

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING  
ALABAMA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE  
JANUARY 30, 2024**

The Executive Board of the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) met on January 30, 2024 at the Alabama Public Library Service building in Montgomery, Alabama. A quorum was present and prior notice was given as required by the Alabama Open Meetings Act and Act #2022-421.

The following Board members were present: Ron Snider, Angelia Stokes, and Michelle Hughes  
Board members absent: Jerria Martin and John Wahl. APLS staff members present: Nancy Pack, Kelyn Ralya, Jessica Everingham, Jennifer Holman, Matt Sponsler, and Vanessa Carr.  
Visitor attending was: Ben Albritton, Office of the Attorney General.

The following guests were also present: Michael Martin, Ethel Williams, Christine Cree, Bernice Fischman, Amy Minton, Krysti Shallenberger, Williesha Morris, Tamara Dean, Robert Gourlay, Elizabeth Delaney, Jessica Hayes, Jodi Womack, Jacob Holmes, Elizabeth Williams, Jemma Stephenson, Maddie Biertempfel, Kate Etheredge, Thomas Ming, Angie Hayden, Amber Frey, Kay Kelly, Matthew Layne, Carol Mosely, Maddie Smith, Leah Billye Welburn, Mary Weidler, Tabitha Isner, Dallas Baillio, Erin Davis, Lori Herring, Alex Willis, Craig Mongel, Andrew Foster, Karen Cooper, Linda Turner, Susan DuBose, Travis Jackson, Liz Campbell, Suzanne LaRosa, Hannah Rees, Makhayla DeRosiers, and Alyx Kim-Yohn

Chairman, Ron Snider called the Executive Board Regular Meeting to order at 10:02 a.m., and roll was taken. The Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

Mr. Snider asked if there were additions to the Agenda. There were no additions to the Agenda. Mrs. Hughes made the motion to adopt the Agenda. Mrs. Stokes seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Ron Snider, Angelia Stokes, and Michelle Hughes. No "nays."

The Minutes of the November 17, 2023 meeting were presented to the Board for approval. There were no updates to the Minutes. Mrs. Stokes made the motion to approve the Minutes as written. Mrs. Hughes seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Michelle Hughes, Ron Snider, and Angelia Stokes. No "nays."

**Participation**

Mr. Snider welcomed all the participants to the meeting and asked that everyone introduce themselves.

Angie Hayden  
Suzanne DuBose  
Hannah Rees  
Matthew Layne

**Angie Hayden – Read Freely Alabama**

It concerned us at Read Freely, when members of your Board handle complaints from Moms for Liberty and Clean-Up Alabama. As we have watched time and time again, these groups target LGBTQ+ content as materials for removal, not relocation as they like to claim, and we have the actual challenge forms to show that. As well as books that discusses complicated history and important topics such as race, and age-appropriate sex education materials, this is problematic. Concerned parties of every political affiliation are alarmed of the idea of a black list collected by the state government; yet, the plan was approved and implemented. Now, parties from both sides of the list insists that these books be made public. We see it contains eighty-two (82) books so far, ranging from stories about red crayons and blue wrappers, Amish romances, books about divorce, the left behind series from the young adult section, and Christian non-fiction books covering sex education. All of this with an estimated price tag of potentially tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars, making it a very expensive experiment to prove that parents have very subjective opinions when it comes to inappropriate materials for their own children. We are troubled by this authoritarian government. We understand that the Board has found itself in a difficult position with these group, feeling as though you must either accommodate these assaults on our rights, while facing the threats of loss of critical funding for libraries. We ask, what this list was really meant to accomplish? What was the end goal of the State collecting a list of targeted books, and how is that meant to affect the duties of library staff who are already

### **Angie Hayden – Read Freely Alabama (continued)**

trained to understand collections. We struggle to see how creating such a list can mean anything, but to create a state sponsored black list of books based on personal ideology of Moms for Liberty and Clean-Up Alabama extremist, only it did not do that very well. What it did establish and demonstrate is inappropriate (dangerously subjected word) open to wildly different interpretations, to be used and misused for ideological and political purposes. However, Read Freely believes that all the books on the blacklist do belong in the libraries, including those on religious minorities, such as Amish romances. These belief systems may not be mainstream, but they deserve representation as we all do. How will Alabama raise its profile, nationally, politically, and culturally as we continue to present this ignorance to the rest of the country that we accept extremism, and discrimination of Americans, and are willing to censor libraries to do that. However, Read Freely has been really encouraged to see so many Alabama families from across the political spectrum join us to reject these attacks, as you can see by all these stickers in the room. Most Alabama parents have no interest in co-parenting with Moms for Liberty or with Clean -Up Alabama. As we move through this year, we hope you will take a lesson learned from this experiment and adjust towards a more rational and equitable way of leading our state library system; remembering the importance of a wide variety of viewpoints, representation and the freedom of Alabama' families who exercise their rights to choose what to read in our public libraries.

### **Representative Susan DuBose**

Thank you for having me today. I am from the Hoover area, Shelby and Jefferson County. We are one week away from starting our 2024 legislative session and I just want to follow-up on some items that Dr. Pack submitted in her October 18, 2023 letter to Governor Ivey. I want to first of all thank her for agreeing to go along with recommendations that are very sensible and reasonable. I hope you all have read them because they are not going to limit what you are able to do as a parent, but it does help you to be a parent and make the selections for your child. The first thing I want to mention, and I am not sure of the status of this, is that you said in your letter that you will draft a letter to the American Library Association urging the impeachment of Emily Drabinski as President of the organization and detailing the adverse impact her comments have made on Alabama's public libraries. Second, you were not going to renew organization membership of the APLS Executive Board with ALA. You have heard from myself, chairs of our Education Budget. and many Legislators that ask for APLS to totally disaffiliate from the ALA or state funding could be jeopardized. I am not sure of the status of that. Also Board approval of the recommended changes to the APLS state aid Administrative Code, Chapter 520-2-2, as detailed by Governor Ivey, is required in order for public libraries to qualify for state aid. These recommended guideline changes make Libraries more conducive to parental and child friendly environments. I am concerned about the timing; I don't know when this process is going to finish and if the libraries will have time to submit their changes and guidelines in order to qualify for funds. Local libraries must submit to the Library Service their written policies covering items in the Administrative Code in order to receive state funds.

The Code changes that need to be added includes:

- Physical location and relocation of sexually explicit materials deemed inappropriate for children and youth
- Advance approval of materials recommended, displayed, or otherwise actively promoted to children or youth

#### **Added new Language**

- Exercising discretion in the location of sexually explicit material or other material deemed by the public library board to be inappropriate for children or youth does not constitute a denial of service on the basis of age. Taking age into account when recommending, displaying, or otherwise actively promoting library materials does not constitute a denial of service on the basis of age.

#### **Added New Paragraph**

- Any expenditure of public funds to the American Library Association must be approved by the governing board of the public library or public library system in an open, public meeting following advance public notice.

We all want strong healthy public libraries in our state and we want these recommendations that Dr. Pack has agreed to move along so that our public libraires can participate in receiving their state budget funding this year. Ignoring and delaying recommendations only harm the ability of our local libraries to receive state funding.

**Hannah Rees - Clean-Up Alabama**

You said we can't talk about the Administrative Code. You are not bothering with that, right.

Mr. Snider – Since that is being published for public comments and there is going to be a public hearing, we thought it would be more appropriate to get written comments and to have speakers on the changes at the public hearing. So, we ask that you not speak about the proposed Administrative Code changes. It will be out for public comment tomorrow.

Ms. Rees – Thank you. I just wanted to clarify because that's what I wanted to speak about.

Ms. Rees – I just want to echo what Susan said, that from the beginning, both the people and the Legislature have been asking for a complete severing of ties from ALA. Not re-upping or renewing membership, but severing ties. For us that includes: financial, training, advocacy, certifications, programing, all of the above, not just renewing our membership. We also want to say we appreciate the steps that are being taken in that direction with Dr. Pack's statements and we are holding her accountable to that and the Administrative Code. We want to thank you for those steps in that direction and we look forward to seeing how it all unfolds.

**Matthew Layne – President, Alabama Library Association (ALLA)  
(Alabama Chapter of the American Library Association)**

It has been my honor to serve as a public librarian for almost twenty (20) years now. During my tenure among books and information resources, I have resisted the idea of librarians as gate keepers for knowledge and information. Something about that always rubbed me the wrong way. My vision of a gatekeeper was medieval. I saw a gatekeeper as someone who could introduce you to the information you sought, or capriciously close the gates upon your requests. Over the last several months, I had to reformulate that concept; I got it all wrong. Librarians are gatekeepers of knowledge and information, not because they want to keep new and different thoughts and ideas hidden away in an old wooden box. We are gatekeepers because there are those among us who fear the very concept of new ideas. There are those here among us who wish to deny the rights of all Alabamians to freely choose what they and their families have the right to read. There are those here among us who feel their limited vision of humanity is the only and correct vision, and they wish to impose their vision on all their neighbors. I proudly stand before you today as a gatekeeper of knowledge, information, and ideas to say that a minority of individuals, no matter how vocal, do not have the right to choose what others read. I stand before you today to remind you of your duty and charge as members of this esteemed Board and representatives of Alabama's public libraries. For you, too, are gatekeepers of knowledge, information, and ideas. It is your solemn duty to protect the resources of all of Alabama's great public libraries, to advocate for them, and assist in their growth.

At the last APLS meeting, I was so happy when Mrs. Doyle spoke in passionate defense of funding for Alabama's public libraries. Shocked, however, when three days later she was capriciously removed from this Board by the Governor's Office. If we cannot engage in honest and open dialogue with one another about difficult concepts and ideas, are we truly Americans? Are we truly Alabamians? I expected more. We as citizens of this great State deserve better. When we silence a voice in this room or out in the world, we only diminish ourselves. We need one another to grow as a society, as a State, and a nation. We need you, as the Executive Board of the Alabama Public Library Service to act as gatekeepers and champions for Alabama's public libraries. Thank you for your time, your courage, and your service.

**Chairman's Report****Virginia L. Doyle – Letter from Governor Kay Ivey – November 21, 2023**

Mrs. Virginia Doyle's appointment ended on November 21, 2023. She was a long-time board member who was passionate for libraries. I think we have a Resolution recognizing Mrs. Doyle's service to the libraries of the state of Alabama and to this Board for approximately 25 years. That Resolution is further down on the Agenda. I think we should go ahead and have a motion to approve the Resolution honoring Mrs. Doyle. Mrs. Hughes made the motion to approve the Resolution for Mrs. Virginia Doyle. Mrs. Stokes seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Ron Snider, Angelia Stokes, and Michelle Hughes. No "nays."

**Unfinished Business****Status of the Opinion from the Attorney General's Office**

Mr. Snider – This morning at 8:00 a.m., we received an e-mail with an opinion we had requested from the Attorney General's Office. We have not yet had a chance to study the Opinion. We will do so and discuss it at the next Board meeting. There will be further discussion about that after the full Board has seen it because they haven't seen it yet.

**APLS Administrative Code Updates**

Mr. Snider – The Administrative Code updates will be published on January 31, 2024. Public comments will run until April 29, 2024. Then there will be a public hearing on April 30, 2024, with respect to the proposed changes.

**Parents' Inappropriate Book List on APLS Website**

Letter from Bryan Taylor requesting a copy of the book list  
 Letter from Nancy Pack responding to the request  
 Letter from Tim Lockett requesting a copy of the book list  
 Letter from Nancy Pack responding to the request

Mr. Snider - There are different requests for the book list under the Freedom of Information Act that we have granted to Mr. Taylor and to Mr. Lockett. The list has been published in some publications. Dr. Pack, do you want to give us the statistics on what we have received so far with respect to that?

Dr. Pack - We received eighty-three (83) book titles, twenty-three (23) of those were submitted by Clean-Up Alabama. It's across the board. One day we had forty-four (44) submissions; other days we have under ten (10).

Mr. Snider – You all will recall, our position on this list is we are not opining one way or the other with respect to any book that is submitted on this list. It was merely intended as information for local libraries to determine if they thought those books were in appropriate sections of their own libraires. We are just compiling the information.

**Letter to Emily Drabinski, President, American Library Association**

Mr. Snider – Dr. Pack wrote a letter to Emily Drabinski, President of the American Library Association, expressing concerns that she had, and that the Board had, with respect to some of the positions that have been taken by her. Dr. Pack recommended that we withdraw from the ALA. Ms. Drabinski did not respond to Dr. Pack's letter. While we recognize that over the years, we've gotten many benefits from ALA membership, particularly in terms of advocacy and program development, I've concluded that membership in ALA is becoming a distraction and that at our last meeting, we had indicated that we would consider whether we withdraw at our March meeting, but I believe we should do so now.

Mrs. Stokes – I would like to make a motion that we go ahead and withdraw from the ALA. Just because of this controversy, that does not mean sometime in the future we might rethink that.

**Letter to Emily Drabinski, President, American Library Association (continued)**

Mr. Snider – We have a motion to that effect?

Ms. Hughes – Are we withdrawing or disaffiliating?

Mr. Snider – We are withdrawing and not renewing our membership in March when it comes due.

Mrs. Hughes -Second.

Mr. Snider - So it's been moved and seconded. Is there any other discussion? Mrs. Stokes made the motion to disaffiliate with the ALA. Mrs. Hughes seconded the motion. Members voting by saying "aye" are as follows: Ron Snider, Michelle Hughes, and Angelia Stokes. No "nays."

**New Business****Appoint Nominating Committee to Recommend Vice Chair for FY2024**

Mr. Snider – Virginia Doyle was Vice-Chair on the Board. I would appoint Mrs. Stokes and Mrs. Hughes to that Committee to make the recommendation at the next Board meeting for the Vice-Chair.

**IMLS Grant Supporting Youth & Family**

Dr. Pack – We are participating in a grant through the IMLS with the Birmingham Public Library. It's called Ready Now. We are working with that library to combat a rise in teen violence and working with the library to develop enhanced opportunities to draw teens into the library, and keep them off the streets, and the potential of getting into trouble. Most of the work is on the Birmingham Public Library. As an agency, IMLS required us to be a partner with them. We are very pleased to partner with IMLS on this project.

Mrs. Stokes – I have a suggestion or information. The University of South Alabama Creative Writing Department and the English department got together with various youth groups in the inner city in Mobile and are teaching writing courses and helping these teenagers who have previously been in trouble write their stories and reading them out loud. That might be something that other organizations and communities might be able to take with the universities affiliated in their areas.

Dr. Pack – Thank you

**Parents' Inappropriate Book List Statistics**

A form was provided on the APLS website on December 14, 2023, so persons can list what they believe are inappropriate books found in public libraries. The statistics from the book list is as of December 14, 2023 – January 5, 2024. Fifty (50) requests were submitted and only seven (7) met the criteria.

**Survey of Libraries Regarding Book Challenges**

Mr. Snider - One of the things that we have done is a survey of local libraries over how many complaints they had with respect to books. I think we had eighty-four (84) libraries respond to the survey that was done in early January and it covered any complaints that had been received from April 1, 2023, until the end of the year. Out of that, eighty-four (84) libraries responded with only 8 libraries indicating they had any complaints with respect to any books. Of the eight libraries that responded, 121 separate books were listed. I think what that shows is that most local libraries do not consider this to be a problem to the extent that we sometimes hear.

**SB10 – Library Board members Serve at the Pleasure of Appointing Authority - Amend Section 11-90-2, Code of Alabama 1975**

Mr. Snider – Legislation introduced regarding libraries members serving at the pleasure of appointing authorities. That is for information purposes. I don't believe we should have a position on that. This is for the Legislature, the local governments, and local libraries.

**Director's Report****APLS Financial Update – Jennifer Holman**

This is budget as of December 31, 2023. At the top portion shows the state funds where we are at for spending. The middle section shows the federal and local funds are directed and obligated. Total for federal and local funds are at the bottom of the sheet. We are on track right now.

**Director's Report on Activities**

Nancy Pack – MaryBeth Wise, Consultant at the Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, conducted a review at APLS. The others are general meetings with the AVL, etc. Also, the receptionist desk statistics for November and December are attached.

**Staff Activities – Katie Bailey – IMLS SDC Meeting – January 22-26, 2024**

Katie Bailey attended the IMLS SDC Meeting on January 22-26, 2024 in Denver, CO. She attended a conference with all staff members who collect data for their agencies. According to Ms. Bailey, there is a standard list of questions that IMLS requires

**Discussion on Another Topic (continued)**

Mr. Snider – Is there any other business?

Mrs. Stokes – Has there been any word about re-appointment for Bobbie Lou’s position? That’s going to be one of the things that will come up in a week or two.


Mr. Snider – No. I think the Governor’s Office is considering that.

**Adjournment**

Mrs. Stokes made the motion for adjournment. Mrs. Hughes seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying “aye” are as follows: Ron Snider, Michelle Hughes, and Angelia Stokes. No “nays.” Meeting adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

The next meeting will be held on May 16, 2024.

  
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Ron Snider, Chairman

  
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Nancy C. Pack, Director

  
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Vanessa E. Carr, Recording Secretary