

McMinn County Library Board  
1289 Ingleside Avenue  
Athens, Tennessee 37303

BOARD MEETING  
JULY 26, 2021 at 6:00 PM

Present – Chairman Tyler Forrest, Treasurer (awaiting approval) Tim Womac, Secretary Patricia Ekiss, E.G. Fisher Director Peyton Eastman, Ocoee Regional Library Board Director Liz Schreck, Calhoun Library Director Mary Tickel and MCLB members, Mickey Blevins, Everett Gillespie and Lynn Perkinson. Robin Arms and Maggie Hoffman were absent.

I. Call to Order, Establish Quorum, and Acknowledgements

Chairman Tyler Forrest called the meeting to order and welcomed guests. He acknowledged and thanked Robert Sherwood for his time as a public servant.

II. Minutes from May 17, 2021 Meeting

Former Secretary Robin Arms was unable to attend and approval of minutes from May was deferred to the next meeting.

III. Treasurer's Report

Former Treasurer Tim Womac's reappointment to MCLB is pending County Commission approval. Lynn Perkinson asked if officers were to continue until replaced or reappointed. Chairman Forrest commented that "when your term ends, it ends" and ORLB Director Schreck agreed. Tim Womac, as a volunteer/guest, referred to the financials that were emailed ahead of the meeting. May/ June Fines and Fees are up compared to last year, the library received several grants thanks to Director Eastman. Expenses - big increase in June - from \$300 in 2020 to \$16,000 in 2021 due to a major maintenance project. County budget passed, checks to be handed out this week. Overall, this year looks much better than last year. Chairman Forrest thanked Director Eastman for her hard work.

IV. Library Reports

i. Calhoun

Calhoun Library Director Mary Tickel reported that 13 children and 7 adults participated in the Summer Reading Program.

ii. E.G. Fisher

Director Eastman discussed the goals which were set for 2021 and current progress made toward those goals. Finally back to 55 hour per week service (standard for a Level IV library) at beginning of July. Two Re-employability volunteers are working 45-60 hours per week. Staff evaluations are done and 50% have been discussed with staff. City of Athens increased their allocation to library by \$10,000. Working with WarrenJackson CPAs to improve the accuracy of recorded

income sources reported. TOP Grant funding began July 1st – tech classes have started. Upcoming TSLA Grants - American Rescue Plan Act maximum request is \$25,000 and FCC Connectivity Funds.

Community Room available to public starting 8/1. Quick Dry Carpets will be shampooing all carpets in library.

Sidewalks pressure washed by McMinn County trustees. Working on ADA compliance evaluation – stickers added to mark accessible areas and preparing to replace parking lot accessibility signs.

Working on annual weeding of materials and books. 82 hotspots circulated with wonderful feedback from the patrons. Updated and improved the Community Resource area of the library – maps of downtown, social services, etc.

Summer Reading 6-14 thru 7-19 more than 700 attended more than 100 meals served 400+ reading competition participants. Final numbers will be reported at the September meeting.

Community outreach – EGFisher was involved with the City of Athens strategic planning, meeting patrons at Athens skate park and inviting them to the library, Kid's Connection. Upcoming – 5<sup>th</sup> Friday July 30 and sharing information with Athens City Schools staff at In-service Aug 4, Festival of Nations Sept 18 and Pickle Festival Sept 25.

Mickey Blevins asked summer meals numbers as compared to 2019. Director Eastman replied that participation was good, but not quite up to 2019 numbers.

iii. E.G. Fisher Friends of the Library

Lynn Perkinson - Currently accepting donations on Saturday mornings for several weeks. They are averaging a truck load a week. Still cannot take magazines due to humidity and heat, but they are one of their best sellers when they have them.

iv. Englewood

In Maggie Hoffman's absence Tim Womac reported Englewood has a new librarian – Madison Webb. Ocoee Regional Library Board Director Schreck said she thought Madison will be going back to school. Englewood currently has no library board and they are having difficulty in finding people for a new library board. Library is currently open 30 hours a week. ORLB Director Schreck is working with the city.

v. Etowah

Lara emailed her report – no questions.

vi. Regional Library

ORLB Director Schreck reported that she hosted an emergency connectivity funds webinar. It is a federal grant that is part of the rescue plan money. Libraries can apply for routers, hotspots, laptops, etc to be used off site. ARPA grant is also rescue plan money and there is \$2.5 million to distribute. Tech grants to update tech equipment and software. Match is no longer 50/50 but has been reduced to 5-

20 percent depending on library level. Libraries can also order print & digital materials and a short list of furniture. The application deadline is August 12. The Public Library Service Agreement was sent via e-mail. This document outlines what both the MCLB and the Regional board do.

First Training session is scheduled to be both in person and virtually on August 17 and will be on Programming Partnerships.

Annual trustee workshop will be in person in Crossville at Art Circle Public Library. It is a one day workshop on September 28. Attendance has an impact on grant money. More information will be sent as it becomes available.

Numbers are up from last year on Consortium downloads.

## VII. Public Comments

Public comments were moved up in the agenda with no objections. Following are those that spoke –

Mike Roberts – semi retired educator, Sally Donaldson unable to attend, Mike read Sally's comments regarding transgender issues. Pride exhibit is just as important as women's or black history exhibits and should not be hidden in a corner.

Cindy McCowan – She came to see the PRIDE exhibit and could not find it. Feelings hurt by exhibit being moved. Thankful for library. She thinks the library should have stuck with its commitment to display the PRIDE exhibit instead of moving it. Library needs to follow its conviction and stick with it. She wanted to know why it was moved. Chairman Forrest stated that he received feedback from an elected official of one of the library's primary funding bodies stating that the display should be removed. This funding body provides about 1/3 of the library's support and the official said it would not settle well with the funding body if the display was not removed. After discussion a decision was made to move the display and to explore adopting a policy to cover this issue in the future. Ms McCowan appreciates that Chairman Forrest relayed the truth. Chairman Forrest clarified that the office holder mentioned does not exercise the full authority to remove funding from the library, but it was implied that it was not good to keep the display.

Michael Coffey – President of local PFLAG chapter (parents, friends and families of lesbians and gays). He explained the Origin and History of PRIDE month and the read the Freedom to Read statement from library website. Mr. Coffey ended with a James Baldwin quote.

Bill Freeman – Etowah – Speaking out for support for LGBTQ community. He is sorry for the controversy caused by the PRIDE display. He does not want the opposed voices to determine the atmosphere of our community.

Unnamed public attendee pushed for Chairman Forrest to name the elected official that caused the display to be moved. Chairman Forrest declined and thanked the public attendees for their comments.

Item viii from NEW BUSINESS was moved to this part of meeting with no objections.

viii. EGFPL Collection Development and Reconsideration of Materials Policy

Director Eastman explained that these two separate policies are being combined into one document. In doing so, she compared verbiage to Etowah's policy and also received some input from ORLB Director Schreck. Section J-4 of the policy included Freedom to Read statement and library bill of rights. The ALA Freedom to View statement was not previously included and has now been added. Previously the Reconsideration policy was designed to challenge materials to be removed from the library or reclassified. The same policy and process is now also being applied to library displays as well as materials. A challenge to materials or displays must be in writing. The Library Board must have a committee of 5 review and make suggestions to the board regarding the material and displays. Section "K" of the policy references Displays.

Lynn Perkinson moved to discuss, Patricia Ekiss seconded. Chairman Forrest suggested the Library Board Executive committee be used instead of a committee being appointed by Director Eastman. Lynn Perkinson asked if weeding was part of this. Director Eastman said it was based on circulation information and relevancy. Lynn Perkinson said weeding was strictly based on circulation information in the policy. Director Eastman said the policy has since been updated. Mickey Blevins presented a scenario and requested whether material or display would be removed at time of challenge. Director Eastman responded that the material would remain until committee and board action. Lynn Perkinson feels there is a misunderstanding about PRIDE display being moved and stated that we need consistency and parameters. Director Eastman explained why displays were moved.

Everett Gillespie clarified that the 3 sided display had only one side opposed to. Feels the public official should not be coddled to. If so, you enable them and then what's next?

Chairman Forrest said it is unfortunate this policy was not in place at time of this issue. The public official stressed that the PRIDE display did not rest well with the constituents of this county nor the position of the government body. Clarified that the official did not threaten to pull funding, but has significant pull regarding funding.

Chairman Forrest moved for a vote with the amendment that instead of the full Board acting, it will be just the Executive Committee. Executive Committee meeting minutes will be shared. The updated Policy passed unanimously with the Executive Committee change.

## V. Old Business

### i. EGFPL Capital Update

Director Eastman reported that the FY finished with money in the bank account. A \$10,000 increase was received from the City of Athens. She is working with Jordan Curtis regarding investment accounts to keep funding consistent.

### ii. EGFPL FY22 Budget Request/Proposal Update

City of Athens acted on increase of \$10,000 to bring it to \$155,000. McMinn County is not increasing funding this year.

### iii. EGFPL Transition to City Department Update

ORLB Director Schreck pulled several documents; however, no movement has been made on this. Chairman Forrest spoke briefly with the city manager and is forwarding documents to him.

iv. Nominating Committee Recommendations

This was acted on at the last meeting. McMinn County Commission has not yet acted on the Library Board's recommendation to appoint Tim Womac to Calhoun city which would leave one vacancy on the regional library which we would leave open. Tim Womac's term on the regional board ended June 2021. It was recommended that he be appointed to the county board as a representative from Calhoun through June 2024 and also serve in that capacity as a regional board member through June 2022. It will leave one at large seat vacant. This will be discussed in more detail at the end of this calendar year or the first of next year.

VI. New Business

i. MOE Service Agreement

Chairman Forrest signed the Library Service Agreement on behalf of the Library Board. The Maintenance of Effort Agreement will be coming soon and it will be circulated to all districts.

ii. Calhoun Policy Manual

Calhoun Library Director Mary Tickel is not ready for the board to act on it, but has submitted it to the board for comments. The final draft will be submitted in September. Chairman Forrest said it looked well organized and requested the board look it over before the September 27 meeting when we will vote on it.

iii. EGFPL Director Evaluation and Probationary Period

Chairman Forrest asked Director Eastman to step out of the room. Evaluations were completed via survey from 5 board members, 8 staff, and Director Eastman. Director Eastman noted on her evaluation that there were some areas that needed work. Everything was acceptable in all categories except for her self evaluation. It was moved by Mickey Blevins and seconded by Everett Gillespie to accept the evaluations. Mickey Blevins and Chairman Forrest noted that they were pleased that 8 of 9 staff gave all acceptable. There is a Compensation Adjustment Pool as a result of the actions by the City of Athens. Director Eastman has been in the director role for 1 year. Her current salary is considered to be at market. Director Eastman has proposed a 5% market adjustment for all of the library staff. Chairman Forrest suggested the board adjust the 5% pool recommended by Director Eastman to a 2% Cost of Living for all staff and an additional 3% for staff and not director. This was proposed because the staff, with the exception of Director Eastman, is below market. This was unanimously passed.

5 minute break

iv. EGFPL FY 2022 Budget Amendment

The budget amendment is to capture the \$10,700 increase from the City of Athens. Director Eastman added that the final numbers are different from the original. A line item was added under Income and Expenses for Capital Improvement. Extra funding would be required from the city, county or donations to complete the capital improvement projects to be discussed in a later agenda item. Chairman Forrest recommended it be noted that the capital is not going to be

spent unless the funding is acquired. A motion to accept the budget with a caveat as mentioned by Chairman Forrest was made by Mickey Blevins and seconded by Everett Gillespie. It passed unanimously.

v. EGFPL Employee Compensation Adjustments

Director Eastman proposed a 5% across the board increase in staff salaries based on the increase in funding from the City of Athens and the savings from the retirement rate going down. The lowest pay would be \$8.15/hr. This is moving toward getting clerks up to \$10/hr and professional staff up to \$15/hr in 3 yrs. Chairman Forrest requested the effective date for this increase. It was decided that this increase will begin at the beginning of the new pay period which is August 9. Director Eastman's increase is to be effective August 9 also. Lynn Perkinson moved to accept and Mickey Blevins seconded. All passed.

vii. EGFPL Maintenance and Capital Improvement Plan

Director Eastman provided the board with an operations manual showing maintenance and improvements. They are working on catching up. She noted that the bidding policy is in line with McMinn County bidding and contractor's insurance requirements. The 5 Year Maintenance Plan goes hand-in-hand with improvement. Aggressive 5 year plan. Currently getting bids on projects. Higher priority – storybook trail must be installed by the end of the FY as required by the grant. Motion by Everett Gillespie and seconded by Lynn Perkinson to accept the plan. Motion carried unanimously.

viii. EGFPL COVID Leave Policy

Director Eastman said the Board passed a COVID Leave Policy last July that employees would not have time off come from their leave time if exposed to COVID. Director Eastman requested that it be rescinded. Everett Gillespie so moved and Patricia Ekiss seconded. It passed unanimously.

Chairman Forrest reminded the board members to focus on Trusteeship Training and that the next regular meeting is scheduled for September 27, 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 PM.