

Minutes
South Mississippi Regional Board
September 27, 2022

The South Mississippi Regional Board met at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday September 27, 2022, in the meeting room at the Bassfield Public Library. Present were Mrs. Dorothy Barnes, Chair, Mrs. Libby Aaron, Mrs. Joan Bass, Ms. Carol Durham, Mrs. Sharon Dungan, Ms. Ryda Worthy, Library Director, and Mona Swayze to take minutes of the meeting.

Mrs. Barnes called the meeting to order with a prayer.

Minutes of the June 29, 2022 meeting were read. Mrs. Dungan questioned whether “solicit for donations” in the last paragraph on page 4 was the best wording. After discussion, it was agreed that the sentence should read “placing an ad to request donations for extra equipment”, not “solicit for donations”. Mrs. Bass moved to accept the minutes as corrected. Mrs. Aaron seconded. Minutes were approved as corrected.

Mrs. Barnes surrendered the floor to Ms. Ryda Worthy, Library Director. Ms. Worthy took time to thank Mrs. Barnes for her five years of service since this is the last board meeting of her term. The agenda, herein attached, was discussed.

Old business was discussed first. Ms. Worthy updated the Board on Ms. Antionette Young. Ms. Worthy was contacted by Ms. Young on September 6, 2022 for the purpose of requesting Ms. Worthy’s email address so that she could email her the documents the Board requested from her at the June 29, 2022 meeting. Attached is a copy of that email. Since the last board meeting, there have been no issues involving Ms. Young.

New business was discussed next. The Board went in to executive session to discuss a staff issue. The Board came out of executive session. Mrs. Dungan made a motion to approve FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) leave for Renae Donegan, pending return of her approved medical form. Ms. Durham seconded. Mrs. Dungan also made a motion to allow donation of three (3) days of Ms. Worthy's sick leave to Mrs. Donegan. Mrs. Barnes seconded. Both motions passed unanimously.

Next, the Board discussed the Board of Trustees self-evaluation. During the discussion, the Board informed Ms. Worthy that they would like to be informed when events (such as book signings) are scheduled at the libraries and when deaths of relatives of staff members occur. They would like to be informed in a timely manner, so there is time for them to attend each event.

The Board then discussed the Library Director's evaluation. All of the Board expressed their appreciation of the work that Ms. Worthy does for the library.

Staff evaluations were discussed next. All staff have been evaluated and individual action goals for the upcoming year have been put into place for each staff member. All staff received satisfactory evaluations. There are two (2) part-time staff (high school students) in Columbia who started at the end of June 2022. Ms. Worthy is requesting a thirty (30) day extension on their probation periods to give administrative staff more time to observe them. Mrs. Dungan moved to extend the probationary period by thirty (30) days. Mrs. Barnes seconded. Mrs. Aaron moved to accept all evaluations as discussed. Ms. Durham seconded. Both motions passed unanimously.

Next, Ms. Worthy discussed the audit letter of engagement with the Board. This letter has to be on file to retain the services of the current accountant Topp McWhorter Harvey (TMH). After discussion, Mrs. Dungan moved to accept the letter as presented. Ms. Durham seconded.

Ms. Worthy presented the Board with a proposal from a Columbia family about placing a vending machine in the Columbia Marion County Public Library. The family

will maintain the vending machine, as well as stock it and clean it. Ms. Worthy had pictures to show the Board what this vending machine looks like. Ms. Worthy suggests having a liability waiver in place dealing with damages, stocking, procedures for when the machine is moved, etc. After discussion, Mrs. Barnes moved to allow this family to place the vending machine in the Columbia Library for a trial period of six (6) months. Mrs. Dungan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Next, Ms. Worthy discussed a patron complaint in Columbia about the meeting rooms. There has been confusion resulting from the current room reservation process. At some point, tutors and distance teachers have been allowed to reserve the room, when it actually violates the room reservation policy that is currently in place. Currently, no for-profit endeavor can use the meeting rooms. They can use the library public spaces. Ms. Worthy was informed of a complaint about the Columbia Library from the Mississippi Library Commission (MLC) staff. On September 15, 2022, Columbia patron, Dr. Lisa Nealy, emailed the director of MLC with her complaint. He, in turn, passed it to one of his staff members, who then forwarded it to Ms. Worthy. Dr. Nealy complains that her civil liberties are being denied because she was not allowed to use the room that she was told she could use, but, the staff let a white woman use the room. Dr. Nealy teaches sixth graders via distance learning and the white lady is a local tutor. In order to investigate the situation, Ms. Worthy ordered the staff to not allow any meeting room to be used until after the Board has met and modified the current policy. After extensive discussion, the Board would like some clarification on the legalities of the meeting room usage. Mrs. Bass asked about an online reservation system since we currently use a paper calendar to record each meeting room request. Mrs. Dungan mentioned Google calendar as an option.

The Board agreed to revisit the meeting room policy at a later meeting to give them sufficient time to investigate other meeting room policies. For now, they have asked that for-profit endeavors not be allowed to use the meeting rooms. They can use the public spaces in the library. The staff can allow people already having reservations to use the room, as long as it is not for-profit. And they can begin to reserve the rooms for groups, as long as it is not for-profit. This situation may be a problem for allowing a vending machine in the library, as well as book signings for authors. Other libraries require the Friends of the Library to sponsor book signings and have the author make a small donation to the library or the Friends group. Could the author donate a copy of their book to the library and fulfill the donation? That is a question for a lawyer. Ms. Worthy informed the Board that she has been in contact with a lawyer from Hattiesburg, who is

retained by several libraries in the area. The Board requests a meeting with this lawyer at his earliest convenience.

The Board then drafted a letter to Dr. Nealy, addressing her complaint of her civil liberties being denied. Mrs. Aaron composed the letters with assistance from all the Board. Ms. Durham wants it included in the letter that it was not only Dr. Nealy inconvenienced but it was everyone who had requested use of the meeting rooms. This incident arose from issues with the reservation system and not an intentional act of discrimination. Also, the Board feels that there was no intent to deny any patrons' civil liberties.

Ms. Worthy gave the Board the current financial report.

This is Mrs. Barnes last meeting as a Board member. She expressed her appreciation for being asked to serve on the Board. Mrs. Aaron will be the next Board Chair beginning October 1, 2022.

Mrs. Barnes moved to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Dungan seconded. Meeting adjourned.

The date for the next meeting was not set.

Adopted by the SMRL Board of Trustees on November 1, 2022.