

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
ALABAMA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE
JULY 17, 2025**

The Executive Board of the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) met on July 17, 2025 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 10:05 a.m. and roll was taken. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and said he appreciates their service on the Board.

The following Board members were present: John Wahl, Kasandra Stevens, Angelia Stokes, Debra Windsor, and Amy Minton. Members joining by videoconference: Ron Snider and Jerria Martin. APLS staff members present: Kelyn Ralya, Katie Bailey, Ryan Godfrey, Matt Sponsler, Jay Mims, and Vanessa Carr. Visitor attended: Ben Albritton, Office of the Attorney General.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Wahl asked if there were any additions to the Agenda as written. There were no additions to the Agenda. By unanimous decision the Agenda was adopted as written.

Approval of the Minutes

The Minutes of the March 20, 2025 meeting were presented to the Board for approval. Mrs. Minton made the motion to approve the Minutes as written. Mrs. Stokes seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Kasandra Stevens, Debra Windsor, John Wahl, Jerria Martin, and Amy Minton. No "nays." Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Snider – I want to make a few comments: I was muted when the Minutes were considered. I want included at this Meeting, my memorandum to the Board of May 19 where I explained that I did not attend the May 8 meeting after it was changed from its scheduled date of May 15. I was particularly concerned that neither I nor at least one other board member was asked if we would be able to attend the meeting. I would hope that in the future when it is necessary to change the meeting, that all board members will be instructed.

Mr. Wahl – Thank you for your comments. The memo will be attached to the Minutes.

Participation

Mr. Wahl welcomed everyone to the meeting. I know there are people in this room that have total opposite views in everything, but in the end, I think we all have the same goals, which is making Alabama's libraries better and serving our local communities. If that's our goal, then we can debate on how to get there. I hope we do it in a civil manner and respect each other as we get to that end goal. It doesn't matter the starting point, it doesn't matter the different values, we should all have that same fundamental principle of helping Alabama be better. We are grateful that you are here, some have driven from a distance, and the fact that you are engaged in this process to address this Board, and be a part of this conversation, I respect it and glad to have you here.

There is a two-minute time limit, I know that's not a lot of time. If you have more thoughts, after speaking or in the future, you can submit written comments to the Board at any time, between meetings, during meetings, or today. The Board makes it a priority to look at everything submitted to us.

Persons Approved to Address the APLS Executive Board

Amber Frey	Dr. Sharon Cook
Mary Campbell	Sheila Wright
Karen Ballard Cooper	Elizabeth Williams
Jackie Nix	Carissa Callan
Sharon Freeman	Dr. Savan Wilson
Katherine Hastings	Alyx Kim-Yohn
Tonia Stulting	Julia Cleland
Dr. Bill Chitwood	Paige T. Gant
Ted Halley	Maggie Minsk
Susan Stewart	Jason Baker

Persons Approved to Address the APLS Executive Board (continue)

Carol Wilson
 Rebecca Watson
 Dallas Baillio
 Angie Hayden

Katie Kratsch
 Sarah Sanchez
 Laura Clark
 Melanie Kolowski

Comments from the Chairman

I want to hear other people's opinions, it is through people who have different opinions that we grow as people and as a society. You are not going to find someone who believe in free speech and the First Amendment more than I do. I abhor the idea of using the power of government to ban a book or ban free speech. Using the power of government to say a book cannot be printed or materials should not be available is not the same thing as saying should we shelve that book in a youth/children's section. There is a fundamental difference between those two arguments. We are not saying the material should not be available, we're saying where is the appropriate placement for it. During the public comments for the code change, we received over 6,000 public comments and I took that seriously. The Board does not take this lightly.

Sexuality is a very sensitive topic. There are going to be different opinions with government leaders, parents, library directors, library board members. That's okay to have different opinions. There are people who feel children should have open access to all materials, even if that material is sexually explicit or what others would call inappropriate. There are also parents who want to see their children protected from material that is sexually explicit and they are concerned that their child may accidentally stumble across materials in the children's section. Both perspectives have value and we need to respect each other. Parents who want their children to feel safe in the children's section that is a respectable position for them to take, that doesn't constitute they are book banners and we shouldn't belittle them. They care about their children. There is no good solution, because you can't make everyone happy. It's why we have public service; you do the best you can to serve the public.

On behalf of myself, not speaking for the Board, I was not open to saying this material can't be in the libraries, we're going to overrule the local libraries and remove the materials. That was an infringement on freedom of speech. What I felt was the common-sense solution, parents who do not want their children to be exposed to sexually explicit content in the children's section, can have that while we still keep the books in the library and provide parents who want their children to have access, still have that in the library where they can have that access. The key to that is a library card where parents can make the decision, not library directors, not this Board. Parents make the decision on whether they want their children to have access or not have access. That was the genesis of the code change to return control back to the parents. Both sides have access in our libraries. The goal is we want every single family in Alabama to feel safe and welcome in our libraries.

I've spoken to several librarians about creating a new young adult section, over age 18 but targeted toward younger adults, if their parents give them access. We want to allow people to have the material they want. We are on the same side, we have the same core values, move forward in a way that's respectful to everyone, that listens to everyone and provide materials to everyone. People are not inappropriate, everyone has value. My goal is to create unity; the most important responsibility of this board and local libraries is to make sure we present ourselves in the way that we are making people feel secure with our local libraries.

Chairman's Report**Appoint Nominating Committee to Recommend Officers for FY2026**

Debbie Windsor, Kasandra Stevens, and Angelia Stokes were appointed to the Nominating Committee to recommend officers for the APLS Executive Board for FY2026.

Mr. Snider – The meeting has to be posted and open to the public.

Mr. Wahl - When they meet, it must be done publicly, by zoom or a public conference call. You can talk to individual board members, but it has to be a quorum of that subcommittee present as a group unless you're in an open forum.

Mr. Albritton stated it has to be a quorum of the subcommittee in a specific location. One can do it digitally as long as two are present in a single location.

Appoint Evaluation Committee for the Interim Director's Annual Appraisal Evaluation

There is no need to appoint an Evaluation Committee for Kelyn Ralya's evaluation because she is a merit employee at the top of the pay scale. No action was taken.

Other Topics

Minutes

Most of the time in a business, Minutes of an organization **record** the votes and Vanessa has done an amazing job with really too much information. The Minutes will cover the business of the Meetings.

Board Meeting Time

The start time of the APLS Executive Board Meetings will be at 1:00 p.m. instead of 10:00 a.m. There were no objections from the Board on the time change.

Summer Reading Program

Congratulations to all library directors for the creativity and work you put into the summer programs to encourage young people to read and explore.

Unfinished Business

Gender Ideology Deemed Inappropriate for Children Under APLS Code – Amy Minton

Mr. Snider - I was concerned to read in the paper yesterday, John, your letter on the gender issue and was surprised as a board member that I had not been provided a copy of the memorandum until I requested it after reading that in the paper. I don't understand at all why such a letter was necessary; this was on the Agenda for this Meeting to be discussed. It appears that what we have going on here is grandstanding, this was not necessary. The issue we have here as some of the critics were saying, we have a board now where one board member has officially announced she's running for political office and you, John, have indicated that you are considering running for political office. APLS is being used as a platform to boost your positions to the detriment of libraries of this state. You stated that you are not in favor of censorship, in fact, what you and what the majority of this board is supporting is censorship.

Mr. Wahl - The content brought to the Board by Amy Minton, in my opinion, does add to state code, and I would not be supportive in passing something today. That would have to go through the review process to amend state code rather than the Board passing it as it changes the meaning of what's required in the code. I am not comfortable passing that as a definition and I would ask the Board to look at language for a code amendment.

Mrs. Minton – The last time, we had a public hearing before we passed the code. I want to reopen the code for public comment on gender ideology so we can hear from everyone. The letter from the Alabama Library Association (ALLA) requested that as well.

A recommendation was suggested by Mr. Wahl on gender ideology. A draft of the handout was given to all board members present. It reads:

- (i) Under this section, any material that promotes, encourages, or positively depicts transgender procedures, gender ideology, or the concept of more than two biological genders shall be considered inappropriate for children and youth.

Mrs. Minton made the motion to have public comments open to the code for discussion.

Mrs. Ralya stated there is a process that we follow through the Legislative Services Agency. That's why it takes so long to change the code because of all the steps. You must have an open period for comments for 45 days and 90 is the maximum. APLS has been doing it between 45 to 50 days. Now, the process is automated – put in changes and the system automatically let you know which date to start. Mrs. Stokes seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Debra Windsor, Jerria Martin, Kasandra Stevens, John Wahl, Angela Stokes, and Amy Minton. Mr. Snider voted "Nay." Motion passed by majority vote.

Fairhope Public Library – Compliant/Non-Compliant with Administrative Code Rules

The Board Chairman and Library Director of Fairhope Public Library attended the meeting. They have not completed the review process. No action will be taken by the APLS Executive Board until the review is complete.

LSTA Update – IMLS – Kelyn Ralya

Mrs. Ralya - APLS has received the second portion of the FY2025 allotment for a total of approximately \$3,000,000.00. We don't know what the future is for IMLS. In the President's proposed budget, there is a \$6,000,000.00 appropriation for IMLS to go towards their shut down. In the meantime, the LSTA Act has to be reauthorized in September. That's why we couldn't have the FY2026 grants because we didn't know whether the funding would be there. They generally do the allocations early in the year but depending on how the budget goes, we don't know if they will close IMLS, keep LSTA, or go through someone else. We do have safe funding for FY2026. The FY2025 grant funds from IMLS runs from October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2026 (two years). When they do another allocation, it shares a year. We finished the 2024 drawdowns from IMLS and I can start working on my annual report to IMLS. We are pulling down funds for FY2025. Fourth quarter state aid checks will be mailed to public libraries this week.

Filling Essential Position at APLS – IT Systems Technician

Interviews were conducted for the IT Systems Technician. Jaiquan Waller was hired on June 16, 2025 as an IT Systems Technician in the IT Division.

Definition of Sexually Explicit (Memorandum to Public Library Directors dated May 12, 2025 and Letter from ALLA Challenging the Definition)

Mr. Snider - Also, another reason I wanted that memo included in the Minutes of this Meeting is I strongly disagree that we can adopt the definition of sexually explicit without amending the Administrative Code. The Administrative Code was adopted and provided that local boards were to adopt policies including what they deemed inappropriate to children. Without that appeal, without going through the administrative process, we have defined provisions or requirements that are not contained in the Code. I think that is without due process.

Mr. Wahl – I will make sure it's attached to the Minutes for consideration.

I don't know if you were at the March Meeting, but the Board did vote and directed me to draft a letter and I was directed by the Board to send the letter.

Mr. Wahl - A letter was sent out yesterday not just with Board approval but Board requirement. At the March meeting, the Board voted to have a letter drafted and sent to public libraries regarding the gender ideology executive order issued by President Trump. The delay in sending the letter was to see if the next fiscal year we were going to receive federal grants that local libraries would have to comply with the executive order in order to receive funds. If funds were not received, there would be no reason to send the letter to public libraries. The letter is informational for our local libraries because they need to know that. Not all libraries received the executive order and I wanted them to see the executive order so they would not risk losing their funding and the APLS agency as a whole did not lose the federal grant money. That is the explanation behind that letter.

The definition of sexually explicit is simple; some of it was originally sent out when the code changes were passed. Same wording was sent out with the recent memo because some libraries said they never received it. We were consistent with the wording on the definition; this is not something new. When the code was changed, it reflects both federal and state law. There is no change to the code or the meaning of the code, or what's not appropriate, just defining what has always been the code under APLS.

I understand the concern of the definition not being in state code. On the other hand, this Board is tasked with the duty under state law of making some of these decisions. One of the decisions we have to make is what terms means, and what we are going to use as a guide as sexually explicit. Local librarians asked for a definition of sexually explicit across the state. This is something we did at their request. This is not us trying to push our agenda off on them; we are providing an official definition to them as a service. We're using this as a basis for this Board.

New Business

BPH Consumer Advisory Committee Members Terms of Service Expired – Request Reappointment to the Committee

Rhonda Napier, Regional Librarian in the Alabama Regional Library for the Blind, explained the purpose of the BPH Consumer Advisory Committee:

New Business (continued)**BPH Consumer Advisory Committee Members Terms of Service Expired – Request Reappointment to the Committee**

The Advisory Committee allows us to spend funding we receive through donations from various patrons so we are able to supply materials to clients when we go out in the field. These are reappointments to the Consumer Advisory Committee. Ms. Stevens made a motion to approve the reappointments. Mrs. Windsor seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying “aye” are as follows: Angelia Stokes, Amy Minton, Ron Snider, Jerria Martin, John Wahl, Debra Windsor and Kasandra Stevens. Vote taken, all in favor. Motion passed by unanimous vote. “No nays.”

- Mary Erwin – Department of Rehabilitation Service
- Carolyn H. Goode – Troy Center for Student Success
- Katie Lovell – Talladega Subregional Library (AIDB Resource Center)
- Tamara Massey-Garrett – AUM (Retired)
- Jessica McKay – Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Richard K. Smith – Consumer, Library Patron
- Debra Tazewell – Central Alabama Health Care System
- Karl Wade - Consumer, Library Patron
- Anna Whitworth-Peters – AIDB

Mrs. Ralya - This committee is comprised of representatives from different agencies. One of the representatives is from the Governor’s Office on Disabilities. The previous representative retired in June. There is a vacancy that will be filled by the Governor’s Office.

Another Topic of Discussion - LSTA Grants Exemption

Mr. Wahl - Some of the smaller libraries may not have enough funds to match the LSTA grant requirements. I would like to accept a motion that libraries who don’t have the ability to match the grant requirements submit a letter to this Board requesting an exemption. The Board can review the letter and vote on it based on the letter.

Mrs. Stokes – Is that legal because some of the grants received are required to have a match.

Mrs. Ralya – By law, we must have a match to our federal monies. When we receive the allotment, we satisfy that match with state funds. As far as IMLS is concerned, we are in compliance, the match is there and so is the MOE. It is true that a lot of small libraries can’t afford the match. The LSTA Advisory Council has discussed lowering the match amount to 10% for smaller libraries. Right now, the match is 25% of the LSTA amount across the board except for vehicles which is 100%. Another option is what you just discussed. I can talk to the Council and get their thoughts. Ms. Stevens made the motion to approve small libraries to submit a letter of exemption for LSTA grants. Mrs. Minton seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying “aye” are as follows: Ron Snider, Debbie Windsor, Angelia Stokes, John Wahl, Jerria Martin, Amy Minton, and Kasandra Stevens. Vote taken, all in favor. Motion passed by unanimous decision. “No nays.”

On a Different Topic - Interim Director Bonus

Mr. Wahl - The Interim Director may be topped out in pay scale, but the Board has the ability to approve a bonus, and I think it is well-earned. She did not receive an increase in pay and the Board wants to commend you. You have worked hard to listen and be a good leader. I believe the maximum bonus is \$5,000.00. Ms. Martin made the motion to approve the bonus. Mrs. Minton seconded the motion. Vote taken, all in favor. Motion passed by unanimous decision. “No nays.”

LSTA Advisory Council Members Term of Service Expires Without Reappointment

The following council members terms expires without reappointment to the LSTA Advisory Council. They served two consecutive terms of three (3) years on the Council. They can reapply after two years off the Council.

- Shelia Harris, Director, Enterprise Public Library
- Janet Silvernail, Mobile Public Library (Retired)
- Chris Warren, Director, Dothan Houston County Library

It’s very important to have representation on the Council of all the districts in the state. Awaiting replacements at the next Meeting.

LSTA Advisory Council Member Term of Service Expires – Request Reappointment
Sara Owens – B. B. Comer Memorial Library (Sylacauga)

The Board approved Sara Owens' request for reappointment to the LSTA Advisory Council by unanimous decision. "No nays."

The Board commended Chris Warren, Director of Dothan Houston County Library, as Chairman of the LSTA Advisory Council for nine (9) years of service.

Discussion – Library Cards

Ms. Stevens requested clarification on library cards. She suggested a letter be forwarded to public libraries because they are doing it differently. The juvenile cards restricted vs. an unrestricted card that the parents have to check out the books. Suggestion was made to lay all the requirements out and provide that to all libraries so they can have it, the definition, the code, and the library cards.

Mrs. Bailey –The way the Administrative Code changes were written and the way we understood it, there is a mechanism for protecting children from sexually explicit materials by the library card. Some libraries have eliminated issuing juvenile cards, due to the fact that they did not want to be out of compliance and felt like that was the best way for them to move forward. Not every library uses library cards. Because of a lack of funding, some of the smaller libraries have a list of patrons, because they don't have a card system. That's why they don't have consistency.

Ms. Stevens – That's confusing, either the board failed or the communication. Eliminating a card doesn't solve the problem, but offering the card whether restricted or nonrestricted is up to the parents. Offering the card was the goal of it, not to eliminate them all.

Mr. Wahl read from the Code:

(k) approved written guidelines that establish library cards for minors under the age of 18 must require parental approval before a minor card is permitted to check out materials from libraries in the adult section

Mrs. Stokes – By eliminating the juvenile cards the parents have to come in and check out whatever books they want.

Director's Report

APLS Financial Update – Kelyn Ralva

The financial spreadsheet entered the last quarter of the year and soon the year end shut down for FY2025 will begin. When the Board approved the grants in November, grant packets were sent to the libraries. In January, federal grant funds were halted. In April, we received money from IMLS and the grants were opened back up to the libraries. The amount awarded was \$990,000.00. To date, we have received and processed over \$700,000.00 in requests.

Administrators' Meeting– July 24, 2025 (Memorandum and Agenda Attached)

The Administrators' Meeting was held on July 24, 2025 via video-conferenced. The Memorandum and Agenda is provided.

APLS Building Updates – Randy Garmon

- Construction in the Stacks Area is complete and IT staff has moved back to their offices. Books stored downstairs will be brought back up.
- Administration Division - Carpet was installed
- Restrooms renovation will be done at a later date, waiting on the Building Commission architect. More information is forthcoming.

Front Desk Receptionist Statistics for April, May, June 2025

The front desk receptionist desk statistics were provided for April, May and June 2025 for review.

New Directors' Orientation – August 20-21, 2025


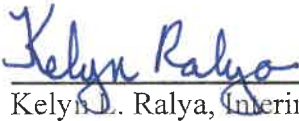
The New Director's Orientation will be held at APLS on August 20-21, 2025. The orientation is for new directors who have been on the job for less than five years. Approximately nineteen (19) persons have registered to attend. Stephanie Taylor is the coordinator.

Service Certificates and Pins

Service certificate and pin was provided to Jay Mims for 20 years of service at the conclusion of the Meeting. Stephanie Taylor was not in the office and will be presented her service certificate and pin for 15 years of service from Kelyn Ralya.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m., by unanimous decision.


Chairman

Kelyn D. Ralya, Interim Director



Vanessa E. Carr, Recording Secretary

Subject: RE: ALLA Statement - APLS Board Meeting & Recent Decisions

Date: Monday, May 19, 2025 at 3:04:10 PM Central Daylight Time

From: Snider, Ronald

To: ALLA Advocacy, JVH440@yahoo.com, astokes522@yahoo.com, ministerjerria@gmail.com, kasandrastevens@msn.com, debwindsor5@gmail.com

CC: APLS Admin, Katie Bailey, Vanessa Carr, Kelyn Ralya

I was unable to attend the May 8, 2025, APLS Board meeting after it was changed from its scheduled date of May 15, 2025. Neither I nor at least one other Board member were asked if we would be able to attend the May 8, 2025, meeting.

I was distressed to read the May 15, 2025, statement of the Executive Council of the Alabama Library Association stating that “several speakers were publicly reprimanded or spoken to in a condescending manner” at the May 8, 2025, APLS board meeting. I would hope the Board would apologize. For too long now APLS by its actions has embraced the extremist views of the Moms For Liberty disparaging hard-working, professionally trained librarians and local boards.

I was particularly concerned to read John Wahl’s memorandum of May 12, 2025, stating APLS approved on May 8, 2025, a definition of “sexually explicit,” which I believe is confusing. Under the Administration Code, as amended last year, a local library has responsibility for approving written policies covering among other things “materials, selection policies, including selection criteria for minors and how they are safeguarded from sexually explicit or other materials deemed inappropriate for children or youth.” The Board of APLS by its action on May 8, 2025, purports to take away the rights of local boards to make those decisions. Such decisions should be left to professional librarians and their local boards and not made by “big” government. Moreover, such a fundamental interpretation of the Administrative Code should, I believe, follow the state requirements for amendments to the Administrative Code.

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