

McMinn County Library Board
1289 Ingleside Avenue
Athens, Tennessee 37303

Board Meeting Minutes
MARCH 25, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Present - Chairman Tyler Forrest, Vice Chairman Mickey Blevins, Treasurer Tim Womac, Secretary Tyler Boyd, EGFPL Director Rebeckah Coleman, Regional Library Director Liz Schreck, and MCLB members Everett Gillespie, Jan Dingess, John Duggan, and Kay Harper. MCLB member Tara Carter was absent.

I. Call to Order, Establish Quorum, and Acknowledgments

Chairman Forrest welcomed everyone and established a quorum, noting that one board member was unable to attend.

II. Public Comments

Richelle Brinkley, EGFPL staff member, spoke briefly to thank the board for hiring Rebeckah Coleman as the library director.

III. Approval of Minutes

Secretary Tyler Boyd presented the Minutes from the February 5, 2024 meeting as well as the corrected Minutes from the December 12, 2023 meeting.

Regional Library Director Liz Schreck had one clarification of her report from the February 5 meeting, noting that she said that no library in the *region* meets every standard. Boyd erroneously recorded it as no library in the *state* meets every standard. Schreck also noted that, when the library receives a materials challenge, a *reconsideration process* is required under the library's Public Service Agreement. Boyd had erroneously recorded that an *email notification* was required.

Boyd said he would make the corrections and present them at the next meeting.

Board member John Duggan made a motion to accept the Minutes. Board member Jan Dingess seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Wetlands Agreement Explanation

Chairman Forrest stated that the Wetlands Agreement Explanation would be delayed to the May meeting due to Ben Burchfield's inability to attend tonight's meeting.

V. E.G. Fisher Long-Term Investment Account Review

Chairman Forrest noted that this is “not an endowment.” Jordan Curtis of Simmons Bank passed around handouts to accompany his review. Curtis noted that the trust was started by Gussie Fisher, the wife of E.G. Fisher. Curtis reported that the current balance in the account is approximately \$388,000 and that it had increased by over \$100,000 since 2010. Curtis stated that he, Chairman Forrest, and other board members had revised the Investment Policy Statement in January 2022. Curtis discussed his handouts and the account’s performance. During a discussion of setting the account’s spend rate, board member Duggan asked how often the board sets the spend rate. Curtis answered that it is set annually. Chairman Forrest stated that the policy is designed to set the rate quarterly, but noted that has not been necessary over the last year. Forrest discussed the idea of setting the rate every quarter, but stated it might be best to hold off on that change due to the cost of capital projects that are split with the county and city governments.

Chairman Forrest asked about the Lee estate and the amount she bequeathed to the library. Curtis stated he would check on the status of the estate.

Curtis answered a question posed by Board member Duggan about withdrawals and investment fees over the last three months.

Chairman Forrest asked if there was a need to readjust the allocation of the portfolio and discussed it with Curtis. Vice Chairman Mickey Blevins asked about the Fixed Income percentage. Curtis stated that both Fixed Income and Money Market are in the 40-60% range. Board member Duggan asked if it would be wise, due to recent performance, to increase the Money Market and decrease the Fixed Income. Curtis stated that recommends to keep everything like it is due to frequent changes month-to-month.

Chairman Forrest thanked Curtis for his review of the account and noted that the board would be submitting a budget request to the City of Athens, on which Curtis serves, later in the meeting.

VI. Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Womac reported that the 4th quarter checks were picked up last Friday. Womac passed out Financial Reports for Nov. 2023 - Feb. 2024. Womac noted an increase in income in November thanks to a generous donation of over \$31,000 from the E.G. Fisher Friends of the Library and thanked Friends board members Everett Gillespie and Lynne Perkinson who were both present. Womac also reported on income from various grants, including Amazon Smile. Womac noted that the check from the City of Athens arrived before Christmas and that the maintenance bill for December 2023 was much lower than December 2022. Discussing the differences

between January 2023 and January 2024, Womac noted that the City of Athens gave \$25,000 to help pay for the new bathrooms at the library in 2023 and specified that it was not MOE money. Womac also discussed reasons for other differences, including utility bills and health insurance bills. Womac stated that the expenses for February 2023 increased from February 2022 because the library spent \$25,000 on the new bathrooms and was reimbursed by the county government paying their portion for that capital investment project.

Womac reported that Regional Library Director Liz Schreck emailed him about a possible surplus of money.

Chairman Forrest asked why our cash balance has declined despite the fact that our income has exceeded our expenditures for the past two years. Forrest asked if it might be related to Fixed Assets or if it is a timing issue. Forrest suggested we ask our accountants at Warren-Jackson to clarify his questions. Forrest also asked if our checking account at Truist Bank is a non-interest bearing account and if we could possibly move some of those funds into a Money Market account. Fisher Library Director Rebeckah Coleman said she would check on that.

Treasurer Womac reported that Warren-Jackson has completed our 990 Form and sent it to the IRS for processing. Womac also noted that all of the requisite information has been sent to Warren-Jackson, including a list of our board members and our By-Laws.

Treasurer Womac discussed our audits, stating that he has been in contact with the auditors and sending them information needed to complete the audit. Chairman Forrest noted that he would like to use a new auditing firm for 2023, 2024, and 2025 and that he has informed Mauldin and Jenkins that the board will not use their services again.

VII. Library Reports

- i. Calhoun – Treasurer Womac reported on the library’s many upcoming summer activities with the “Keep It Cool” theme.
- ii. E.G. Fisher – Director Rebeckah Coleman reported on the goals she set for herself, as well as goals not yet achieved. The TLA accepted her proposed session titled “Diffusing Difficult Situations” to be presented on April 3 and plans to repeat the presentation elsewhere at a later date. She discussed the recent reorganization of the Fiction section and prepared a Vision Statement for the library. She emphasized that one of her goals is for the library to be a teaching library, comparing it to a teaching hospital. She discussed her plans to send the remaining material required to complete the audit. Other items reported on include painting the break room, work on the Storybook Trail, ILS

(Integrated Library Systems), upcoming installation of solar lights, and signs for parking lot restrictions to be displayed for big events.

Board member John Duggan asked if Athens Public Works director Ben Burchfield could be consulted on installing the solar lights. Chairman Tyler Forrest, board member Everett Gillespie, and Friends member Lynne Perkinson discussed Friends of the Library donations for new lighting in 2017 and clarified that those funds are still in the Friends' account.

Director Coleman reported on changes in various job descriptions for the staff, including a request to make Cyndi Scott the Administrative Assistant. Discussing the two homeless individuals who live on library grounds, Director Coleman reported on discussions with the man who lives in his truck in the lower lot and how she is helping him find a new place to live and move his truck by May 28. She plans to talk to the other man (who watches videos on his laptop all day) very soon about making plans to move on. Director Coleman also reported on quotes for removing the carpet and installing laminate flooring as well as discussions with Athens Fire Chief Brandon Ainsworth about a fire system for the library. Board member Jan Dingess commented on how she is looking forward to seeing the carpet removed and asked Coleman about the library's experience as a precinct on Election Day in March. Director Coleman reported that it worked "just fine" and recommended closing the library for November presidential elections and using it as a staff training day. Board member Dingess also asked for updates about new outside lights and improved security for the library. Director Coleman did not have any updates on that, but did report on a patron request for another book drop box by the handicap parking spaces.

Board member Everett Gillespie asked about the landscaping plans, and Director Coleman showed some artist renderings for proposed landscaping improvements. Board member John Duggan praised Director Coleman for her non-aggressive yet also non-passive way of handling of the homeless situation on the library grounds. Director Coleman also noted that Nina has been helping one of the homeless men find a place to stay. Duggan and Coleman discussed possible signs to prohibit loitering and restricting access to the lower parking lot, and referenced a recent assault on one of the homeless men who lives on the grounds. Chairman Forrest asked if Director Coleman planned to include the proposed job title change for Cyndi Scott in the budget request to the City of Athens. Coleman said she did plan to do so. Forrest and Coleman discussed TCRS and the best retirement plan options for full-time employees at the library.

- iii. E.G. Fisher Friends of the Library – Board member Everett Gillespie reported on the recent Friends meeting and plans for the used book sale in June,

commenting that they were ready to “hit the ground running” on this major fundraiser.

- iv. Englewood – Board member Jan Dingess reported that the library had 113 patrons in February, noting that 95 of them used the computers. She reported that the library director asked if the updated Internet Use Policy and Reconsideration Process was ready to be implemented. Dingess responded yes and said that their library has had no problems with it so far. Dingess also reported on new books at the library and the director’s plans for summer programs. EGFPL Director Rebeckah Coleman asked Dingess to offer the Englewood library director the opportunity to visit the Fisher library to observe any procedures she believes would benefit the Englewood library.
- v. Etowah – Board member Kay Harper reported that the new dropbox had recently been installed and that the old dropboxes were donated to the TWU and Clinton libraries. She discussed grant opportunities from Dollar General and the hiring of Halle Bible as the new Professional Work Experiences student. Treasurer Tim Womac praised the hiring of Bible. Chairman Tyler Forrest thanked board member Harper and the Etowah Library for donating one of their old dropboxes to TWU’s library.
- vi. Regional Library – Regional Director Liz Schreck reported on a recent “excellent” training on Space Planning for libraries. She reported on an upcoming training on Marketing and Social Media for libraries and noted that the Regional Library is there to help all library staff complete their required continuing education. She reported on the upcoming TLA Conference in Franklin and the theme “Libraries Connect Us All.” She also discussed the quarterly statistics reports and other papers she distributed to the board. Board member John Duggan commented on the high number of patrons at the Fisher library, noting that it is among the most-used library in the region. Regional Director Schreck reminded the board that these statistics are helpful to reference when requesting funds and donations.

VI. Old Business

- i. MCLB Public Etiquette Policy Meeting Proposal – Chairman Tyler Forrest reported that Item #7 on the Fisher library’s proposed Public Etiquette Policy Proposal is still being reviewed by attorney Bridgette Wilhite and that she has been delayed but hopes to have an answer for the board soon.
- ii. MCLB Nominating Committee – Chairman Tyler Forrest reminded the board that nominations for officers on the MCLB will be made during the

May meeting and that the Athens City Council will be voting on a successor for Everett Gillespie at their next meeting.

VII. New Business

- i. MCLB Book Order/Disposition Report Discussion – Chairman Tyler Forrest noted that the board is required to review these and reported that the Calhoun Library sent in a lengthy report. Forrest asked Director Coleman to work on a different method/format of for this process to be used for the other libraries governed by the MCLB. Board member John Duggan asked about details on the reports, including the book title, author, etc. Chairman Forrest and Regional Director Schreck discussed this with Duggan.

- ii. MCLB Budget Request Submittal – McMinn Co. and the City of Athens – Chairman Tyler Forrest noted that the budget request for McMinn County is due April 2. Director Rebeckah Coleman reported that she had recently sent the budget request to the City of Athens. Chairman Forrest reported on his and Director Coleman’s discussion about a 3% compensation tool to be used in the recurring request to the City of Athens, which would increase their appropriations to the Fisher library to roughly \$172,000 for the year. Forrest also discussed a non-recurring request for three projects: \$40,000 for fire system improvements, \$12,500 for security system improvements, and \$5,500 for an automatic door system for the emergency exit. He noted that these projects would be funded by the library, the city, and the county. Coleman noted that she did not include these three non-recurring requests in the budget request since she did not have board approval. Chairman Forrest said the board would retroactively approve them. Chairman Forrest asked if the board wanted to approve #2, #9, and #10 on the list of non-recurring requests in the city budget, which includes \$5,500 for changing Cyndi Scott from a part-time to full-time employee. He said he especially supports requesting funds for improved security. He also expressed his desire to request funds to help improve the Community Room and noted the increased use of the room during elections. Board member Jan Dingess agreed. Director Coleman agreed contact City of Athens Finance Director Mike Keith to submit these additional non-recurring requests to the City of Athens.

Regional Director Liz Schreck discussed moving towards full benefits for Cyndi Scott if she becomes an Administrative Assistant.

Discussing the smaller items on the budget request, board member John Duggan made some suggestions on ways to encourage our generous patrons to make small donations for the library, including leaving coin jars

labeled in certain spaces in the library. Duggan also suggested working with other community organizations to host fundraising events. Regional Director Schreck joined the discussion, and Director Coleman noted that the library had recently held a “Pi Day” fundraising event. Chairman Forrest praised these ideas for event fundraisers but noted that they are often low-margin. In addition to hosting fundraisers, he recommended reaching out to the library’s top donors to request larger donations for specific projects. He also noted that many corporate grants are available.

Chairman Forrest called for a vote on the non-recurring requests. Board member Duggan made a motion for approval. Board member Everett Gillespie seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Forrest reminded everyone that the library’s fiscal year 2025 budget would be voted on at the May meeting.

Chairman Forrest noted that Director Rebeckah Coleman had accrued several sick hours as an employee of the Cleveland-Bradley County Library and that she has requested to have those sick hours carry over to her employment at the Fisher library. He said the board would consider that at the July meeting after the first six months of her employment has passed. He praised Coleman’s work so far as the library director.

Chairman Forrest also noted that the 4th Monday of May is Memorial Day and discussed possible alternate dates. Board member John Duggan made a motion to move the meeting to Tuesday May 28, 2024. Vice Chairman Mickey Blevins seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Board member John Duggan asked if the board would consider updating the board’s By-Laws which have not been updated in a few years. Chairman Forrest, Vice Chairman Mickey Blevins, and Regional Director Schreck joined the discussion trying to determine the date of the most recent update.

Vice Chairman Blevins thanked Director Rebeckah Coleman and EGFPL staff member Beth Jackson for memorials for his late mother-in-law, noting that his wife was very touched by the donation. Vice Chairman Blevins also expressed his delight to see the library’s parking lot was full due to so many patrons using the library this evening.

Chairman Forrest reminded the board members to complete their Trusteeship Training.

Chairman Forrest adjourned the meeting at 7:44 PM.