



West Georgia Regional Library System Board of Trustees Called Meeting

September 28, 2021

This meeting was held via teleconference per O.C.G.A. 50-14-1(g).

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m.

Trustees in Attendance:

- Denise Askin (Carroll County) - Chairman
- Mike McPherson (Carroll County) - Vice Chair
- Tracy Crooks (Douglas County) - Secretary
- Karen Tarpley (Haralson County)
- Keri Perkins (Haralson County)
- Beth Hammond (Heard County)
- Rodney Kay (Heard County)
- Elaine Stokes (Paulding County)
- Jenna Barton (Paulding County)
- Pat Rakestraw (Paulding County)

Staff in Attendance:

- Stephen Houser, WGRLS Director
- Stephanie Irvin, WGRLS Deputy Director
- Justin Nobles, WGRLS Assistant Director for Technology

Trustees Absent:

- Tim Grizzard (Carroll County)
- Kathleen French (Douglas County)
- Urshla Dowdy (Douglas County)

Guests Present:

- Katie Henry (Douglas County Library Board)

Motion to Amend the Agenda to Remove the Second Reading of the Finance Policy – Hammond; Second - Tarpley; No Discussion; MOTION APPROVED: Vote 9-0.

Askin	McPherson	Crooks	Tarpley	Hammond	Perkins	Stokes
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YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Barton	Rakestraw	Grizzard	French	Dowdy		
YES	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT		

Motion to Approve March 31, 2021 Minutes – Hammond; Second - Crooks; No Discussion; MOTION APPROVED: Vote 9-0.

Askin	McPherson	Crooks	Tarpley	Hammond	Perkins	Stokes
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Barton	Rakestraw	Grizzard	French	Dowdy		
YES	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT		

Motion to Approve April 21, 2021 Minutes – Tarpley; Second - Rakestraw; No Discussion; MOTION APPROVED: Vote 9-0.

Askin	McPherson	Crooks	Tarpley	Hammond	Perkins	Stokes
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Barton	Rakestraw	Grizzard	French	Dowdy		
YES	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT		

Motion to Approve June 8, 2021 Minutes – Perkins; Second - Stokes; No Discussion; MOTION APPROVED: Vote 9-0.

Askin	McPherson	Crooks	Tarpley	Hammond	Perkins	Stokes
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Barton	Rakestraw	Grizzard	French	Dowdy		
YES	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT		

Deputy Director - FY21 Annual Report Highlights

- Ms. Irvin gave a presentation of highlights from the FY21 annual report. They included:
- Last FY saw the second declination in fines revenue across WGRLS.



- Physical circulation dropped from 707,750 checkouts in FY2021 and 845,631 in FY20, but e-content circulation rose slightly. There were 62,762 e-content checkouts in FY21, up from 58,756 in FY20.
- eRead Kids has increased in popularity from 3,071 checkouts to 4,180 checkouts.
- Summer Reading Program (SRP) registrations rose from 2,011 in FY20 to 3,405 in FY21.
- Many WGRLS libraries used Beanstack, where patrons can complete virtual activities to receive a badge. This year there were more activities per badge. This led to there being a drop in the amount of badge completions (from 8,225 in FY20 to 7,089 in FY21) but an increase in the amount of activities completed (from 4,110 in FY20 to 8,861 in FY21).

Courier and Extension Services Report – Teresa Jones

Ms. Jones gave a presentation on courier and extension services. As a part of PINES, WGRLS can place holds on books across the state. Holds are created all day due to requests from other libraries, or from books from other libraries which were sent to a WGRLS library being checked in. There are two sets of couriers: the state courier, who delivers WGRLS items to a warehouse to sort items which are delivered throughout the state. WGRLS usually gets anywhere from 20-40 tubs a day. They are sorted by a WGRLS courier into the 20 stations: one for each library, and one for extension services. Libraries may get multiple tubs delivered to them a day. These tubs are delivered by the four WGRLS couriers who deliver tubs to all member libraries. Mr. Houser commended the department, adding they are one of three sites in the state who are helping in a PINES project for testing ways to transfer A/V materials. Ms. Jones stated the couriers work about 19 hours a week with two vans, with each van travelling an average of 230 miles a day. Through extension services, WGRLS delivers items to the 115 schools and nursing homes which have requested services. The media specialists contact Ms. Jones, who sends out items four days a week. In the school year of 2021, 802 deliveries were made to schools and there were 306 pickups; these deliveries are multiple items. Extension services have been approved to get a new van, with that van replacing the STEAM Engine van, which has over 400,000 miles on it. Mr. Houser stated the van would be on state contract so an RFP isn't needed; it will be brought before the board before purchase. Several board members commended Ms. Jones and her department for their work.

Director's Report

Mr. Houser gave his director's report. The \$93,255.70 ECF grant is offered through the federal government. WGRLS applied for 125 laptops and 123 hotspots to use in various libraries in the region. The \$38,372.05 ARPA Funds, which passed through the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS), was approved August 12. This resulted in 1,062 titles being added to the regionwide e-book collection. Through another ARPA-based grant through GPLS, WGRLS is providing makerspace and STEM equipment to all of its libraries. The ARPA-based Digital Inclusion grant,



which is also provided through GPLS, will provide 50/50 funding for a new pop-up bookmobile for outreach and circulation services.

An RFP has been issued and approved by the Town of Centralhatchee. Renovation and addition to the library will commence shortly, with an estimated four month project timeline. Preliminary drawings have been created for an outdoor pavilion by the Neva Lomason Memorial Library. The pavilion would be used to host events and storytimes. Proposed renovations for the Douglasville library include doubling the children’s area, adding windows, and revamping the walkway. Progress drawings are under review by the Douglas County administrator. Douglas County is also handling preliminary design work with their selected architect for a new library, the Anneewakee/Chapel Hill library. WGRLS will begin reaching out to state legislators shortly for funding for the project.

WGRLS is partnering with different school systems for PLAY cards. The cards for the Carrollton City Schools will go live October 4. Notifications have been sent to parents and students. The Paulding County Schools are finalizing technical details, but are expected to go live in the end of October. WGRLS is beginning discussions around an MOU with the Carroll County schools.

The regional office has completed several projects. This includes outdoor WiFi being installed and available at all member libraries, a catalog clean-up and A/V update, construction documents organized and filed, the annual report being completed, and the state grants budget forms submitted.

Upcoming projects include the Staff Development Day on November 19, strategic planning in Spring 2022, and the FY21 audit scheduled for December 13-14. Through a partnership with the Community Foundation of West Georgia, WGRLS will host “On the Table,” a civic conversation program for 3 of its 5 counties. Several years ago WGRLS established a partnership with the Carrollton Center for the Arts for the educational, Community Foundation-funded puppet show “Grasshopper Tea.” All board members will be receiving digital invites soon for the invite-only premier on October 28.

Committee Reports – Finance Committee

- **Motion to Approve First Two Months of Financial Statements – Hammond, Finance Committee Chair; Second - Perkins; No Discussion; MOTION APPROVED: Vote 9-0.**

Askin	McPherson	Crooks	Tarpley	Hammond	Perkins	Stokes
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YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Barton	Rakestraw	Grizzard	French	Dowdy		
YES	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT		

Budget Amendment 2022-1

Budget Amendment 2022-1 accounts for ARPA Tech Grant Revenue and Expenditures. It increases federal grant revenue by \$148,164.6 while expenditures increase by an equal amount

- **Motion to Approve Budget Amendment 2022-01 – Hammond, Finance Committee Chair; Second - Perkins; No Discussion; MOTION APPROVED: Vote 9-0.**

Askin	McPherson	Crooks	Tarpley	Hammond	Perkins	Stokes
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Barton	Rakestraw	Grizzard	French	Dowdy		
YES	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT		

New Business

Fines Free Presentation

Mr. Houser stated that some libraries in the United State are ending fines. Reasons for this include: a desire to have long overdue items returned, a removing a barrier to access for patrons who need library services, and to bring patrons who have not been coming to the library back. Four library systems in Georgia have gone completely fines free, while one is fines free for children and young adult materials. Mr. Houser shared statistics from the system which has the most complete data pre-pandemic: Chattahoochee Valley. In their first six months (September 2019-March 2020) they saw an increase in new library cards every month, with a 20% increase in new cards overall. They also saw an increase in circulation, with a 9.3% increase in the first six months. This number does not include renewals. There was a dramatic increase in lost items returned by patrons. For example, in February FY20 there were 475 items returned, as opposed to 92 in February FY19. The amount collected for replacement items also rose for Chattahoochee Valley.

Mr. Houser stated while patrons do not have fines under the fines-free model, they do still need to return or renew items in 30 days or they will be marked lost. They are also still responsible for



lost or damaged books, with replacement fees for lost books still being in effect. He shared patron stories from Chattahoochee Valley.

WGRLS fines revenue has decreased the past two years. Some challenges to going fines-free include: local funding agencies may not approve of the potential lost revenue, revenue for WGRLS might decrease, and PINES would have to approve the pilot program (which is currently at their maximum allowance of three library systems). GPLS is pursuing grants that would allow for a statewide fines free program in the next 12-18 months, which would cover the loss of revenue.

There are two options for the potential next step if this is something WGRLS wants to pursue. If WGRLS wants to go fines free for all patrons, a formal policy would have to be delivered to the county boards and then the regional board. If approved, WGRLS would be prepared to go fines free wither when PINES approves the program, or when the proposed GPLS fine replacement program begins. If WGRLS wants to go fines free only for children’s materials, it would also have to develop a formal policy to be delivered to the county boards and then the regional board. If approved WGRLS would be able to immediately go fines free for children’s materials.

There was discussion among the board. Some concerns included lost revenue, longer hold times, and items not being returned. Mr. Houser stated he would look into the statistics related to the concerns. No action was needed by the board.

Calendar Year 2022 Closing Schedule

Mr. Houser said the list of proposed closings for calendar year 2022 covers the same holidays as last year. The only difference is the addition of a floating holiday, which would be used for a staff development day.

- **Motion to Approve Calendar Year 2022 Closing Schedule – McPherson, Finance Committee Chair; Second - Crooks; No Discussion; MOTION APPROVED: Vote 9-0.**

Askin	McPherson	Crooks	Tarpley	Hammond	Perkins	Stokes
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Barton	Rakestraw	Grizzard	French	Dowdy		
YES	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT		



Executive Session for Director’s Annual Review

- **Motion to Move to Executive Session for Director’s Annual Review – McPherson, Finance Committee Chair; Second - Crooks; No Discussion; MOTION APPROVED: Vote 9-0.**

Askin	McPherson	Crooks	Tarpley	Hammond	Perkins	Stokes
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Barton	Rakestraw	Grizzard	French	Dowdy		
YES	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT		

It was decided the Personnel Committee would meet after the regional board meeting.

The Motion to Move to Executive Session for Director’s Annual Review was withdrawn.

- **Motion to Adjourn – McPherson; Second - Hammond; No Discussion; MOTION APPROVED: Vote 9-0.**

Askin	McPherson	Crooks	Tarpley	Hammond	Perkins	Stokes
YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Barton	Rakestraw	Grizzard	French	Dowdy		
YES	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT	ABSENT		

The meeting was adjourned at 11:29 a.m.

Minutes taken by Stephanie Irvin, WGRLS Deputy Director
 Reviewed by Tracy Crooks, WGRLS Regional Board Secretary