

Minutes of the Meeting of the
Lafayette Public Library Board of Control

March 17, 2025

Recordings of all meetings can be found on the Library Board of Control page of the Lafayette Public Library website.

The regular meeting of the Lafayette Public Library Board of Control was held in the meeting room on the 2nd floor of the Main Library at 301 West Congress Street on March 17, 2025. Allan Moore, Vice President of the Board, called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

I. Roll Call and Invocation

Board Members Present: Allan Moore, Board Vice President; Robert Judge; Ella Arsement; Rena Bradley; Eric Baquet

Board Members Absent: Daniel Kelly, Board President; Erasto Padron

Other Staff Present: Danny Gillane, Library Director; Dawn Williams, Assistant Director; Larry Angelle, Library Operations Manager; Nancy Hebert, Administrative Assistant

The invocation was led by Robert Judge.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Allan Moore led the board in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Comments from the Library Board

Ella Arsement provided an update on the Northeast Library Committee. There being no business, the March 13, 2025 meeting was canceled. The next meeting is scheduled for April 17, 2025.

IV. Facilities & Financial Update

Main Library was closed from March 11 through March 14 due to a plumbing issue. Lafayette Utilities System and a plumbing company helped to reconnect the library to the sewer system.

The automatic door at North Regional is having issues, and a company is addressing the problem.

South Regional Library project is moving into phase III. Staff are relocating books from the children's area to allow work to proceed.

There are cracks in the sheetrock and on the brick wall in the courtyard at the West Regional Library, and the library is looking into the issue.

The library has collected 13M and has spent 4.8M this fiscal year.

Larry Angelle was welcomed back as Library Operations Manager.

V. Assistant Director's Report

Staff changes were announced to the Board. Library should be fully staffed within weeks.

Staff is still in the planning phase of the 2025 Summer Reading Challenge. A t-shirt design competition was held, and Lan Pham's design was selected to be featured on the Summer Reading Kickoff's t-shirts. The Friends of the Library will provide shirts for all staff.

Statistics were presented to the Board. Despite closures due to Mardi Gras and Main's closure due to plumbing issues, the library recorded a total of 61,922 visitors and 305 programs were offered to patrons.

Assistant Director attended the Friends of the Library meeting, the Library Foundation meeting, and the Bayouland meeting. They also attended the Summer Reading Program Kickoff meeting and the teen/adult programming meeting. Assistant Director attended storytimes at East, West, and North.

Main will host *An Evening with Denise Lewis Patrick*, the author of this year's Lafayette Reads Together selection, on Wednesday, March 26 at 6:00 PM.

VI. Director's Report

The Director spent a significant portion of the month addressing Main's plumbing issues and conducting ratings interviews for the Library Operations Manager.

Director attended the Bayouland and Friends of the Lafayette Public Library meetings. Director has attended the South Regional construction meetings.

Director attended training on the Tyler ERP system. Director has dedicated a considerable amount of time working with Human Resources.

Director supplied the board with all available information regarding the Northeast Library in preparation of the March 17, 2025 meeting.

VII. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2025 Regular Board Meeting was made by Rena Bradley and seconded by Ella Arsement.

Yeas: Moore, Judge, Arsement, Bradley, Baquet

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Kelly, Padron

The motion carried.

VIII. Unfinished Business

A. Marketing

A motion was made by Allan Moore for the Board to give the Director the permission to submit a proposal to the Professional Services Committee and for the award of a Professional Services contract related to library marketing and to exercise that contract. This was seconded by Rena Bradley.

Yeas: Moore, Judge, Arsement, Bradley, Baquet

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Kelly, Padron.

The motion carried.

B. Northeast Library

Ella Arsement stated that the Northeast Library Committee voted unanimously to recommend Option 1, the 20,500 SF plan. When the decision was made by the Committee to recommend the largest facility, they did not talk in-depth about the costs to build the library, run the library, or how much it would cost to run all ten libraries.

The committee stated that the library system has a healthy fund balance of 30-34 million dollars.

Board members do see the value of building the Northeast Library. The needs were strongly expressed by the community. It was stated that Evangeline Thruway was a barrier for some people, technology is needed for educational purposes, a space for children is needed so they can be encouraged to learn, and the community needs meeting and study spaces.

Arsement stated that the library system may have 30-34 million now but as a trustee she has to answer to the public about decisions made, and that she is very interested in

the long-term effects of building the largest library. She stated that she cannot consciously allow the library system to go backward and be in the red like they were just a few short years ago, especially if there is something that can be done to prevent this from occurring again.

To get out of that financial hole, there were drastic cuts that had to be made which included cuts to operations. Capital projects were put on hold or downsized. Staffing was downsized. Library hours were cut. These changes were made so that the library system could get its finances back on track and in a position where the Board and library staff could move forward in the process of building the Northeast Library.

Factors that need to be considered and discussed when considering the size of the Northeast Library include the following: the needs of the patrons this library will serve, the number of people the Northeast Library will be serving, and the cost to run all ten libraries.

Information on population was given from different sources. Arsement stated that information given from Consultant Maureen Arndt with 720 design stated that the population in 2023 for a 1-mile radius was 5,202, a 3-mile radius was 41,621 and a 5-mile radius was 78,411. Anticipated projection for population growth for the year 2028 for a 1-mile radius was 5,193, a 3-mile radius was 42,527, and a 5-mile radius was 80,116.

Rena Bradley presented a statement from Daniel Kelly:

I, Daniel Kelly, President of the Library Board of Control, do support the building of the Northeast Regional Library and I support the adoption of Option 1 for the library's construction.

Rena Bradley presented a statement from Parish Councilman Donald Richard:

I want to express my support for building the library and utilizing the option that includes the auditorium. That area of the Parish is growing and will continue to grow as we offer more opportunities such as the library. I am behind the largest option.

After the previous meeting, Bradley requested staff provide a three-mile and five-mile radius. The three-mile radius that was estimated for the Northeast Library was 65,318 and the five-mile was 114,882. She stated the consultant also advocated for building the largest option. This will be the only library for the entire region of the north and northeast side of the I49 corridor. A smaller option will not meet the growing demands of the expanding population that was demonstrated in the Lafayette Economic Development Authority's research. This will offer the second public meeting space in the area. The population in the surrounding area has a younger age demographic. Families in the new housing developments are young with small children.

Demographic research done by 720 design showed half of the population in a five-mile radius was below the age of 39.

Bradley stated that this library will also serve as a safe space for teenagers when schools are closed. There will be library opportunities from the times of 4-9 PM. The library fund balance currently has money to cover construction and operating costs for the largest option. If the smaller option is built with the intention to expand later, the price of construction will increase. This will also disrupt library services and patron use. More computers offer internet access to a population in critical need. There are public, private, parochial, charter, and business schools in the area. The largest design option will reinforce children's learning opportunities through programs and reading and reinforce the 6M Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) program at Baranco and Faulk.

Robert Judge commended the work done over the previous month. Judge reached out to Ziler Architects and asked if doing something that wasn't in the original 13,500 square foot scope would break the legal obligation. There would be no legal implications to amend the contract. In 2018, 8M was designated by Kenneth Boudreaux for the Northeast Library. The allocated amount and the requested square footage were determined by the cost and size of West Regional Library. It was asked why larger sizes were considered. Judge stated that the Board has a duty to ensure the library remains viable and financially stable. He commended the Director and Library Operations Manager for maintaining a healthy overall library budget. He emphasized the need to strike a balance between this project, meeting the needs of an underserved community, and ensuring the well-being of the entire system.

Director stated that after speaking with the Consultant and the Library Operations Manager, Library Administration's recommendation was to choose the 17,500 square foot option, as it would be an adequate and suitable library size for the area, based on experience with previous construction projects and existing libraries.

Projected budget documents sent to the Board included operational costs for Options 1 and 2. There is sufficient funding in the balance to sustain Option 1 through 2034.

Ziler Architects stated that within the original 8M set aside, 5.7M was considered construction costs and 2.3M was for soft costs. These are the costs for the consultant, architect, purchasing property, and various other things. The original contract included a warehouse. The library's current lease on warehouse space may last 2 more years.

Allan Moore expressed his gratitude to the Board, library staff, Committee, and Consultant for the extensive data provided to ensure the Board fulfills its responsibility of maintaining a library system that will serve future generations to the best of their ability.

Mayor-President Monique Boulet thanked the Board, the Committee, and library staff. She acknowledged that the community had faced many challenges over the years and

expressed gratitude to Councilman Boudreaux for starting the effort. Mayor-President Boulet mentioned that her signature appeared on all official documentation. She expressed curiosity about the legal structure, noting that while the parish council appoints the Board, the Mayor-President is the one who signs the paperwork. She also pointed out that most boards and commissions in Lafayette are advisory in nature.

City-Parish Attorney Pat Ottinger provided an overview of the Board's authority. The Board is appointed by the Parish Council, and their responsibilities primarily involve personnel and administration of the library proper. When it comes to contracts, the Parish Council has the authority to approve and the Mayor-President to execute. There are a series of Attorney General opinions that are consistent in that it is the responsibility of the Parish to administer contracts. Prior libraries have been built through the Public Works department as it is an LCG project in that regard. This is a Parish contract that is to be administered by Lafayette Consolidated Government which is composed of the Parish and under the auspices of the Parish Council to approve budgetary matters in contracts of this type. Ottinger stated that the Board's perspectives were certainly encouraged and welcomed. He explained that contracts were in place, and the land had been acquired in accordance with the ordinance and budget revisions, and the Ziler contract was also in effect. If a change order was necessary, it would need to be initiated by the administration. He reiterated his thanks to the Board for its consideration of those matters but emphasized that this is ultimately a Parish project to be administered by the Public Works Department of the Lafayette Consolidated Government.

Mayor-President Monique Boulet said she would like to take the Board's recommendations, working with the Parish Council, and administer them with the Parish Council in mind. She stated that there was some misunderstanding in the community, with the belief that the decision rested solely with the Board. She expressed her gratitude once again for the effort put in, noting that she signs many contracts each day. She added that the Parish Council also appreciated the effort, and together, the three bodies - the Administration, the Parish Council, and the Board - will work to move the project forward.

Allan Moore made a motion that the Board support the construction of a 20,500 square foot library with the requested additional warehouse space. Furthermore, he proposed that a minimum of the 1200 square feet of the additional 3,000 square feet above the requested 17,500 square feet option be specifically designated for the creation of a Makerspace. This Makerspace should be designed to rival any Makerspace in all of South Louisiana providing our Northeast Lafayette community with direct access to exceptional resources and opportunity for creativity and innovation, utilizing cutting-edge technology such as: artificial intelligence, 3D printers, laser cutters, CNC machines, virtual reality systems, augmented reality tools, robotics kits, electronics prototyping stations, advanced software for design and engineering, and state-of-the-art media production tools. This was seconded by Rena Bradley.

Tom Houdek, Cindi Fox, James Rees, Kenneth Boudreaux, Andrew Duhon, Mitzi Miller Maddox, Conrad T. Comeaux, Margaret Oelkers, AB Rubin, Lynette Mejia, Alton Trahan, Anne Swanson, Mary Lib Guercio, Samantha Amos, Claire Delcambre, Mitzi Moss Duhon, Pablo Mejia, Melany Champagne, Consuela Gaines, Augustine Isadore, Ola Prejean, Jan Skinner, Melanie Brevis, Francesco Crocco, Ernest E. Daniels, Judy Daniels, Cara Chance, and Rene Sonnier commented.

The public was thanked for the decorum and the professional communication that came forth during the meeting.

The motion was reiterated by Allan Moore, that the Board support the construction of a 20,500 square foot library with the requested additional warehouse. Furthermore, he proposed that a minimum of the 1200 square feet of the additional 3,000 square feet above the standard 17,500 square feet option be specifically designated for the creation of a Makerspace. This Makerspace should be designated to rival any Makerspace in all of South Louisiana providing our Northeast Lafayette community with direct access to exceptional resources and opportunity for creativity and innovation, utilizing cutting-edge technology such as: artificial intelligence, 3D printers, laser cutters, CNC machines, virtual reality systems, augmented reality tools, robotics kits, electronics prototyping stations, advanced software for design and engineering, and state-of-the-art media production tools.

Yeas: Moore, Judge, Arsement, Bradley, Baquet

Nays: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Kelly, Padron

The motion carried.

IX. Announcements

- A. Reminder that the next Library Board meeting will be Monday, April 17, 2025.
- B. Reminder that Personal Financial Disclosure form due on or before May 15, 2025.
- C. Reminder that yearly ethics training and sexual harassment training must be completed before December 31, 2025.

X. Comments from the public on any other library matter not on this agenda

There were no comments from the public.

XI. Closing Prayer, Adjournment

A closing prayer was led by Allan Moore. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danny Gillane, Secretary