

**GREENVILLE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

October 23, 2023

**Present:** Mr. Brian Aufmuth, Mr. Kenneth Baxter, Dr. Gene Becker, Mrs. Elizabeth Collins, Mr. James Hoard, Mr. Tommy Hughes, Mrs. Marcia Moston, Mrs. Kristen Odom, Mr. Bill Pinkston, Mr. Joe Poore, and Mr. S. Allan Hill, presiding.

**Administrative Managers Present:** Don Allen, Accounting Manager; Greg Hester, Operations Manager; Anna Lee, Community Engagement Manager; Brian Morrison, Access and Discovery Director; Beverly James, Executive Director; and Jill Cornwell, Administrative Projects Manager, acting as Recording Secretary.

**Presenters:** Matt Phillips, CPA, Phillips CPAs and Advisors

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Hill called the meeting to order at 12:00p. He acknowledged that Mr. Beckner was attending via conference call.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Hill called for the approval of the minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting, September 25, 2023. Mr. Poore so moved and Mr. Hoard seconded. The motion carried.

**PRESENTATION OF THE AUDIT**

Mr. Hill called on Mr. Phillips who provided an overview of the Library System's financial activities for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023. He noted that the audit cited a "clean opinion" of the Library System's financial statements, meaning that the financial statements are fairly presented in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Mr. Phillips added that it was the best opinion the Library System could obtain.

**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Fines/Fees Policy

Mr. Pinkston referred to the *Fines/Fees Policy*. He stated that the adjustments made to update costs were appropriate and other changes included the removal of things the Library System no longer does. Mr. Hill noted that because the policy recommendation was from the Operations Committee a second was not needed. With none opposed, the proposed revisions to the *Fines/Fees Policy* were approved.

Display of Library Materials and Information Policy

Mr. Pinkston referred to the draft policy noting language proposed by the Executive Director and administrative staff, and language that was proposed as an amendment during the committee meeting – all of which passed as written. He noted that although the policy passed in committee, it was not a unanimous vote.

Mr. Hughes expressed concerns about the state of displays in library locations over the past 90 days. He noted that the current instructions in place stifled creativity of librarians, adding that there were no fall seasonal decorations in any location. Mr. Pinkston indicated that the Greenville Library System seemed to be the only library with a non-themed display policy, and that is why he abstained from voting at the committee meeting.

Mr. Aufmuth noted several dates that may not be recognized and inquired as to what qualified as a holiday. He moved to send the policy back to the Operations Committee for further review and revision. There was no second.

Mr. Hughes expressed his preference that all children's sections be made more appealing to children in all aspects.

Mr. Baxter stated that he felt the proposed policy had gone too far and that leaving everything up to the Executive Director and/or designee was the best path forward.

Mrs. Odom asked where the policy came from and what the vision was behind the proposed policy. Ms. James responded that the proposed policy was being suggested as a starting point. She noted that the previous policy had been criticized and that the proposed policy was not what she really wanted the Library System to be doing. Ms. James stated that it was difficult to move forward in an atmosphere of criticism, so she went back to ground zero with the proposed policy. She stated that she was trying to respond to direction and commentary, noting that her role was to manage and the Library Board's role was to govern.

Mr. Poore expressed his concerns with the policy, and asked what problem the proposed policy was trying to solve.

Mrs. Collins stated that for her, using displays to promote political agendas or a single point of view was the issue that the proposed policy was attempting to solve. She reported that she had received over 3,000 emails about displays since June of 2022 compared to fewer than 300 on any other topic. Mrs. Collins added that while she did not see the proposed policy as a permanent solution, she was prepared to support it. She also added that she had seen a single book on free speech and censorship on display furniture at one location, adding that the single book was not a display.

Mr. Poore stated that displaying unrelated items was almost impossible, and that while it was well intended, the policy should go back for another review. Mr. Aufmuth moved to end the moratorium and revert back to the policy that was in place in April. There was no second.

Mrs. Moston clarified that books representing divisive themes for the community should not be in common areas, adding that books on display in public areas needed to be as neutral as possible. She stated that the previous policy was abused by some staff and managers to promote an agenda. Mrs. Moston reiterated no one was taking books away.

Mr. Poore stated to be truly neutral would mean taking displays away altogether.

Mr. Hill stated that the purpose of the policy was never to "not" be offensive. It was so that we would not be seen as promoting something we didn't need to promote. He added that the City of Greenville promotes certain holidays that the County does not, and that the policy allows displays of certain holidays that the County recognizes. Mr. Hill stated that previous displays made it appear as though the Library System was promoting an LGBT agenda. He shared examples of issues and topics that he has seen in his 24 years of being on the Library Board, adding that the Library System didn't put up a pro-life display when Roe v. Wade was overturned. He added that the Library System doesn't need to do that. Mr. Hill concluded his remarks stating that the Library System does not denigrate someone's sexuality nor do we have displays which promote someone's sexuality.

Mr. Hoard stated that the Library had a policy and people abused it. He stated that the community tells the Board what they want and the Board needs to listen.

Mr. Hill asked Ms. James to confirm that a moratorium on displays was in place until a new policy is passed. Ms. James confirmed that there were no displays other than those featuring new materials.

Mr. Hill noted that the proposed policy was in lieu of there being no displays.

Mr. Aufmuth moved to refer the policy back to the Operations Committee to be further refined. Mr. Baxter seconded. Mr. Hill noted that by doing so, we would continue with the policy in place until a new policy was developed. With one abstention and the majority of the Board voting in opposition, the motion failed.

Mr. Hoard moved to adopt the proposed policy on the floor, as recommended by the committee. Mrs. Moston seconded. Mr. Hill noted that it could always be sent back for more work at any time. With one abstention and the majority voting in favor the *Display of Library Materials and Information Policy* passed as presented.

Mr. Hughes moved to open the children's areas back up to what they were before the 90-day moratorium on displays was decided. He stated that he wanted materials, decorations, hands-on activities, etc. placed out in all children's areas. He added that the children's areas should have seasonal decorations as well. Following discussion, Mr. Hughes withdrew his motion as Ms. James requested an opportunity to accomplish what he was asking for without further amending the policy.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. James announced that South Carolina Room staff had curated a photography exhibit at the Main Library and online in recognition of 100 years of bookmobile service in Greenville County. She referred to the November/December *Event Guide* and highlighted two programs: Lollipops concerts held at Main and the Greer Branch on October 14, with a total of 147 attendees, and Storytime Ballet at Main and the Five Forks Branch on October 21, with a total of 437 attendees. In response to a question, Ms. James stated that this was typical attendance at both of these very popular programs.

### APPEARANCES

Mr. Hill announced that several speakers had signed up to appear before the Board. He reminded all in attendance that each speaker would be given three minutes to speak, and that he would time them and notify them when they reached three minutes. He asked that if they were told to stop, they should stop. If they did not, they would not be able to speak again. He called on the following individuals:

Name	Purpose of Appearance
Sheila Kihne	"Explicit Books – Board support"
Michael Becker	"Board support"
Alexandra Byrd	"Display Policy"
Jeannie Hall	"Display Policy and Board"

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

### NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Collins stated that she was enjoying the new auto-renewal feature with the Library System's new integrated library system.

### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hill asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Hoard so moved. Mr. Baxter seconded. Mr. Hill adjourned the meeting at 1:55p.

S. Allan Hill  
Chair, Board of Trustees

Beverly James  
Executive Director

Jill Cornwell  
Recording Secretary