

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
ALABAMA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE
JANUARY 15, 2026**

The Executive Board of the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) met on January 15, 2026 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.

Chairman John Wahl called the Executive Board Regular Meeting to order at 1:10 p.m., in the Alabamiana Room, and roll was taken. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated he is honored to have them.

The following Board members were present: John Wahl, Ron Snider (via phone), Angelia Stokes, Debra Windsor, Amy Minton, and Kasandra Stevens. Board member absent was: Jerria Martin. APLS staff members present: Kelyn Ralya, Jennifer Holman, Ryan Godfrey, Matt Sponsler, Jay Mims, Pennie Broussard, and Vanessa Carr.

Visitor attended: Ben Albritton, Office of the Attorney General. Randal Wright and Robert Gourlay, Fairhope Public Library.

Adoption of Agenda

Chairman Wahl asked if there were additions to the agenda. There were no objections to the agenda. The agenda was adopted as written by unanimous decision.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Wahl asked if there were any corrections or edits to the Minutes. No edits or additions. Angelia Stokes made the motion to approved the Minutes as written. Amy Minton seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Kasandra Stevens, John Wahl, Debra Windsor, Amy Minton, and Angelia Stokes. No "nays." Vote taken, all in favor. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

Participation

**Autumn Zellner
Alyx Kim-Yohn
Amber Frey
Angie Hayden**

Chairman's Report

I want to address a few things said during the participation period. When I said "bad actor" it was very disappointing to me when I found out through the public comment period that librarians and directors who were refusing parents the ability to get a library card for the children section. We want parents to have access to youth cards and/or the minor section. We're not trying to force either one, we want parents to make that decision. When I found out librarians were not giving the parents that choice, but was forcing them, saying no, you only have access to the adult section, that's a bad actor. The code changes are very clear; parents make the decision of whether they want their children to have access to only the children/youth or the adult sections. There were libraries overruling that saying parents you don't have that option, you only get a youth card with access to the adult section and would not issue a card for the minor section. That's very disappointing, the goal is parental rights and the goal is letting parents make the decision. We should be supporting parents if they want their children to have access to the youth or the adult sections. I'm not being derogatory to you or to librarians in general, this is specific people who are restricting the freedom of parents.

It's an exciting time for libraries; I am excited about some of the things are happening. Kelyn will share some of the things that going on with the summer reading program that highlights the positives of libraries in and around the state. I want to highlight both, the work of this Board, the work of the staff in this building, and also the work of our local libraries across the state. There is so much good going on that doesn't catch your attention; and doesn't get the credit it deserves. The service and professionalism that so many of our libraries provide to patrons around the state.

Unfinished Business**Fairhope Public Library**

I know there has been a lot of debate on this and the negativity aimed at me. The delay was not an attempt to pressure anyone or hoping the people of Fairhope forgot anything. Chairman Wright made a comment to the press that she doubted this Board would read the materials, and I took that challenge seriously. I want to make an informal decision, and I wanted to have the information and understand the full scope; so out of respect to the Fairhope Public Library, I took the time out to do that. I want to highlight that some people may be able to read those books in a month. I could not because I have a very busy schedule. Even the Fairhope library board had multiple members reading the books and it took them from our March to September meeting to read them. I ask for a little bit of grace in the time it took me; I did my best and I hope there is no frustration, especially from the members of Fairhope, but I wanted to do my due diligence to speak clearly and informed when it came to the books in question.

As a Board we do have the question of whether we reinstate Fairhope's funding or whether we continue it being cut. I think the question clearly rests on does the decision the Fairhope Public Library made comply with state code. I am going to be very frank and honest because I feel this is the only way to approach things in this manner. I put together a list of a few things in the books, reading them from the perspective of someone who might be concerned with the books. Things I consider the worse content of each book, for a review of this Board. I would also like to get the opinion of the Fairhope Public Library on the content as well because I want to give them every chance to read the material, read it to us, and explain why it is not sexually explicit.

Chairman Wahl handed out excerpts from the books to the Board, Randal Wright, and Robert Gourlay. Chairman Wahl asked Mrs. Wright and Mr. Gourlay to come and explain to the Board the contents of each book outlined in the excerpts.

Chairman Wahl - I have mixed feelings on some of the books, but I understand the author's intent on reading the books as a whole. On several of the books the authors had genuine hearts, and were communicating hard subjects, and I understand where they were coming from. I also understand that we have a diverse opinion especially on matters of sexuality and it's important that we as government officials respect diverse opinions and try to find a solution that people are comfortable on all sides of the issues. That's my heart and I ask that you communicate with me as we try to find a solution.

Beyond Magenta – Susan Kulkin.

Chairman Wahl - You will see a list of profanity count at the top of each sheet for each of the ten books on the list. I would highlight reading these books as a whole; the ten books on this list contained the following profanity count:

F word used 184 times

S word used 297 times

D word used 17 times

A word used 120 times

B word used 44 times

F..g word used 15 times

N word used 11 times

I am going to be brutally honest; I am not use to reading content that contains that amount of vulgar language. The idea of being happy, content, or excited about youth reading that amount of vulgarity concerns me. Since the beginning of time, society has protected young people from harsh subjects that includes: sexually explicit vulgarity, which include this type of language and violence. One excerpt in one of the books talks about watching videos where a woman is pulled apart and her intestines are pulled out. This is not content that I can recommend to young people. This is not content that I can tell a parent they should not be concerned about. When I

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look at the concern of parents having this material in front of their children, I can't condemn that concern.

To the press in the room, you can't print it – I had a challenge from some of the press last time, will you print the content of these books? They said 'yes.' I would like to see it printed, because I think the people deserves to know the content and let them make the decision. It's about putting people in power, putting them in control, and letting them make the decisions. When I looked through this content, I saw material that I cannot tell a parent they should not be concerned about it; they're blowing it out of proportion. I saw content that I think deserves consideration, but I want to hear from Fairhope. You have the sheet with some of the content from each book. Read it out loud and explain why you think it's appropriate. I would love for you to do that.

Ron Snider – John, this is Ron Snider. You should have sent this list to the Board [inaudible – breaking up] you are ambushing the Fairhope library. The library board reviewed the materials and they made the decision; you are becoming the censor-in-chief for Alabama. You're substituting your judgment over the overall benefit of these books to publicly appointed people [inaudible – breaking up]. It is highly inappropriate and you are going to be known as the censor for Alabama, which is not very inaudible.

Chairman Wahl – I am going to push back on that pretty heavy, Ron. What I did was explain and try to look at both sides. I want to give Fairhope the chance to respond. I am not trying to censor anything.

Ron Snider – That's disingenuous, John, that is not what [inaudible – breaking up] you're giving them something at the last minute. They made a decision based upon the overall content of these books and you're now trying to use your judgment for a local board's decision. That's inappropriate.

Chairman Wahl – Quite the opposite. I am asking for their opinion on why this material should be considered appropriate for children and why this material wouldn't be sexually explicit. That's due process, you're a lawyer and should understand that.

Ron Snider – It is the overall content of these books and the idea that teenagers have not heard any of the words that you suggested, it's just not reality.

Kasandra Stevens – I don't disagree with that.

Chairman Wahl – I don't disagree with that – the idea that children do run across hard things is 100% true. The question is should taxpayer funded libraries take measures to safeguard children from such materials. That's a question we have to answer because whether you like it or not, the Governor appointed us to this Board to make those decisions. We can't just shirk that responsibility.

Angelia Stokes – Where are these books put in the library? Where were they in Fairhope, the young adult section?

Chairman Wahl – They're in the youth section.

Response – You can't ask the library to dictate language – this is a board decision.

Robert Gourlay – I don't think I can represent our whole board today – they made these decisions in public meetings – that was their decision, so I can't revisit what my board has already done.

Chairman Wahl – It's better to address the board chairman than you on that.

Robert Gourlay – The only question I would have for the Board, this is the first time I've heard questioning profanity and violence. I know the focus has been on sexually explicit materials in the past. That is widening the scope of how we evaluate these materials.

Fairhope Public Library (continued)

Chairman Wahl – I was using that as an example for the content of the book as a whole. There were many scenes of violence and drug use, encouraging drug use, talking about how crack is bad but marijuana is good. I skipped all of that, we can have a debate over whether that is inappropriate for children or not. You will notice the excerpts deal with more sexually explicit for that reason. I don't want to blindside you with content. I was using the amount of profanity as my shot for a reader, reading the books as a whole and I think that is very fair.

Kassandra Stevens –The profanity is not the cause of the books being there for consideration – sexually explicit is what we are sticking to.

Chairman Wahl - The books are all sexually explicit.

Robert Gourlay – It will be interesting to hear each of your positions on each of these titles and where APLS stands? Do you have anything to add, Randal?

Randal Wright – No.

Chairman Wahl – I would love you to read the materials and explain to us why it's not sexually explicit. There is a disagreement especially for me.

Kassandra Stevens – I think *“Doing It”* is pretty sexually explicit. My question is when we redefine sexually explicit, it specifically didn't necessarily say as a whole the book is because there are some books that are sexually explicit, example dealing with rape, but as a whole that could be an important book. I'm not saying it shouldn't be in the teen section; that can be in the young adult section, for 18 years and over, but it's important literature for kids to have access in case they're in that situation. My question to Fairhope is: it's not sexually explicit because you didn't find it sexually explicit, or you thought the work as a whole outweighed whatever was sexually explicit in it?

Angelia Stokes – The content of the entire book was befitting for the subject they were trying to get across in the reading material. Is that what you're trying to say>

Amy Minton – If you were just looking at obscenity – but we're not, we're looking at sexually explicit. You can't say – look at *“Doing It”* – it talks about masturbation, the orgasms, and the sex acts themselves. That's why we had a public hearing and decided what we considered sexually explicit for six hours. These words and these definitions were in the public hearing that was decided.

Chairman Wahl – I genuinely want to get a thought from Fairhope – I don't want this to be where we are not giving you guys time – we will take as much time as needed to read book-by-book. Do you defend that content – do you feel this content is appropriate for children- do you not feel it's sexually explicit?

Randal Wright – I don't think you can take a few words out of a book 400 pages long and say that this makes it a bad book for kids. I also believe that the definition that we were given the word 'prurient' was there – I don't think any of this is sexually explicit unless it arouses someone, it's just statements in talking about it. As a whole, these books did not have a reason we felt, that they should be moved. They were written for teens.

Chairman Wahl – I want to make it clear we are not talking about these books being bad. We are talking about whether these books reach a level that parents should make the decision of whether their children have access to them.

Randal Wright –Parents have made their decision. If they want their child to have access to those books, and they don't have a card that allows them to have access to those books. The books are in the teen section, ages 13 – 17. It's upstairs in the library, it's not where the younger children go.

Chairman Wahl – Let's look at it from that perspective, the content for 13 and up, I think that's fair.

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Kasandra Stevens – Do children cards allow them access to the books? Do a minor card allow kids access to [inaudible]...

Robert Gourlay – There are multiple minor cards so you can choose the card to have access to certain sections of the library. We have lengthy discussions about these books, and I don't think we will be able to represent the fullness of those discussions now. Two board members read each of these titles and presented them to the rest of the board.

Chairman Wahl – No offense - you're asking us to say these books are okay and parents should not be concerned about the contents – I need reasons. If you can't explain it, say I can't explain it.

Robert Gourlay – That's not what I'm saying.

Randal Wright – He's saying he can't speak for the board of trustees

Chairman Wahl – Let's go back and look at each book.

Randal Wright – No, sir. I've already looked at them and we've made our decision on them.

Chairman Wahl – So, you're not willing to look at the books. This Board has to make a decision. We have to look at the books. I don't understand how you can tell me not to look at the books. Explain that decision, if that's not too much to ask.

Randal Wright – My definition is different from yours – my background is different from yours. When I read these books, these bad words just flow over my head, and I don't pay any attention to them. I don't like them and they are not important to me.

Chairman Wahl – We have parents who come to the library and are concerned about them. We have to look at each book; this is what state code demands; we have to look at this objectively. You can't say one percent of inappropriate is ok. Inappropriate is inappropriate – every child and every parent deserves to walk in the library in the children's section and know that books do not contain sexually explicit content.

Kasandra Stevens- That's my question– is it sexually explicit or not? I am not sure about *“Beyond Magenta”*. Is this about transgender because I have not read the whole book. Based on the definitions that we've provided, I feel like these meet the definition of either transgenderism or sexually explicit.

Chairman Wahl – I do want to make it clear that the updated Code is not in effect yet, so any decision made here today will be made on the original Code changes, which is sexually explicit.

Kasandra Stevens – Which there wasn't a clear definition of that, is that correct?

Chairman Wahl – There is a clear definition of sexually explicit, but it does not add language of transgenderism to it.

Kasandra Stevens - This first book would not be in violation, that's my opinion, since it's not the act, it's the idea of it.

Chairman Wahl – I want to highlight the first book: *“Beyond Magenta”* [a sentence from the excerpt was read to the Board]. I can't defend that for young people.

Kasandra Stevens – The definitions have to be defined, then there has to be a process because this is not just Fairhope we're talking about. These books exist in libraries across the state. It's very important - we don't want to be the arbitrators of this. This is not what this Board is supposed to be doing. Ultimately, we are having to make this decision today. This should be something that should be settled by our laws, our policies, that we've adopted and either it meets the definition or it doesn't. It should be a position within APLS to review this and say does this meet the need and apply to all the libraries across our state. Fairhope shouldn't be the only one

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having to deal with this because it's housed in the same sections of 40 to 50 libraries in our state. It's developing these policies and procedures that make it fairly applied and fairly interpreted. You're right, your definition of sexually explicit could be different than my definition and they are not asking - it should be broadly defined and it should be a simple yes or no; is it explicit or not based on criteria.

Chairman Wahl – I did an interesting test on that with AI. It comes from an unbiased position, it comes from the gathering of human knowledge, not a moral or faith-based position. It's a machine and I put some of the excerpts in from these books and asked if it's sexually explicit. The answer was: the wording you used is against protocol, it is definitely sexually explicit and I erased it from the content of this cache. If AI, non-human, immediately defined it as sexually explicit, erased it, and did not leave it in the cache, I think that highlights some of the contents of these books.

Ron Snider – John, are you advocating that we are going to come up with a list of books that are banned from libraries in Alabama. That's banning when you take it away from the audience where it's intended.

Chairman Wahl – I don't think we should ban any books – that's very disingenuous because everyday libraries across the entire world make a decision on which books are housed in the libraries and in which section.

Ron Snider – They make those at the local level, they don't do it from one board member in an agency reading a book, and putting up a list that you ambushed the Fairhope people with today. What you did today was an ambush.

Chairman Wahl – Again, there is no ambush, I honestly just wanted their opinion.

Amy Minton – We had a six-hour public hearing and we voted on these definitions.

Chairman Wahl – We have been talking to Fairhope for months; they reviewed these books and submitted them as being okay. If I had not given them the chance to review the books you would be correct, but they had that chance.

Ron Snider – No. They never had a chance – you had your mind made up [inaudible – breaking up].

Chairman Wahl – They have their chance right now on every book to convince this Board that they are appropriate for children.

Randal Wright – You've already made your decision - I can't change your mind.

Chairman Wahl – You actually can.

Randal Wright – If you're saying that these books are sexually explicit then you need to make a list that you give to every library in this state.

Amy Minton – We did with definitions and they said masturbate.

Randal Wright – No, ma'am. Your first definition is the one you have to go with. It did not list those words.

Chairman Wahl – The first definition that Nancy Pack sent out in June 2024 did include almost the identical wording that was used in the final – it was not an official definition, but it was almost identical to the wording from this Board. It was received immediately after the Code was changed then passed officially by this Board before you made a final decision on your books. This is not a blind side, this is not a change of definition, this is very clear guidance from this Board. We don't want to get into banning books, there is no bad book, what we're talking about is the books appropriate for youth. That is the only question here. We're not saying burn the

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book, destroy the book, we are saying it is appropriate to house them in the children's section of the library.

Angelia Stokes – She already said they don't house them in the children's section; they have them in the young adult section.

Chairman Wahl – It's in the youth section. Let's call them minors.

Angelia Stokes – Then we have parents who say they can read these books, they have different cards and the parents approve the cards for the child themselves. They make the decision whether their own child can have access to this material.

Kassandra Stevens – The question is: if this is housed in the section for 13-year-olds and you don't think this is appropriate. The card would allow them to be in that section because that's their age. The question is: if it's sexually explicit material, does it belong in that section? Either it is or it's not. Some of these books can be great books, they can be useful books. I am not saying if it's a sexually explicit book, and if it's a warning on the book listing all the reasons why it is rated 'R'. There are things that are put out that are designed for certain audiences, even though that audience may or may not be ready for that material. That's the way it is.

Amy Minton – There are good books that talk about rape or sexual experiences without the paragraph and graphic description of what's going on and the experience.

Chairman Wahl – Whether you think I made up my mind on this or not, this is a seven-member Board and this is your chance, Fairhope Public Library, to explain to this Board why these books are not sexually explicit and I encourage you to take it. So far, you have refused, this is your chance.

Ron Snider – The Fairhope Public Library has told you repeatedly, John, that they reviewed these books and think that they have merit. I see no purpose that's being served in this ambush language that you didn't provide even to the Board until this meeting started. You're wasting their time. [inaudible – breaking up] That's inappropriate.

Chairman Wahl – I work very hard not to send everything to this Board and ask for forgiveness. This can't be inappropriate. Here is the books, here is the content I am concerned about as Board Chair that has been provided to this Board. I am giving you a chance to redress the grievance on it, and to explain to us why this material should be allowed in front of minors.

Ron Snider – They told you it's the overall content of the books, the audience its addressed to, and the people it's addressed to. Like I said, if you think a 13, 14,15, 16-years-old haven't heard any of these words you've listed, you are not in the reality that I fit in.

Chairman Wahl – The profanity is a different subject; I find that to be concerning. The item in question is the sexually explicit content; that is not something all children need to be exposed to, and definitely, the specific stories contained in the books. That is new materials; that is something when it's in your head, it's in your head. I read these books over the holiday season; I would prefer to be doing something else. I am going to be brutally honest, some of the books were well-written, and I can see the greater literary context of the books. I appreciate those authors and I want to highlight that. I am not saying these are necessarily bad books, at least not all of them, some of them are bad books. Some of them I found to have literary value, I enjoyed reading them, but they contained parts that I would not want my children to read before I explain to them the content. I think if I have that concern, it is perfectly legitimate for parents across the state to also have that concern. That's what we are saying, we received complaints from parents, we're stuck with this duty, none of us asked for them, none of us wanted this, but we are in a very hard position where we have to make the decision on parents saying they are concerned about the materials. I want to give you now the chance to say why these parents are wrong. I need to hear that, this Board needs to hear that, if you want us to make that decision. This is

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your chance to explain to this Board why this material should be allowed to stay in the minor sections.

Ron Snider – I think they've answered that already. I wouldn't answer either.

Robert Gourlay – Our board has already made that decision; we're here to hear your decision.

Randal Wright – I would like to add that parents make those decisions and if you as a parent don't like this book, then your child doesn't read it. You can't keep the book away from my child; it's not your job to make that decision for every single parent.

Chairman Wahl – Thank you. We are in full agreement on that. That's why I think we should make sure that every parent has access to give their child a card with access to the adult section because you do have that right and I defend that right every day. I also defend the right of the parents who don't want their child to have access to it. I want to defend the rights of both sides for these parents.

Randal Wright – That is in place at our library.

Chairman Wahl – A 13-year-old child can walk in right now and check out these books? You're missing the point. What are libraries designed to do for their communities? They are designed to be a welcoming place where families can come in on both sides of this issue and feel comfortable and safe in that library.

If a mother comes in and she has three to four kids, she cannot necessarily police every one of her children, what they are looking at in the minor section, and you can't expect her to. We want to be supportive of parents; and we want parents to feel welcome in our libraries on both sides of this issue. You're only thinking about parents on one side of the issue; we need to be thinking about parents on both sides. Both have rights, both deserves to be heard; and both deserves for their children to have access to those books. The only way to do that is to create a system.

This is not perfect; there is no perfect solution when you're dealing with issues relating to sexually explicit materials. I understand that there are parents who want their children to have access to them, I defend their right. There was push on this Board during the public comment period to remove books completely from the library. I can't support that, because I always said that I want to leave it to the parents which means moving them to the adult section where the parents can make the decision. I've actually been an advocate for parents on that side. At the same time, I must also be an advocate for parents who are concerned about these materials, because not to, would disrespect their views on how to raise their children, and I cannot do that.

Kassandra Stevens – The policy about that has already been approved and voted on that sexually explicit materials must be located in the adult section. The policy is already in place, so the question is: is this sexually explicit?

Amy Minton – The definitions have been approved by this Board and voted on.

Kassandra Stevens – It's a very simple question. The definitions have been approved and voted on and accepted in the policy. Is this book sexually explicit or not, it's very simple if you just boil it down to that; yes or no.

Ron Snider – Fairhope determined that it was not and John has determined that it is. I think we should go ahead and make a motion. John, you clearly are in favor of not allowing Fairhope, which pays a disproportionate amount of taxes, to receive state funds. It's been going on for many months now and it was a foregone conclusion that you made.

Chairman Wahl – That is very disingenuous to say I already made up my mind. I really did want to hear their opinion.

Amy Minton – Why did we have a six-hour public hearing; why did we vote on definitions if we're not going to follow them. Just like you said, we have clear definitions. You look at the

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book *“Doing It”* has five of those things in our definition in that one book. That one book shows there is a violation there. That is not my opinion, that is what the public hearing overwhelmingly said they wanted for the state of Alabama.

Kasandra Stevens – If the Board votes that this material is sexually explicit by the definitions that we have already approved, what is that process that’s set up?

Chairman Wahl – This is why I wanted to hear from Fairhope because the power rests completely with them. You at any point can be compliant and receive your funding. We don’t want you not to get funding; we want to fund Fairhope. The only thing is we can’t do it if you’re not compliant with the Code.

Robert Gourlay – Are you saying every one of these books are sexually explicit?

Chairman Wahl – I want to hear your argument which ones are not. That’s literally what I’m asking.

Robert Gourlay – We’ve already said each of these are not.

Amy Minton – So you don’t think *“Doing It”* is sexually explicit? Do you have the list of definitions? Masturbation, oral and anal sex is specifically stated multiple times in that book.

Robert Gourlay - That’s what our board voted on so I’m waiting to hear what you say. This Board is saying *“Doing It”* is definitely sexually explicit.

Amy Minton – Yes. That is the definitions we sent out and voted on.

Randal Wright – So that book has to be removed from every library?

Amy Minton – Moved to the adult section.

Ron Snider – John, are we going to enforce this with all the libraries across the state many of which have the same book? Will APLS send out a list of books?

Chairman Wahl – We are going to be consistent across the entire state. That is our duty with respect to Fairhope. Libraries as a whole can read definitions just as they do in the movie and video game industry. I don’t want to send out a list.

Kasandra Stevens – The list will eventually get developed by people bringing books up for consideration and being looked at. It will happen at the local library.

Chairman Wahl – I want to be clear the books are not in question, the question is the content and it has to be. That’s how every rating system works because new books will be written and those books must be judged on their content. There is no master list because every day new books will be written, and new books are in consideration that may not have been in publication before or in that library’s collection. I also don’t want to be aggressive toward libraries and say, you missed a book because I know librarians don’t read all books that come in. We are trying to be very genuine and generous towards libraries. I always say when I receive a complaint from a patron at a local library to send them to their local board because most of the time disputes can be settled. When parents talk to their local board, those are the best conclusions, because they can come to a conclusion on the local level. That’s what we want. I hate to go down the road of creating a book list because the genuine answer to this is the same we seen in every area of life whether its movies, video games, not allowing children to buy guns, not allowing them to drink. We know that we as a society protect children. It’s not up for debate. Since the beginning of time, society has protected children. The only question is does this material reach that level and that threshold. I think that is a fair question and I understand that there are different opinions on it. At the end of the day, we have to decide what level we as public officials respect parents and think this is controversial enough to let the parents make the decision instead of us.

Amy Minton – How can there be different opinions on it when we passed a list of definitions with specific words and these specific words are in it. How is that an opinion? The definitions

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we passed in order to receive funding was based on the six-hour public hearing about specific definitions. If you choose to keep the books in the children's or the minor sections, that means you don't want funding because that is our policy. You don't want to move them to the adult section, then you don't want our funding.

Robert Gourlay – Is it all the books in the packet?

Chairman Wahl – This is the research I did for the Board. Some of the books have a lot more than these. I just pulled out a few excerpts so the Board will make an informal decision. I don't know if any of you have read the books; but I wanted to provide that as a resource to my Board members. I'm not saying these are the only things I found in the books, these are just excerpts that I thought would provide the worse content out of each book.

Ron Snider – Are you going to propose that we send out this list of books to all the libraries around the state and tell them that they will risk losing state funding if the books are not moved out of the teen section?

Chairman Wahl – Any book that contains sexually explicit content, as defined by this Board, and located in the minor section of the libraries, need to go through the local process. If they refuse to move those books, then yes, this Board will hold them accountable.

Angelia Stokes – So they can't go through their local process. You're just saying black and white, you can't have these.

Ron Snider – Fairhope went through the local process, they happen to disagree with you as censor-in-chief and you are saying they are wrong and you're right

Chairman Wahl – The content of the book will decide whether they are wrong or right. It's about the books and the materials in the books that are in question.

Ron Snider – In your opinion as opposed to the opinion of the board of the Fairhope Public Library, that's where we are. Like I said, do you want to make a motion to continue the suspension of funding to Fairhope? What are we going to do?

Chairman Wahl – The vote has to be in compliance because they were already ruled out of compliance by this Board. The question now is: are they in compliance so they can start receiving state funding.

Kassandra Stevens – If the Board finds these books make Fairhope not in compliance, what is the process? If these books need to be moved, is there a time period when you all will be willing to relocate these books to get the funding? Are you saying **you** don't care what **our** opinion is, **you** think they are fine, so **you** are not going to move them?

Robert Gourlay – I certainly will bring that information to our full board and that will be their decision what their next step will be.

Randal Wright – It's been eleven (11) months, I would like a decision made today.

Chairman Wahl – I find it very disingenuous to complain about eleven (11) months when from March to September we were waiting on you. Let's be clear on that. I get it, so try to be honest with that.

Randal Wright – We were doing what you asked us to do.

Chairman Wahl – And I appreciate it. Look, I am now asking you if there are any comments because the Board is about to look at these books if you want to be involved or give any comments. I want to hear from you.

Randal Wright – We have already decided about these books.

Fairhope Public Library (continued)

Robert Gourlay – I think that other public libraries in Alabama will be at risk of misinterpreting the Code as according to you in the same way that we might have. I think there should be some kind of communication with the rest of the libraries.

Chairman Wahl – We agree. There was a lot of different information provided, opinions shifting a lot with the last director and this Board. That is not going to be the case anymore. We are going to be clear, we are going to be open, we are going to be honest. We received a lot of negativity for creating the definition of sexually explicit because the libraries asked us for that definition, and we wanted to provide them with the information of how this Board defines sexually explicit. You can say you have a different opinion on that definition. You are free to interpret anything you want or any way you want, but this Board is going to rule based on that definition. We have that authority and we clearly set that out. We have been open and honest.

The Constitution has no definition on sexually explicit. As far as codified rule, this Board has the power to make the decision on what we set the definition is without necessarily being in the Code. That was done as a courtesy for local libraries so they would know what to look for when looking at the content of new books coming to the collections. The same way that will be provided for anyone else looking at a rating system. We want to provide clarity where local libraries can have the information needed so there would not be differences of opinions or questions over did you mean this or did you mean that. It's clear, it's been passed to provide that clarity, and it's what books will be weighed on when making the decision on whether it is or not sexually explicit.

Chairman Wahl – We will take it book by book. For public record, does anyone want to read the content?

“Beyond Magenta”

Kassandra Stevens – I think it's more about transgenderism than sexually explicit. This to me is the least offensive based on this excerpt.

Ron Snider – Are we going to vote on ten (10) books, John? Is that what you are proposing?

Chairman Wahl – I think we have to, Ron.

Ron Snider – Oh, that's ridiculous. We don't have to do that. We are doing that on the basis of a summary you didn't provide anyone in advance.

Kassandra Stevens – Ron, the reason I think we should vote on them so Fairhope knows whether or not which books are said to be sexually explicit, and which books need to be moved to the adult section to be in compliance. I do think it's important that we vote.

Ron Snider – I don't think most of the board members have read each of these books and I don't think we should be reading them. I think it's inappropriate for us to be doing that. We are voting on books based on a summary that John has handed out with some words on selected books and some passages. I just think that's inappropriate and I again move that Fairhope's funding be restored. I think we have put them through this for way too long. In your opinion, is never going to change. You are substituting your opinion for that local board. I always thought this Board believed in small government and what we have been doing by the actions recently of this Board, we are taking big government to the ultimate degree.

Chairman Wahl – The smallest level of government is the family unit and that's where we want to leave this.

Ron Snider – The smallest level of government in this instance is the Fairhope Public Library and the city council of Fairhope. We are wasting a lot of time with this; and I again move that Fairhope's funding be restored.

Chairman Wahl – Is there a second to that motion? [No response.] Hearing no second, it dies for lack of a second.

Fairhope Public Library (continued)

Chairman Wahl – We have two choices and the Board can decide this. We can look at the packet as a whole and say that the books from the Fairhope Public Library do or do not contain sexually explicit content or we can go through the packet book by book. I will leave that to the motion of the Board. Amy Minton made the motion to vote on the content of the packet as a whole. Debra Windsor seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying “aye” are as follows: Kasandra Stevens, Debra Windsor, and Amy Minton. Members voting by saying “nay” are as follows: Ron Snider and Angelia Stokes. Vote taken, most in favor. Motion passed by majority decision (3-2).

Chairman Wahl - Looking at the content as a whole, I am going to give board members more time to look at the content of the books. The question is does the material of the list of books provided by Fairhope Public Library contain sexually explicit content. Amy Minton made the motion that the list of books does contain sexually explicit content; therefore, we should not restore the funding. Kasandra Stevens seconded the motion. Members voting by saying “aye” are as follows: Debra Windsor, Kasandra Stevens and Amy Minton. Members voting by saying “nay” are as follows: Angelia Stokes and Ron Snider. Vote taken, most in favor. Motion passed by majority decision (3-2).

Chairman Wahl – I want to thank the Fairhope Public Library for coming to the board meeting and stated if you want to come back and defend the books, you now have the content, you are welcome to at any point. I genuinely would have liked to heard your opinions on the books and the contents in each of the books. If at some point you want to come back, tell the board my request, and you are welcome to do so. If they would like to come up here as a whole, I make that invitation to them. We want to work with Fairhope as much as possible, but I really do need you to explain why these books are or are not sexually explicit.

Robert Gourlay – I guess I am confused are you saying to become compliant, every book in this packet has to be moved to the adult section. One member, Kasandra Stevens said she didn't think “*Beyond Magenta*” met sexually explicit materials.

Chairman Wahl – We voted to take under consideration on the packet as a whole and the answer is Yes. The materials are sexually explicit.

Robert Gourlay – So each title is sexually explicit – so all them are not in compliance or not?

Chairman Wahl – The materials in these books contain sexually explicit content. Ron didn't want to look at each book, so the Board did not vote to look at each book. At this time, can you finally explain why the materials in these books are not sexually explicit?

Robert Gourlay – Can you explain to me why it is?

Chairman Wahl – Yes. “*Beyond Magenta*” – I agree with Kasandra Stevens. We voted on the packet as a whole, but if we vote individually book by book, “*Beyond Magenta*” is more ideology and not sexually explicit.

Amy Minton – The new policies would prevent this from being in there.

Kasandra Stevens – We are not talking about that today. Today we are talking about Fairhope. I didn't find another one that didn't specifically talk about the process of having sex and goes into detail of it, then that's sexually explicit in my definition, based on those definitions.

Robert Gourlay – Based on conversations does human sexuality qualifies sexually explicit?

Chairman Wahl – Did you read the definitions provided by this Board for sexually explicit?

Robert Gourlay – Yes.

Chairman Wahl – That is the definition of this Board what sexually explicit is.

Fairhope Public Library (continued)

Robert Gourlay – Some of those definitions are bullet points. Does that mean if they include the word masturbation anywhere in the text is that sexually explicit. It doesn't describe it; it just mentions the word.

Chairman Wahl read an excerpt from "*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*" – *Stephen Chbosky*. That is sexually explicit. I didn't want to read that and I don't want my kids reading that without me talking to them first. I don't think it's out of line for parents to have that opinion. That is sexually explicit by the definitions provided by this Board and I believe by 99.99% of every person in this country if they read that.

Response – It's a good idea to put a trigger warning on books before reading the description of 'rape' going forward with sexually explicit.

Chairman Wahl – If this is going to be in front of minors, it does deserve a trigger warning. It deserves that for the children. You just provided an excellent point. The idea that I just read something that needed a trigger warning is okay to put in front of minors without any safeguard, highlights why the reason the Board made this decision. If it needs a trigger warning for adults in an official public hearing, it needs a trigger warning for our kids. This is sexually explicit content, we have full agreement, then Fairhope is not in compliance. There is no way to sugar coat this, and this is not the only excerpt that's graphic. I will provide this to anyone who wants to see this afterwards, but I am tired of beating around the bush. There are sexually explicit contents in these books that requires a trigger warning and we're going to protect our children. I am not going to sit here and tell parents if it needs a trigger warning their child should look at it in a library with no parental consent. Any other input from the Board. I genuinely wanted to hear your thoughts and opinion from Fairhope. My invitation is still good. Take these thoughts back to the board, take this package back to the board, let them look at it and explain to them in all genuineness our hearts are to serve both sides of the parents in the equation. There is content that are sexually explicit and if they think there's not, I need to hear why not.

Robert Gourlay – Can I get an official written letter to us saying the Board voted this way?

Chairman Wahl - I will be glad to write a letter to go along with this packet and I will give you a digital copy so you can share a pdf with them as well as a letter explaining that the contents of the books are sexually explicit.

Robert Gourlay – We never actually received a letter in March when our funding was paused indicating any of that. We had to learn about it by watching footage of the meeting.

Chairman Wahl – I called you immediately.

Robert Gourlay – You did but there was nothing on APLS letterhead, nothing official.

Chairman Wahl – If you prefer a letter over a phone call – I wanted to respond immediately as fast as I could and that's why I made the phone call, but if you prefer an official letter, I will be glad to do that.

Robert Gourlay and Randal Wright thanked Chairman Wahl and exited the meeting at 2:27 p.m.

Administrative Code Certification – Kelyn Ralya

I was able to get the revisions that the Board voted on and approved, submitted to Legislative Services Agency. The revisions were published in the Administrative Monthly at the end of December 2025. For forty-five days they are in the hands of the Joint Legislative Committee. They can let them go through or they can contact us with updates. If it goes through as is, the effective date is February 14, 2026.

Status of Chief of Staff Position

Chairman Wahl – There has been some complications on this regarding state code and making sure we stay in compliance with funding for the position and several other items. I have been

Status of Chief of Staff Position (continued)

working with both Pennie and Kelyn to try to find a solution. I think I have been able to do so, but I wanted to give the Board an update. I feel a re-vote is required on the structural changes to the position. State Personnel requires a new title of position to go through a process of approval; it will take many months to get that finalized and approved. I find that not practical for needing someone immediately. My thought process is and my recommendation to the Board is: we move forward instead of with the chief of staff, move forward with the replacement of Kelyn's old position, which is Assistant Director, with a new job title that she and I will work on together. I will make final approval before submitting the job application online for that position.

Angelia Stokes – Will we get to see the information about how the position is set up and the requirements?

Chairman Wahl – Yes. When I finish working with her on what the duties will be. I want to work with Kelyn because she is the Director, and I want to work with her on what duties that person will fulfill, and what they will be doing because I want it to be a good fit for the office. When it is listed, we will also send a copy to the Board to see it.

Pennie Broussard – (handouts given to the Board). What we discussed, you talked about the AD, that is a state merit position that goes through State Personnel; it is not posted like the Director's job. The position you wanted to appoint, after reviewing, I found out you can't appoint it. The Code is on the back of this page. For Kelyn's position, this front page is what's on file with State Personnel. They did a desk audit when we got the second AD. The first one in the pinkish color is Katie's position, and what she does day-to-day. The second position in blue is Kelyn's old position that's LSTA federally funded. So, if we are going to change it, we have to go through State Personnel and have another desk audit, even if we keep it as is. We will get with State Personnel, get it re-opened for thirty (30) days, and file an application with State Personnel. Once closed, they review it and tell us who is qualified and who is not; they rank and we get a register. The minimum qualifications for that position is a Master's in Library Science.

Chairman Wahl – Is that the only requirement, a Master's in Library Science.

Kelyn Ralya – And library administrative experience.

Pennie Broussard – By it being a merit position you can't pick and choose what the pay scale is. There are open continuous positions within the state and this is not one of them so we would have to petition State Personnel and ask them to open the position. Persons would go online to apply through State Personnel, nothing comes through here. We don't see anything until it's finalized and it's only people who make the cut. Depending on how many people apply, we may not see everybody we only see Band 1.

Chairman Wahl – So what's the first time period, the first thirty (30) days.

Pennie Broussard – We can have the application window open for the first thirty (30) days. This is what we have on file from State Personnel for this position, and it's federally funded, no state monies. Ms. Holman can talk more about that. This position is no longer in our budget for this year. We will have to go back and get this changed before we get it opened.

Chairman Wahl – I spoke to members of the state legislature and we are going to be getting an increase far more than one salary. There can be responsibilities other than what's listed here, this would just be a primary.

Pennie Broussard – If we're paying out of federal money.

Chairman Wahl – We will be paying out of state funds. Both assistant directors' items here, both the pink and blue, those members do far more than this.

Pennie Broussard – We have Form 40s and the duties are on there and that is what you are graded on. This position will be supervised by Kelyn. I know some people have an issue with that, but this position is a direct report to Kelyn. You get hired and these are your duties. In six

Status of Chief of Staff Position (continued)

months, you get off probation, so on and so forth. You are graded and you know what your responsibilities are.

Chairman Wahl – I think that's healthy. I am in support of that. Kelyn, I assume you have a lot of day-to-day duties as Director. I feel like you can use someone to help you with the grant program, we can leave this wording in here. If I can increase state funding that would leave more money in the grant program to get to public libraries, so this is a double win. If I can increase state funding to help cover this position, we can have more money for local libraries out of the grant program. Leave the wording to help manage the grant program under you which is what a good assistant director does. We don't have to change the wording to provide to State Personnel.

Amy Minton – So what is it about appointing a position we can't do?

Pennie Broussard – You don't have the authority. The only authority you have is over the Director. Everybody else you can approve upon nomination from the Director.

Chairman Wahl – The important thing is we want to do this right and we want to make sure we have funding. I think I have that covered in state. Of course, if that doesn't come through, we might have to put a pause on this or not do it. I am fairly confident that we can move forward.

Amy Minton – What is the timeline for this? When would we be able to have this filled?

Chairman Wahl – We can open it up for thirty (30) days.

Pennie Broussard – We can open it up for thirty (30) days but we have to have a Form 40, and have the responsibilities ready when its open.

Chairman Wahl - Kelyn and I can work on that for the next couple of days. Probably try to open it Monday.

Pennie Broussard - Who is going to do the interviews? Who is going to be on the interview panel?

Chairman Wahl – I recommend using the same process as last time – bring the top three (3) to the Board and let the Board decide.

Pennie Broussard – Is Kelyn not going to be on the panel?

Chairman Wahl – Kelyn and I are going to do everything during the whole process. I told her before the meeting that I want her involved every step of the way, including putting together the Form 40, and what the duties are because she's the Director. This person is going to be working under her and it needs to be a team effort to provide the needed guidance. I want to be honest, for me I see this position as a needed accomplishing three main things:

- Supporting our local libraries with the grant program – that's near and dear to my heart. Getting increased state funding will allow us to get more monies for the grant programs for local libraries. I really want to highlight we can use that to the best of our abilities. Have increased focus there I think is good.
- Interfacing with local libraries on requirements. Having someone who is already working with local libraries tasked with providing that information for local libraries in a supportive way, I think can be incredibly helpful. I think there has been a lot of misinformation. We heard that from Fairhope and I heard that from other libraries.– they just don't know. Having someone who to be a resource for them, to have information, know what the requirements are, and be able to answer questions directly, that can be helpful.

Kelyn Ralya – Since it's closed so the next step is to contact Personnel?

Status of Chief of Staff Position (continued)

Pennie Broussard – I say the next step is to make sure we have our funding and we have our responsibilities in line before we ask. We're adding somebody to the merit system.

Chairman Wahl – Leave the funding to me – the funding will be there. I had conversations yesterday preparing for this meeting, and talked about specifics with the budget chair; the funding will be there.

Angelia Stokes – Is there anything else after interfacing with libraries on requirements?

Chairman Wahl – I will say this, remember that last session, I got the \$3 million safety net. We are not talking about that level, but I am very confident about the increase in budget and definitely enough to cover salaries, this is not going to be an issue at all.

Those are probably the two biggest and I want to talk to Kelyn about what else the person can do to help in other areas as a team.

- Anything in the works that needs help in the office.

Ben Albritton – John, keep in mind, Kelyn's got to be involved in this entire process because who you select has to be made on her nomination according to the law.

Chairman Wahl – Before I knew that, I told Kelyn she's in here working every day, I'm not. She has to work with this person; she needs to be involved in the process. Being the chain of command is also very important. I have full faith in Kelyn that's why I supported her to be the Director and believe in her leadership abilities. There's no doubt, full inclusion of Kelyn in every step of the way.

Amy Minton – In other words, you all will look at the applications, pick three (3), bring them to us, then we will interview them, or read over them and make a decision?

Pennie Broussard – No. Kelyn will conduct the interviews, she is a merit system employee.

Chairman Wahl – The Board has a right to say "no". If the Board says "no", then Kelyn will go to the next person.

Ben Albritton – Kelyn will bring to the Board the nominees whoever submitted applications and the Board will say "aye" or "nay".

Chairman Wahl – At the end of the day, Kelyn is the Director; we can say "no" we have the veto authority, but we want to respect her.

Amy Minton – Thank you for doing that, Pennie.

Chairman Wahl – With that in mind, if this motion passes, Kelyn and I will sit down and try to get a job description done for you to list as soon as possible. I know some board members were anxious of the delay. It was not an attempted delay, but we wanted to get it right, follow state code, and do things the right way. I appreciate Pennie running everything and having Kelyn working with her. We wanted to get it done but we wanted to make sure it's done properly. Give us a quick time line.

Pennie Broussard – Once you all get me the Form 40 duties because I can't request it be open until we know what we're doing.

Kelyn Ralya- They need that information.

Chairman Wahl – Yes. When they're submitting the application, they need to know what the job duties are.

Pennie Broussard – It will be open and a generic listing in Montgomery for APLS, etc. and salary range and all that. We need to know what we're doing.

Chairman Wahl – Responsibilities, once you have all that, open for thirty (30) days.

Status of Chief of Staff Position (continued)

Pennie Broussard - Then we're at their mercy of when they get the register finalized which could be approximately one hundred twenty (120) days. State Personnel is doing this for everybody in the state.

Chairman Wahl - I would accept a motion to move forward with the position of Assistant Director with the current job description. Kelyn and I will be tasked with the responsibility of creating the Form 40 for Pennie, that it will be listed for thirty (30) days, and a final decision made after State Personnel gets done. Kelyn makes her selection. Angelia Stokes made the motion. Debra Windsor seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Ron Snider, Amy Minton, Kasandra Stevens, John Wahl, Debra Windsor, and Angelia Stokes. No "nays." Vote taken, all in favor. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

Angelia Stokes exited the meeting at 2:46 p.m.

New Business
(Nothing to report)**Comments from the Chairman**

As a new director giving a report, I want to address some of the negativity aimed at you at the last meeting. I want to thank you for your work and your service. I know it's not an easy job. I get to leave and forget about it; you are stuck with it. Thank you for your work and I know you are tireless. What I like about Kelyn is she's a peacemaker and she tries to help everyone and that is sincere and I appreciate your work. I just wanted to tell you I'm sorry about the negativity towards you and I appreciate your work.

Kelyn Ralya - I did want to let you all know that apparently there was some confusion about when Rebecca Mitchell retired in 2014. I did not apply for the job when she retired. I was made Interim and we did have two inside candidates, but I was not one of them. I actually had no intention of applying at all. This time the reason I did is because there has been so much upheaval in the state for these past three (3) years that at least I am a known quantity to the staff and the libraries. State librarian has not been my lifelong ambition. If I could have been anything, I would have been a park ranger.

One other thing I did want to do – Katie's not here, she's in New Orleans at a conference this week. She and I chatted about each board meeting what we would like to do is highlight a specific library on what they have done. I want to talk about Thomasville Public Library in Clarke County, which is southwest of here. One thing they did last summer which I thought was fabulous. During their summer library program, they partnered with their local food bank and gave out meals to families in need. Which I thought was fabulous; that had nothing to do with books; they were trying to help their community. One thing they did take care to do is, which I thought was very sensitive and very considerate, they made sure they partnered **it** with their summer library program so if people were there and want to get food, they could. But that way it's not stigmatizing people who need food. I thought they went to that level and that was fabulous.

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

This is as of December 31, 2025; and just starting the second quarter so this is the end of the first quarter. We are right on track with spending. If no questions, I will move on to the next part.

Letter from Andrew Sorrell, State Auditor – APLS Property Audit

Jennifer Holman - We had a property audit in December 2025 we weren't due for one but they were trying to get us in a better time in their calling cycle because we are very small. They finished with the hour, with nothing missing. It was a group effort; everyone did a great job with it. Also in December, we had an exit conference with the Examiners of Public Accounts for legal compliance. Report coming out soon, we will have one minor finding reporting board vacancies to the secretary of state website.

Letter from Andrew Sorrell, State Auditor – APLS Property Audit (continued)

Kelyn Ralya – Basically, what happened, this particular five-year period, a lot of time we don't have a lot of turn overs on the Board. These five years, I had to come up with a cheat sheet because they asked for every board member who served during that time, when their term was, and are they still there. During those five years, we had three resigned before the end of term, one person died, one member removed. They changed the districts. We did not know we were not in compliance. During that time, they explained to us and I have informed Vanessa, she does the posting.

Summer Reading Kickoff – January 13-14, 2026

The Summer Reading Program was held on January 13-14, 2026 at APLS. I heard nothing but great comments about it. The coordinator is Barbara Curry she does a phenomenal job. People downstairs involved, breakout sessions. The statistics show 166 public libraires were represented and 208 persons attended the kickoff.

Administrators' Meeting – January 22, 2026

The meeting will be virtual only because we don't know about the building renovations. OCLC will be tuning in to give update on their cataloging and ILL services. We have a statewide subscription to them with free services to public libraries. We want them to explain their own products because they had some updates.

Front Desk Statistics – November and December 2025

Statistics were provided for November and December 2025 for the board's review.

Other Discussion

Amy Minton – The 250 year celebration – is that within the summer reading program?

Kelyn Ralya – That is a question for Katie and Barbara. I don't remember them mentioning that but I do know Katie got some of her staff working on some programing for the 250.

Service Certificate and Pin – Keith Walker

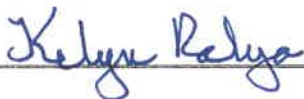
Chairman Wahl presented Keith Walker a service certificate and pin for 15 years of service to the state of Alabama at the conclusion of the Meeting.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.



Chairman



Kelyn L. Ralya, Director



Vanessa E. Carr, Recording Secretary