McMinn County Library Board

1289 Ingleside Avenue

Athens, Tennessee 37303

Board Meeting Minutes

JULY 22, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Present - Chairman Tyler Forrest, Treasurer Tim Womac, Secretary Tyler Boyd, EGFPL Director Rebeckah (Becky) Coleman, Regional Library Director Liz Schreck, and MCLB members Jan Dingess, John Duggan, Kay Harper, and Ashley Smith. MCLB Vice Chairman Mickey Blevins and board member Tara Carter were absent.

1. Call to Order, Establish Quorum, and Acknowledgments

Chairman Forrest welcomed everyone and established a quorum, noting that Treasurer Tim Womac and board member Kay Harper would be active participants but unable to vote until they are approved for another term by the McMinn County Commission and the MCLB.

1. Recognition of New Trustee – Ashley Smith

Chairman Forrest welcomed new board member Ashley Smith, representing the City of Athens.

1. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

1. Approval of Minutes

Secretary Tyler Boyd presented the Minutes from the May 28, 2024 MCLB meeting. Board member John Duggan made a motion to approve the minutes. Board member Ashley Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

1. Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Tim Womac compared the April 2023 and April 2024 finances, noting that the City of Athens had given a larger amount than usual because of the bathroom remodeling. Comparing May 2023 and May 2024, Womac reported on “small bonuses” to each library in 2024 because of unexpected extra funding from the County Commission. He stated that other expenses for both months over the past year were similar. Discussing June 2023 and June 2024, Womac noted that the Executive Committee approved moving $31,000 from the EGFPL Long Term Investment Account to cover expenses between EGFPL directors since city and county checks had not arrived yet. Womac compared other income and expenses for both months over the past year.

Womac also thanked EGFPL Director Becky Coleman for June 2024 being “much quieter” than June 2023.

Womac reported that the check from the City of Athens would be arriving in early August and that the County Commission would be meeting soon.

EGFPL Director Becky Coleman reported that the draft of the 2021 audit was ready for approval. Coleman shared a quote of approx. $14,500 for performing the audit for 2022 and 2023. Chairman Forrest said he believed the board needed to approve the audit before sending it to the state comptroller’s office. Forrest discussed how the auditors will have no choice but to “carry forward” when performing the 2022 and 2023 audits. Board member John Duggan asked if the auditors found anything that needed to be brought to our attention. Chairman Forrest said they did not, but did point out that the auditors found “material weaknesses.” Chairman Forrest and Director Coleman discussed whether or not the quote from Mauldin and Jenkins for the 2022-2023 audits was for both years or one year. Chairman Forrest said he believed the quote was $14,000 for one year, and $14,500 for the next year. He noted that the quote was “extremely high” for an audit of this size and said he wanted to get other quotes. Director Coleman and Chairman Forrest discussed auditors H&M and Coleman said she would check back with them for a quote. Treasurer Womac praised Director Coleman for her organizational skills in helping complete the long overdue 2021 audit.

Board member John Duggan made a motion to approve the audit for Fiscal Year 2021. Board member Jan Dingess seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

1. Library Reports
2. Calhoun – Treasurer Tim Womac reported that the “Beat the Heat” June event was a great success. Womac thanked Cathy Castor for bringing the Bookmobile, and he thanked EGFPL Director Becky Coleman for helping. Womac reported that the library is working on an after school reading program for Pre-K and Kindergarten students and that the library has become a drop-off pointfor school supplies for the Calhoun-Charleston area schools.
3. E.G. Fisher – EGFPL Director Becky Coleman reported that an estimated 600 people attended the kickoff event for the Summer Reading Program and that “quite a few” children were given free lunch meals over the summer.
4. E.G. Fisher Friends of the Library – In the absence of a Friends member, EGFPL Director Becky Coleman reported that the Used Book Sale was “fabulous” and that it made more money than it did in 2023. She shared plans for a possible used book sale of nonfiction books in the library in November and December. She reported that the Friends had allotted $17,500 from the 2023 and 2024 Used Book Sales which the library plans to use to purchase some genealogical material, an outside book drop, and a refrigerator. Inspired by the Cleveland-Bradley County Library, she reported that the library is developing a request form to send to the Friends for help finances any of the library’s needs.
5. Englewood – Board member Jan Dingess reported that 20 people attended the June 27 Storytime, an increase from 2023. She discussed book giveaways and increased public interest and participation at the library. She reported that the library had 137 patrons June, with in 101 using the computers.
6. Etowah – Board member Kay Harper reported that Director Briana Pagdon had completed the 2023 end of year spending report and that the budget for this year will see a $1,779 increase. She noted that the program director had recently resigned and that they planned to hire a successor by July 25. She reported that 498 people attended the Summer Reading Program and that 237 lunches were handed out to children. She reported on increased program attendance, item circulation, and the issuance of 282 new library cards over the previous year.
7. Regional Library – Regional Director Liz Schreck noted that she handed out printed reports for all board members. She discussed a recent library directors roundtable and the importance of filing reports. She shared info on upcoming workshops and trainings in the region. She reported that library directors have been busy completing the standards survey and Title VI training before all of the deadlines. She reminded everyone of the need to complete their Trustee Certifications. She discussed the Public Library Service Agreement (included in her handouts) and emphasized its importance. She also discussed the Ability to Pay document and hopes it can be used to persuade funding bodies to allocate funds to each library based on each county’s income per capita.

Chairman Forrest commented on the Ability to Pay document and said he would like to see an increase in funding based on per capita income. He asked EGFPL Director Becky Coleman to send the Ability to Pay statistics to the Athens City Council and McMinn County Commission.

VII. Old Business

1. MCLB Nominating Committee – In the absence of Vice Chairman Mickey Blevins, Chairman Forrest explained again that board member Kay Harper and Treasurer Tim Womac were unable to vote at today’s meeting because they had yet to be recommended by the MCLB and approved by the County Commission for new terms. Board member John Duggan made a motion to approve Harper and Womac. Secretary Tyler Boyd seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Forrest said he would send the recommendations to County Mayor John Gentry.
2. MCLB Book Order/Disposition Reports – The MCLB looked over the book order and reports for the EGFPL and Etowah Carnegie Libraries. Regional Director Schreck said the MCLB was not required approve the orders and reports, and noted that the Englewood and Calhoun Libraries needed to send in their orders and reports as well.

Board member John Duggan asked if the book order forms had labels for age groups for each book and discussed it with Regional Director Schreck and Treasurer Womac. Board member Duggan expressed much he appreciates the book order reports and how helpful they can be.

1. EGFPL Budget Approval – EGFPL Director Becky Coleman noted that the 2023-2024 budget needed retroactive approval and that the proposed 2024-2025 budget needed approval from the MCLB. She emphasized that the proposed budget includes raises and the promotion of Cyndi Scott to a full-time employee.

The board members looked over the proposed budget. Chairman Forrest noted that the City of Athens had increased their appropriations by $6,000 from the previous year and expressed his support for pay increases for library staff. Chairman Forrest noticed that some numbers on the expense side were missing and said he believed the board needed to take a closer look at financial statements to fill more information in the budget proposal, which also included some revenue items. Chairman Forrest asked and the board agreed to finalize the budget proposal to be approved at the September meeting. Director Coleman discussed other items included in the budget proposal.

VII. New Business

1. MCLB Public Library Service Agreement – Chairman Forrest noted that he had signed the agreement, which is signed annually, and reminded everyone what the agreement requires, including periodic By-Laws revisions.
2. EGFPL Director Probationary Period – Chairman Forrest asked EGFPL Director Becky Coleman to briefly leave the room for the board to discuss hiring her on a permanent basis. Chairman Forrest said she “has done a really good job,” praised how “responsive” she is, and said that she has been a “positive force” for the library. Chairman Forrest discussed the letter he drafted offering the permanent director position and noted that Secretary Tyler Boyd found a date that needed to be corrected. The correction was made, changing the date from 12/12/2024 to 12/12/2023.

Board member John Duggan also praised how Director Coleman communicates with board members, and praised her hands-on approach to library events and activities. Secretary Boyd said he is glad his previous reservations about Coleman were “unfounded” and that he has been very impressed with her job performance. Board member Jan Dingess complimented Coleman as very “personable.” Treasurer Womac said he was impressed with her work helping complete the 2021 audit. Board member Duggan said she “goes above and beyond” what he expected, and Chairman Forrest concurred. Board member Ashley Smith recalled enjoying talking with Coleman at the Summer Reading Launch Party before she became a board member. Chairman Forrest said that about ten people who are benefactors and patrons of the library have praised Coleman, noting that some of those people are hard to please. Chairman Forrest also praised Coleman’s community involvement. Board member Duggan was impressed with how she is open to new ideas.

Secretary Boyd made a motion to approve the letter and end Director Coleman’s probationary period. Board member John Duggan seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Coleman returned to the meeting room and everyone applauded her for being hired on a permanent basis as the EGFPL Director. Chairman Forrest again praised her work and congratulated her. Chairman Forrest also thanked the library staff for their work and lamented that he and other board members do not get to work with them as often as we do the library director. Director Coleman said it is a “blessing” to come work as the EGFPL director every day.

Chairman Forrest reminded the board members to complete their Trusteeship Training, and that the next board meeting will be on Monday September 23, 2024 at 6:00 PM. He expressed his hope that at least one board member would be able to attend the trustee workshop in Crossville on September 25.

Board member Duggan asked about the library’s experience as a voting precinct. Director Coleman said it has been going well but recommends that the library be closed for a staff work day for all presidential elections due to the high turnout.

Chairman Forrest asked for a vote to close the library for staff work days on all presidential election days. Board member Duggan made a motion. Board member Ashely Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Coleman reported on recent book challenges and noted that all board member had the info in their packets. Board member Duggan and Director Coleman discussed the nature of the book challenges, including placement of the books in the library. Director Coleman said she believes every patron has the right “to read what they want to read.” Director Coleman said she has yet to receive a response from the patron who challenged the book. Treasurer Womac reiterated his belief that no books needed to be “pulled” from the shelves but that every book “needs to be in its proper location.”

Director Coleman also asked the board to vote to approve a change to the library’s library card application. She asked to remove the reference section from the application, citing reasons of increased cell phone use and patron privacy. Board member Duggan made a motion to remove the reference section from the library card application. Board member Ashley Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Forrest adjourned the meeting at 7:19 PM.