. Bell advised that September is Library month, and several celebrations and events will be held. The internet speed at the libraries will be increased soon due to a change in the local internet provider.

The Friends of the Library are open and operating a few days each week. The Friends have also begun a guest author lecture series. The Oconee Friends are doing pop-up book sales and will have a full sale in September.

Chairman Campbell provided a report to the Board regarding the Wire Park Oconee Library location. Proposals are open for architects to submit their suggestions and ideas to the library system. Eight firms submitted proposals to the Board for review and consideration. Mr. Campbell is pleased with the response from interested firms and looks forward to the committee and the Board's full review. Ms. Norris and Mr. Eddy attended the opening of the proposals. Ms. Bell advised that the City of Watkinsville has given its capital contribution of \$60,000 to the Oconee Library. The funds are earmarked and reserved for use on the new Oconee Library at Wire Park.

Chairman Campbell presented a report to the Board regarding the book entitled Silence is My Mother Tongue by the author Sulaiman Addonia. A comprehensive written report and

summary of the book were provided to the Board for review and consideration. The Library Bill of Rights was reviewed. The recommendation of the Intellectual Freedom Committee is to maintain the book in the Adult Fiction section. Mr. Eddy thanked Mr. Mitchell for his comprehensive report, noting that while book topics and themes may be difficult and disturbing, it is the duty and responsibility of libraries to afford access and education to such materials. Upon recommendation of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, seconded by Ms. French, the Board unanimously approved maintaining the book in question in the Adult Fiction section of the library.

Chairman Campbell reviewed the budget for FY2022. A written budget was provided to the Board. Although revenues have been less than anticipated, Chairman Campbell noted that management and staff have done a great job of minimizing expenses. There are revenues available that can be moved into the reserve fund. Ms. Bell has recommended that the Board consider moving \$41,746.30 into the reserve fund for use on future library needs.

Chairman Campbell also advised the Board that the Oconee County Board of Commissioners increased its library funding by 2% over FY2021 levels.

Mr. Eddy raised the issues of employee compensation and library fines. The Board and management discussed salary levels especially considering the current employment environment. Libraries are generally moving to a “no fine” rule due to the library’s mission of public service. Mr. Eddy asked management to provide an analysis to the Board of market comparables, as well as the impact on the overall budget of raising salaries within the Oconee Library System.

Ms. Norris inquired about the reduction in the “books and AV materials” budget line item. There is potential that the Friends may be able to assist with this budgetary item. Ms. Butler suggested that with the library circulation numbers down, it may be reasonable to reduce expenditures for books and AV materials this year. The librarians observe that patrons continue to use curbside pickup as well as holds, rather than browsing in the library facilities.

Mr. Lutz inquired about the “programming incentives” line item.

Ms. Norris made a motion to approve the FY2022 budget as amended. Her motion was seconded by Mr. Kirkpatrick, and unanimously approved by the Board.

Chairman Campbell advised the Board that it was in order to consider Covid relief supplemental compensation for Oconee Library system employees in the amount of \$1,000 per employee. Upon motion by Mr. Eddy, seconded by Ms. Norton, the Board unanimously approved the supplemental compensation.

Mr. Eddy raised the question of the October 2021 Board meeting. Ms. French noted that the October meeting falls on October 11, which is Columbus Day. Ms. Butler advised the Board that the libraries are busier on school holidays. A suggested alternate date is October 18, 2021

at 4:30 pm on the Bogart branch. Ms. Norris made a motion that the October 2021 Board meeting be held on October 18, 2021; such motion was seconded by Ms. Moss-Hill, and passed by the Board unanimously.

Chairman of the Board of Commissioners John Daniell visited the Board. He thanked the members for their work on behalf of the citizens of Oconee County.

There being no further business, upon motion by Ms. Watson, seconded by Ms. Norton, the meeting adjourned at 5:44 p.m.

Mark Campbell, Chairman

Laura French, Secretary