

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
ALABAMA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE
MARCH 20, 2025**

The Executive Board of the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) met on March 20, 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 10:00 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, Ron Snider, Jerria Martin, Kasandra Stevens, Debra Windsor, and Amy Minton. Member absent: Angelia Stokes. APLS staff members present: Nancy Pack, Jennifer Holman, Kelyn Ralya, Katie Bailey, Ryan Godfrey, Matt Sponsler, Pennie Broussard, and Vanessa Carr. Visitor attended: Ben Albritton, Office of the Attorney General.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Wahl moved to adopt the Agenda as written. Mrs. Minton made the motion to approve the Agenda. Mrs. Windsor seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Ron Snider, John Wahl, Jerria Martin, Kasandra Stevens, Debra Windsor, and Amy Minton. No "nays." Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Approval of the Minutes

The Minutes of the November 21, 2024 meeting were presented to the Board for approval. Mrs. Minton asked that a correction be made to the Minutes. On page 11, last paragraph, first sentence states: Alabama right now has DECAP... It should read, Alabama right now has VCAP. Ms. Stevens made the motion to approve the Minutes as corrected. Mrs. Windsor seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Jerria Martin, John Wahl, Kasandra Stevens, Debra Windsor, and Amy Minton. Mr. Snider abstained since He wasn't present. Motion passed by majority vote.

Participation

Participants are broken down into three (3) groups. Each person has three (3) minutes to address the Board.

Group 1

Amber Frey – Autauga-Prattville Public Library

There are accusations that a book was found at the Autauga-Prattville library that's not a part of the collection – that's not true. It's a conflict of interest when persons appointed as board members are part of anti-extremist groups.

Chris Warren – Director, Dothan-Houston County Library System; Chairman, LSTA Advisory Council.

Thanked the Board for reinstating FY2025 LSTA Grant Program to allow libraries to apply for specific needs, for specific libraries, in specific communities, especially small towns and rural areas - keep the grant program in place.

Mr. Wahl – We are committed and we understand the needs. I want to say we as a Board was proud to make that decision and we understand the impact it has on libraries. I am also very hopeful that the President's Executive Order does not actually affect the direct grant money just the federal department.

Lori Herring – Did not attend

Carissa Callan – Athens, AL, MLIS degree from the University of AL; worked as a children's librarian in Huntsville.

Thank you for updating the Administrative Code. Libraries should be held accountable for having sexually explicit content on the shelves for minors. Transgender books on ideology are in the juvenile section of the library. The President's Executive Order states that federal funds

will be withheld from any public entity that continues to push harmful, transgender ideologies on minors. Children are perfect just the way God made them.

Alyx Kim-Yohn

Read the policy from the APLS home page, read the policy of the APLS board of directors, and the APLS advocacy page affiliations. If IMLS folds, APLS will follow, then our public libraries. Where will we be on education rankings - think about the long plan, stop holding libraries hostage to an agenda, and don't give up.

Samantha Webb – Retired Teacher

It's not appropriate for this Board to take direction from Moms for Liberty and Clean-up Alabama, and micromanage what books are placed into library collections. Let librarians do their job without government interference. Let all parents determine what's best for their kids. Restricting access to books by binding certain purchases for libraries, singling out books for removal, silencing librarians for making recommendations, or withholding funding from libraries that are not in compliance, violates their First Amendment rights.

Julie Cleland – Jefferson County

Books about sexuality are in the children section of the library. How can anyone tell a child that they are both sexes at the same time. Request that Alabama public libraries be in compliance with the President's Executive Order, and federal funds not be used to promote gender ideologies and gender identity. Alabama law recognizes only male and female. She requested a letter be sent to all library directors to remove all books, e-books, DVDs, fiction and non-fiction that are not in compliance with state law and the President's Executive Order.

Sheila Wright – Trussville, AL

Thank you for making changes to the Administrative Code. Libraries that are not in compliance, hold them responsible by withholding funds. The transgender movement is pressing its agenda denouncing the traditional categories of man and woman. God created man in His own image; male and female, created he them. I am requesting a letter be sent to all library directors to remove all books, DVDs, children and adult, fiction and non-fiction that promote gender ideology, gender identity, and transgenderism.

Leslie Johnson – Birmingham, AL

Thank the Board for making changes to the Administrative Code. I checked books out from three (3) libraries in Jefferson County that promote transgenderism--Hoover, Pinson, and Vestavia libraries. There are many books on the shelves in Mountain Brook and Homewood libraries. God created us in His image. Request public libraries remove prohibited items and from purchasing these items in the future.

Lara Person – Did not attend

Rachel Homolak

Thank you for the code changes and for protecting our children from sexually explicit materials. Transgenderism has a suicide rate of 59% - the majority of the suicides happen eight to ten years after transition. Asking the APLS Board to honor the President's Executive Order because the transgender ideology is dangerous and deadly.

Group 2

Tonia Stulting

Every consenting adult has the right to live their life the way they see fit as long as they don't hurt other people to do it. Thank you for everything you do to prevent the sexualization of children through our public libraries. Huntsville library board has committed to moving adult material into the adult sections. We are not going to be complacent, it's too much at stake, we have to stand.

Tabitha Isner – Vice Chair Alabama Democratic Party

Each American has the right to full sexual beliefs and to express them freely. We are entitled to these beliefs, we are entitled to write, publish, and read books that include our beliefs, and we are entitled to read them to our children. While you are entitled to put the chair of the Alabama GOP on this Board, you are not entitled to impose GOP ideologies on all Alabamians, let the people choose – if your ideals are better, let them win on their merit.

Rebecca Watson – Chapter Chair, Moms for Liberty – Baldwin County (Fairhope, AL)
Sexually explicit books are in the children's section in the library. Excerpts were read from several books. Fairhope voted at the last board meeting not to revisit any of the books. I am requesting funding be removed from Fairhope because they are not in compliance with APLS policy. They continually dismissed the law and APLS policies. A list of books was presented to the Board for review.

Joella Luna

I am here today utilizing my First Amendment right protection under the Constitution, which gives every person the right to speak whether or not you agree. Liberty is another right the Constitution grants and the only requirement is that you are a U.S. citizen. We as Americans are legally allowed to freely pursue our own interests and preferences; this extends to our literature and to our children. This is not about protecting Alabama's children from sexual content; this is a hate campaign trying to silence a marginalization group of citizens because we don't agree with your way of life.

Chelsea Carlson – Former Educator

A select few are advocating to limit the freedoms of all. This Board dictates funding for libraries across the state. Why limit access to books when Alabama is #44 in literacy. Kids will still have access to these materials, whether they are on internet or at book stores. I was told to mind your own.

Ayden Howell

Encourage the Board to maintain proper funding of public libraries. Thank you for your dedication to public libraries and your continuation to hear us. It's important for the next generation not to have unnecessary restricted access to literature and I hope the Board fights against any attempts from higher powers to enforce against literature containing diversity materials. Access to these diverse materials is necessary for the development of young minds.

Caitlin Tyler – District 6

Libraries are vital community spaces for everyone. I am deeply concerned about public libraries being targeted by anti-library extremist like Moms for Liberty and Clean-up Alabama. At the North Shelby Library, extremist groups have stripped the rights of citizens and removed the library's long held processes and procedures in order to institute their own agenda of hate and erasure. Some are on this state board where they will continue their campaign to trample our constitutional rights on an even larger scale; it is appalling. I implore those on this Board who believe in equal representation, freedom of speech, and constitutional rights, to hold firm to your values and stop this perversion of democracy.

Elizabeth Beth Martin – Retired Teacher, Children's Minister

I have seen the slow destruction of childhood innocence. Children need time to grow and mature in safe and morally clean environments. They are not ready to make decisions that will affect their lives. The ideas of transgenderism and same sex relationships destroy family relationships, friendships, and the individual. It's time we take back our neighborhoods, schools and libraries. Adult literature and sexual materials or transgender materials does not belong in the hands nor in the easy reach of our children. Enough is enough.

Amanda Ennis – Educator

Thank you to everyone who cares about children and libraries in the state of Alabama. What my child has access to read is made by me not groups looking to isolate my child from world views different than their own. To this Board, keep funding libraries and make sure librarians' jobs are protected.

Sarah Sanchez – Assistant Director Clean-up Alabama

Thank the Board for making changes to the APLS Administrative Code that protects our children from sexually inappropriate materials in the children's sections of the libraries. Alabamians want to protect childhood innocence when it comes to books and resources that we offer our children in libraries. Books with inappropriate themes or sexually explicit content should not be located in the minor sections of libraries.

Jocelyn Bradley – Birmingham, AL

Transgender books are located in the children's sections of libraries in Birmingham. I am for freedom of speech for everyone; I am for freedom of content in libraries; but I do think there is an important distinction between freedom of content in the adult section and what's being placed in the children's section. Unfortunately, we no longer have an age of innocence for children it seems anymore. I was able to be a child and play. They are trying to indoctrinate our children with their gender.

Chairman Wahl – That finishes our second group. Before you leave, I want to highlight something. I took a very good beating from some, and I welcome that. One of my priorities in conversation is that I grow as a person and I genuinely welcome it. I appreciate your preface; I learn from that. Since I've been Chairman, it's important that we allow every single person to speak because I want to hear from every single person. That's going to give us almost two hours of discussion hearing from people, but that's why it's a priority, I do care. Whether we agree or not, I very much appreciate you coming today, and taking the time to be willing to speak because I respect you and that's a priority for me. That will always be the case of my chairmanship, you will always have the opportunity. If you want to call or talk to me; I am always available. Thank you all for coming.

Group 3

Paul Brasher –Pastor

Thank you for taking the time to listen. Do you realize this book (Bible) is the number one seller of all time. This book is the first text book we had in the United States. In this book you learn truth, how to do things and how not to do things; God has provided good and bad examples for us. This is life or death; I choose life. Any other thing other than truth and life is confusion. That's a lot of things our children deserve and there's a lot of things our children don't deserve, and that's confusion. The things that we do as adults have a life and death outcome. The Bible teaches us who we are, whom we are, and what's going to happen in the future.

Melissa Gates – Mobile, AL

There is going to come a time when we all will stand and be accountable for everything we say or do and it's going to be to the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether you believe in Him or not, it's going to happen. There are pornographic books in the children's section of the library; we don't need it for our children. These books need to be removed from the libraries.

Toni Keener – Mobile, AL

Books in the Mobile Public Library on transgender must be removed from the shelves at the library. Several books were discussed on the youth section. There was to be no association with ALA, but Mobile Public Library renewed a subscription with ALA.

Lindsay Gardner – Director of O'Neal Library

Thank the Board for the time investing in the meeting. The role of local library boards is established by state code and given specific responsibilities including: library hours of operation, hiring and firing the director, as well as overseeing the budget, and setting policies. The library boards have worked hard to come into compliance with the code changes. Vague language in the code changes leads to different interpretations. Give us a more explicit definition and your interpretation of the words: inappropriate, give specific examples on how a disclaimer can be applied; and define pornographic and obscenity.

Chairman Wahl asked that the list of items discussed be e-mailed to him, and if libraries need more guidance, contact him.

Brady Johnson - Cullman, AL

What does gender ideology represent? It represents rejection of objected truth with made up identities replacing biological reality. It's wrong for society to condone ideas that will lead to undermine our belief in objective truth and reality. These ideas are dangerous for young people because they are the most vulnerable. It makes sense to take them out of the libraries so children aren't exposed to them. The President's Executive Order limits gender to male and female. I would ask that this Board remove any books or DVDs in libraries that include sex for gender categories or risk losing federal funding.

Mr. Wahl thanked him for coming to address the Board

Linda Poiroux – Eagle Forum - Mobile, AL

Mobile Public Library are moving books from the children's section to the adult section of the library. Also, she discussed books in the library that are not in the proper sections.

Anna Amador – Warrior, AL

Request the APLS Board be in compliance with the President's Executive Order stating federal funds not be used to promote identity ideology which includes transgenderism. Alabama recognizes two sexes, male and female. Also request a letter be sent to all public libraries directors to remove all books, DVDs, fiction and non-fiction, that are not in compliance with the Executive Order and Alabama state law and the library be prohibited from purchasing these books.

Ivan Hendon – Did not attend

Judy Hicks – Shelby County

Request public libraries be in compliance with the President's Executive Order and Alabama state law. Federal funds shall not be used for transgender ideology and gender identity which includes transgenderism. Encouraging the Board to give grant money to the libraries that can prove they removed the books and don't promote gender ideology.

Cindy Battles – Registered Nurse, Pinson, AL

Libraries are being used to promote an ideological agenda. A certain group of people argue that everyone should be able to see themselves in a library. Is this really their desire or is this just a ploy to indoctrinate our children to advance their agenda? The President's Executive Order and the state law says gender categories are male and female. Request the APLS Board remove all DVDs and books from public libraries with transgender content.

Cheryl Corvo – Fairhope Public Library

I am here to represent the reasonable majority of Fairhope. A letter was read and given to the Board supporting Fairhope and the dedicated staff. Chairman, you stated that you are a strong advocate for the First Amendment, you don't support book banning, and using government authority to dictate what books parents are allowed to read to their children. A small but vocal group has repeatedly questioned the placement of certain books claiming they are inappropriate and sexually explicit based on religion. Rather than casting doubt and cutting funding from Fairhope Public Library, we ask that you recognize the library is a model of excellence and one that serves the needs and values of our communities.

Recess and Reconvene

The Board recessed for five minutes at 11:51 a.m.

Meeting reconvened at 11:56 a.m.

Discussion - Fairhope Public Library

Mr. Wahl - Mrs. Minton, do you want to make a motion?

Mrs. Minton - This is very concerning because the Code is clear about the things that should not be in the children's section. So, when there are books about sexual intercourse and masturbation in the children's section, I am confused how there is any confusion. I would like to make a motion to withhold funding from Fairhope Public Library until all books containing sexually explicit topics or pictures as stated in Alabama Code, Section 13A-12-200.1, are moved to the adult section of the library or weeded out. There is no exception stated for sex education listed in the Code. I want to make that motion and turn it back on when the books are moved, Mrs. Windsor seconded the Motion.

Mr. Snider - This is highly inappropriate. Fairhope Public Library is one of the jewels of the state library system, one of the best-funded libraries with private support, and in one of the most conservative parts of Alabama. The library board consists of prominent people who have recently, because of the criticism, all been reappointed. They are some of the highest taxpayers in this state, and to tell them that this Board is going to make a choice as to how they do things, I think, is far beyond what this Agency should do.

Mrs. Minton – It's in the Code.

Mr. Snider – That should be taken up with the local public library. We shouldn't be directing libraries. I thought we believe in local control, but it seems that you keep supporting the

Discussion - Fairhope Public Library (continued)

movement that this state agency needs to micromanage libraries in this state, and I think that is highly inappropriate.

Mrs. Minton – The state has the money, so if they want to keep the books, they can, but I am voting to withhold funding, which is what we have the authority to do. According to the Code, the books are sexually explicit, so if they move the books tomorrow, they will get their funding back.

Mr. Wahl – Once we pass state Code, we do our obligated duties to enforce it. At the same time, I do respect public libraries. Is there any more discussion on this?

Ms. Stevens – If we pass the Code that says they must comply; if there is no enforcement, what is the point in passing the Code?

Mr. Wahl – There are no exemptions to the Code, and there are no loopholes when talking about Fairhope Public Library.

Ms. Stevens – For libraries that are not in compliance, are they risking the entire state to lose both state and federal funding. Is that something worth risking for every library in Alabama because we are not in compliance with state and federal laws?

Mr. Wahl – We have to have a conversation about the federal laws as a Board. Right now, we must be in compliance with the APLS code. There's only one question: Is Fairhope out of compliance with state code?

Mr. Snider – Shouldn't a letter be written to Fairhope Library and tell them there are reports of non-compliance to give them an opportunity to respond before the Board takes such drastic action?

Mrs. Minton – We did that last October, Ron, and that's when we set these policies.

Mr. Snider – We did not write them that I understand. They were never sent a letter from this Agency. Every library should receive a letter in writing about changes.

Dr. Pack – Fairhope policies met state aid requirements. As to how we enforce these requirements, I agree that it is a local issue because APLS doesn't have the staff nor the funding to check each library and ensure these materials are on the shelves in the appropriate collection. I firmly believe that if you want to do that, they should be notified, and allow them to present their case, and review it as a Board.

Mr. Wahl - No agency of government will ever allow for someone to set a Code policy, intentionally disobey that policy, and expect to get away with the disobedience because they set a library policy, that is ingenuous. No other sector of government would allow that, law enforcement would not allow that, intentional disobedience of state government and now their local Code, because their Codes are in compliance. They cannot ignore these Codes and leave sexually explicit materials in the library. You can't redo policy and just leave the books in place. There's a broader question in the policy changes that this Board made. You have to set up policy but you have to physically remove the books from the children's section. That is the Code and they are bound by it. Changing their policies is not in compliance, they have to remove the books. The question I have now, I do believe looking at materials, they are not in compliance with APLS Code. The question is whether we give them a warning, allow them time to remove them, or whether we remove their funding today.

Mrs. Minton – Why can't we cut off their funding and give them 30 to 60 days to remove the books and reinstate the funding?

Mr. Snider – Are we doing that because we have all these speakers who talked about books in other libraries in the state? Are we going to remove their funding, too?

Discussion - Fairhope Public Library (continued)

Mr. Wahl – We will have to be consistent and follow state Code. The goal is to get the local libraries in compliance. I think everyone sitting around this table supports our local libraries. We proved that at the last meeting when we returned the grants.

Mr. Snider – We don't know if they are telling the truth or not. Cutting funds from libraries; we are not demonstrating that we support libraries at all by this action.

Mr. Wahl – We have to be consistent and follow the state Code. No other state government agency will ever allow open disobedience and flagrant disobedience to policy Code and not require some kind of action.

Mr. Snider – I propose an amendment to the resolution that they be given a notice, and the Board consider their response at the next meeting, sixty (60) days from now.

Mrs. Minton – My motion stands including cutting funds immediately until they are in compliance. Remove the books and we will give them the funding back in thirty (30) days. This is specific to Fairhope.

Mr. Wahl – Code changes are for every library; they can't have sexually explicit materials in the children's section. It is incumbent for every single library to understand that because they can't have sexually explicit materials in the children's section.

Mr. Snider – We heard all these other examples about other libraries as well, is the Board singling out Fairhope; or, will the same be done with them? That's what I think is inappropriate.

Mr. Wahl – As I communicated with local libraries with concerned parents, I want this handled at the local level whenever possible. If someone finds a book that's inappropriate, take it to the local board. I don't want it to be brought to us until all due diligence has been done at the local level. What makes Fairhope different is they are refusing to hear from parents.

Mr. Snider – What it seems like to me is the Board has considered advice from their librarians and made a choice. We were told that other libraries did the same thing.

Mr. Wahl – It's non-compliant – Fairhope made the decision to disobey state Code already. Which is why we are talking about them instead of other libraries. Other libraries have not gone through this entire process. We were told Mobile did the same thing, but they were moving books. We don't want to punish a library that is trying to be compliant. The key is if we know a library is intentionally disobeying state policy, we have no choice. No other state agency will allow intentional disobedience of the state Code.

Ms. Martin – How we handle this will set the tone for all other public libraries that are not in compliance. I say we cut the funding, but in thirty (30) days if you are able to adjust and fix it...

Mr. Wahl - I do think your motion should include confirmation of books presented were, or, are still in minor sections of libraries. It would be legitimate to check that and to confirm that they are not adhering after their local code changes. They are not allowing grievance of parents of books previously reviewed before the Code change, that's not appropriate. It's a very different set of rules. That's my recommendation to add that to your motion.

Mr. Snider – What's the motion again?

Mr. Wahl – Add to Mrs. Minton's motion and check to see if the books are currently located in the juvenile sections of Fairhope Library. Confirm with Fairhope that parents are not allowed to bring up the new book challenges after APLS code changes.

Mrs. Minton – I will add that to my motion that Chairman Wahl will contact Fairhope Public Library.

Mr. Wahl – I will confirm that. We don't want to act on a report. This is a professional Board and we should confirm the details. Members voting in favor by raising hands are as follows:

Discussion - Fairhope Public Library (continued)

Amy Minton, Jerria Martin, Debra Windsor, Kasandra Stevens, and John Wahl. Ron Snider voted "nay". When this is confirmed, the Board will talk about details. However, if this is correct, state funding will be cut immediately.

Chairman's Report

Mr. Wahl – I do want to thank those who are in our observation room. Thank you for being here and thank you for being a part of this process. I know for the Board, it's a lot of time, but you took time to drive from around the state to be here and share your opinion. We respect your opinion; we appreciate every one of you on every side of every issue for being involved in this process and caring about Alabama's libraries and children. It's important for me as Chairman of this Board, that we try to agree where we can agree; something we can agree on is we love our libraries. I never dreamed when I took this appointment originally that we would be thrown in this controversy. I expected this was going to be a very non-active Board and that changed very quickly within a year of my appointment. I love what libraries bring to local communities, especially for the youth, that's why it's so important that we make sure everyone is comfortable in our libraries, and everyone feels safe.

Protecting innocence of children is not censorship and it's not book banning. I want to make it very clear. As I heard people speak today, I found components of every single person that I agree with. I do believe in the First Amendment strongly. I would fight to the death for the rights of freedom of the people of Alabama. That includes the right to the First Amendment, free speech. Everyone has the right to read freely, and to buy whatever book they want to buy, to read any book they want to read for themselves or to read to their children, respectful of parental rights. I think on those subjects we are all alike. I know that I am passionate about the freedom of speech and I would oppose book banning at every level 100%. The question is not banning books. The question is making sure that innocent children don't accidentally stumble across something in the children's section. We're not telling parents don't check books out of the adult section for your child; we're not telling parents don't buy this book for your child, that's the family's decision. The main part of the APLS Code changes, was putting parents back in control and let them make the decision for their families, for their children, and not have anything that anyone can deem inappropriate, sexual or harmful for children in the children's section. That's my commitment and I feel like that's the majority of the Board's commitment. I hope we can come together as a state, as a community, as a Board to agree and find a solution that best fits every single community, every local library, and every family in the state of Alabama. We're not saying you can't have these books; we're saying let's not have easy access for children whose parents don't want them to stumble across the books in the children's section.

Welcome New Board Member – Kasandra Stevens – Sixth Congressional District of Alabama

Chairman Wahl welcome Kasandra Stevens to the APLS Executive Board. Ms. Stevens will serve the sixth congressional district of Alabama.

Ms. Stevens – I am honored to been appointed by Governor Ivey and looking forward to serving on this Board with each of you. I respect everything that each of you brings to the table. I've had quite a bit of experience. I am a lifelong lover of libraries and feel like they are an integral part of every community. I've had the honor of serving on the North Shelby Board this past year, working very closely with the director and getting a first-hand experience of what this process is like. It is a very big undertaking to go through these books. I see the individual challenges and very dedicated library staff pulling books, reading excerpts, and finding where to house the collections. I know they are trying very hard to come into compliance and I appreciate that perspective that gives me to serve on this Board. Thank you all very much for letting me be a part of this.

Michelle Hughes – Resignation Letter from the APLS Executive Board

Michelle Hughes resigned from the APLS Executive Board on December 5, 2024. Mrs. Hughes served the sixth congressional district of Alabama. Mr. Wahl thanked Mrs. Hughes for her time and service on the Board. I considered her a friend as well as a colleague.

State Aid Compliance or Non-Compliance – Ben Albritton, Office of the Attorney General

Mr. Albritton will present a report to the Board at the May Board Meeting.

LSTA Awards for FY2025

Dr. Pack – The Board approved the awards and they were ranked as received at APLS. In the event there is not enough money to spend on that right now, our funding needs to go towards staff. Ten (10) library positions are paid with LSTA funds and there is enough to last until September 30, 2025. When IMLS determines if APLS receives the FY2025 money, it may be possible to fund competitive grants. It's totally based on what the amount of the appropriation is, when it comes, and how it comes.

Mr. Wahl – Are we going to get the full amount for FY2025?

Dr. Pack – I have no idea. IMLS does not have any idea right now either. Correspondence from them states we are to cautiously spend money. Money is available from the FY2024 budget until September 30, 2025; and we are waiting to hear from IMLS on the FY2025 allotment letter in April.

Mr. Wahl – What impact will this have on local librarians?

Dr. Pack – I have no idea. We haven't awarded any grants because we don't have the money to do so.

Mr. Wahl – When will that normally come in?

Dr. Pack – Normally, we run two years of grants; in April we will pull from 2025. Since we haven't received money for 2025, the 2024 money will go towards staffing positions in the Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled (BPD) and other staffing positions in this Agency. APLS is fully funded through September 30, 2025 with the money on hand right now.

Mr. Wahl – APLS is going to be fully funded through FY2025. You halted the grants in order to hold money over to the next fiscal year.

Dr. Pack – No, sir. The money is in the budget to pay for salaries for staff who works in this agency.

Mr. Wahl – I would like to hear Kelyn Ralya's comments on that.

Kelyn Ralya – Since the Board voted in November to go back to the grants, Katie Bailey, Jennifer Holman, and I got together to determine an amount that would be available. Katie and I worked with the applications that came in, we worked very closely with the libraries that were state aid compliant at the time, and we came up with a list. In the packet, you have a list of applications received and a spreadsheet of proposed awards. Notifications went out to the libraries after that time. In January, the federal grant freeze came and everything was halted because we didn't know what was going to happen. I continued to get contracts back from the libraries, that's their first step, they sign off on them, and send them back to me. In a perfect world, they would be dated as of October 1 and signed by Dr. Pack. Unfortunately, that did not happen this year because of what's going on with IMLS and the funding. I continue to get contracts and I contacted all awardees that we had to stop because of what's happening with the Executive Orders. Now, we are in a holding pattern.

Another complication with this is the Continuing Resolution expired this month and if it didn't get extended, we really didn't have any money. However, the CR was signed and that will get us through the end of September. Now, IMLS is waiting for the OMB to review their grant program and then IMLS will reach out to us. I informed the libraries, the council members, and awardees that we are waiting on IMLS. Once we get the word that the money is in the bank, we can go forward with that. If they do it the way it's normally done, the actual appropriation is a two-year period. It would have started in October of last year and supposed

LSTA Awards for FY2025

to go through September of next year. That will get us through FY2026. After that point, I don't know what FY2026 will bring with IMLS.

Mr. Snider – Prepare a contingency plan. Not only are the funds used for grants, a number of salaries are paid with the funds in this agency. If there is a three million dollar cut, it is going to be devastating to this agency. We need to start thinking about the worst-case scenario on what we are going to do. We are facing a potential three million dollar cut in funding.

LSTA FY2026 UPDATE

Dr. Pack – On September 25, 2025, Congress will make a decision whether they want to continue with IMLS funds, Grants to States, and all the other programs and museums. The LSTA is up for reallocation and if that happens, if not reallocated, that means no federal funding for libraries and museums.

I spoke to Marko Riccobono, President, of the National Federation for the Blind (NFB). He wrote a letter to the congressional districts in Washington, DC stating the impact it will have on all NLS libraries across the United States.

Mr. Wahl – I know what we are currently facing. The President's Executive Order on funding for the federal offices should not affect the grants, that's two different areas. However, there are strings attached to that from an earlier Executive Order in January that local libraries should know about with specifics regarding gender ideology.

Dr. Pack – It's not only federal funds, but it's the city and the county federal funds. There are a lot of ramifications that IMLS told us that they would give us guidance and I feel that it identifies to our public libraries. They are the agency we need to follow because they know what we can or cannot do. I would not want to give misinformation to public libraries.

Also, I spoke to congressional members in Washington and asked where do we stand with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). Senator Katie Britt is having her team look at it from the perspective of how it impacts a special population; that group is federally funded to provide programs for the individuals who are physically disabled and compliant. Another part of the FCC regulations that I asked Senator Britt to look into is wireless internet for circulation in libraries and hotspots. She was surprised and some of the other representatives that this will have an impact on libraries. NLS has a budget within the Library of Congress, and if that budget is not funded, APLS will probably have to pick up free materials for the blind and postage. APLS' budget cannot afford to send out blind materials without postage.

Mrs. Minton – Regarding the Executive Order and many of the people speaking about the transgender issues, I notice from watching President Trump talk to Governor Janet Mills of Maine, you either comply with his Executive Orders or he will cut funding. The Executive Order is very clear saying federal funds will not be used to promote gender ideology. Would you consider as Chairman of the Board, sending out a letter to our libraries to make them aware of this?

Mr. Wahl – I think the public libraries should be made aware of this because they may not know. It's good to be already in compliance and let our libraries know about this Executive Order and the impact it will have on public libraries as well as this agency.

Mrs. Minton –DOGE can look at the whole state catalog and tell every gender book that's in our libraries. They can pull state funding, they don't have to attend board meetings, that's what he's saying in his Executive Order. I do think it would be helpful to have a letter from Chairman Wahl to library directors.

Mr. Wahl – I do think a letter should be done and it's appropriate to copy the White House to let them know that we are taking it seriously and doing our due diligence. It will give us a chance to advocate for funding for our public libraries as well as our state agencies. I want the Board to approve for me to draft the letter. Ms. Martin made a motion that Mr. Wahl draft a

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letter to library directors making them aware of the President's Executive Order on transgender issues. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. Vote taken, all in favor. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

Essential Positions at APLS

Administration Division

ASA II or Retired State Employee

Dr. Pack – We have not at this time been able to fill the ASA II position. The register was pulled and interviews were scheduled. No candidates were available on the Retired State Employee list so we will continue the search. Whether we go part-time or full time, we will let the Board know. We will report back to the Board at the next meeting.

Assistant Director

Three persons were interviewed for the position. The money is in the budget for the position because one position was eliminated over the consultants; the assistant director position and the public services position were combined. That person will be over the consultants and work with me on the public side. Kelyn Ralya is the assistant director on the federal side. Two of the persons interviewed were inside candidates. I don't want to disclose their names but Candidate A had some experience in working with public libraries in different areas. Candidate B was above all in working with supervising, working with agendas, public libraries, and boards. Candidate C was from the outside with different backgrounds that were not so focused on public libraries. I recommend that we go with Candidate B and offer her the position. She is on our staff at this time. The duties of the position cover the following: supervising the consultants, working directly with public libraries, making sure our initiatives, programs, and training are in order, and totally in charge of partnering with groups like DHR. Duties that I don't have time to do. It's a critical role in making sure the public side is covered.

Mr. Wahl – We need to know a name so we can vote on this person.

Dr. Pack – I haven't informed the others of this decision, but it's Katie Bailey. She is presently working as Interim Assistant Director and has done a great job in reviewing policies for libraries. Mr. Snider made the motion to approve Katie Bailey as the Assistant Director of APLS. Ms. Martin seconded the motion. Vote taken, all in favor, motion passed by unanimous decision.

Blind & Physically Disabled (BPD) Division

A register was pulled and interviews conducted for the Library Technician position. Kayle Foster accepted the position and her effective date of employment was March 1, 2025 in the BPD Division.

Information Technology (IT) Division

Requesting permission to hire an IT Technician for the Help Desk. This position has been vacant for approximately nine (9) months. Staff has been doubling up serving as back-up for smaller libraries with computer issues. Seeking permission from the Board to start interviews and report back to the Board at the next meeting. It's an entry level position. We have the sustainability in our budget at this time. If we continue to receive LSTA funds, we can sustain the funding of this position.

Mr. Wahl – I agree but I have some reservations because we don't know the status of our federal grants. How much burden has this placed on current staff?

Dr. Pack – The libraries are having to wait probably a day when we were able to get responses to them within thirty minutes prior to this. I have been hesitant and gone back and forth on this. Also, it depends on what we get from state budget.

Mr. Wahl – Let's just wait on this to see what happens with the federal grants. Not saying no, just delay. That's my recommendation and if the Board feels that way a motion can be made. The Board gave unanimous consent to wait for the status of the federal grants before giving approval to fill the IT Technician position.

New Business

Waiver of the State Aid Rules for FY2025 - Carrollton Public Library – Rule #520-2-2-.04

Dr. Pack - Carrollton Public Library requested a waiver of the state aid rules for funding. I think we should waive because of circumstances. They are not going to be in compliance because of other APLS rules including the Public Library Survey (PLS). The information they provided is incorrect. The mayor and board replaced the former director with a new director. Since it's such a tiny community, I recommend to waive it and the requirements of the PLS. Mr. Snider made the motion. Mrs. Windsor seconded the motion. Vote taken, all in favor, motion passed by unanimous decision.

Alabama Public Library Service Executive Board Meetings

Mr. Wahl – I had a very productive meeting with library directors several months ago. I felt like bridges were built because there were a lot of organization on both sides. That process was very good on the federal grants. I got a lot of feedback on the federal grants. I appreciate the standing ovation when that decision was reversed. That is my heart to return the good relationships on all fronts within the Alabama library systems. Some of the requests were very common sense, very easy to bring transparency to organizations, and allow more involvement from local communities, and easier access to information that will already be accessible open record requests.

- All Meetings be video-conferenced
- Minutes placed on the APLS website
- Board Agenda placed on the APLS website

Mrs. Minton made the motion to have the meetings video-conferenced, the Minutes and Agenda placed on the APLS website. Ms. Martin seconded the motion. Mr. Snider voted “nay”. Vote taken, most in favor, motion passed by majority decision.

Mr. Wahl – I really think that's a good idea. This is a good step to show everyone involved that we are trying to make the best decision for the people of the state of Alabama. We care about transparency, we care about the open forum, we want to hear their discussions, that's one of my priorities as Chairman, to allow everyone to speak. I know it was long and I apologize, but that was my decision. I hope you bear with me in making that commitment to hear from people because it's very important that we do our due diligence.

Lawsuit – George Kelley v. State of Alabama, Department of Human Resources, et al.

Dr. Pack – APLS was named as one of the defendants along with thirty-five (35) other state agencies. This has been turned over to the Attorney General's Office to respond. They have assigned someone to do this.

Agreement between the Attorney General's Office and the Alabama Public Library Service

APLS signed an agreement with the Attorney General's Office effective January 1, 2025 – March 31, 2027 for legal assistance and consultation.

2024 Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) Form

The SEI must be completed and filed with the Alabama Ethics Commission on or before April 30, 2025. All members who were on the Board in 2024 must file an SEI statement.

Legislative Actions

HB 4 and SB6 still in committee.

HB4 – Exempting librarians from having educational materials that contain sexual content in the library. If that passes, there may be some ramifications on whether the exemptions of public libraries contain materials for sexual content that is educational maybe in conflict with what we are going to do.

APLS Budget will come out after April 1 from the Senate on the state operating budget floor. Dr. Pack gave out information sheets to legislators on what APLS does in our budget and the Senate seems to be agreeable with funding us. The House stated APLS was just level-funded and will go with what Governor Ivey has stated, which is the same as last year.

APLS Financial Update – Jennifer Holman

Jennifer Holman - Included in the packet is the budget for the state funds and federal funds as of the end of February 2025. We are right on track.

Director's Report on Activities

Dr. Pack – Legislatively, I have been keeping the Board informed on IMLS and the actions taken. Senator Reed from Rhode Island has taken the torch for the past twenty (20) years to promote LSTA funding. We are getting information directly from his office on the status. I had the honor of presenting him the Carl Elliott Award from our Southern Council of Chief Officers.

- The legislators received a copy of the “Accidental Activist: Changing the World One Small Step at a Time” by Author Mary Jolley. Ms. Jolley was Carl Elliott’s aide during the time when he sponsored the LSTA bill and it gives homage to Alabama being the father and birth of the first federal bill for funding for libraries.
- Legislators received a copy of the APLS Annual Report for FY2024 –This report was very useful when I spoke to the Washington delegation. They received copies of the annual report.

Receptionist statistics for November 2024 – January 2025 are attached.

Building Updates – Construction in the Administration Division and the Alabama Room

No discussion on this subject.

LSTA Grants to States Program – Letter from Teri DeVoe, Associate Deputy Director of State Programs, Approving APLS’ LSTA Grants to States Report

Teri DeVoe, Associate Director of IMLS, forwarded a letter dated February 10, 2025 verifying APLS Grants to States Report was approved by IMLS.

RFP for Writing History of APLS

Dr. Pack – Right now since we haven’t filled several positions, we do have \$20,000 to fulfill the writing of the APLS history. The ASA II position is not filled and the position over the consultants was eliminated. It’s up to the Board to decide to follow through with it under these circumstances. There is no definitive history of the Alabama Public Library Service. The longer we wait, the longer we are going to miss some more histories. Two very good writers submitted proposals for this, and I am very confident that they will talk to former employees and former library directors. If we don’t get this history written, a lot of the history of APLS will be lost. An integral part of getting LSTA grants were through a group of southern librarians. We had what we called dragon librarians back in the day. They worked in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Emily Reed worked very hard to get funding for public libraries in Alabama and establish having at least one library in all the sixty-seven (67) counties. During segregation, she gave African-American libraries money to buy books. She gave 68 cents per capita for the Black population to have their own libraries. This is going to be lost and it’s a project that I would like to see through. If we don’t have the money, if the Board can fund it partially, I may be able to find some donors who may be willing to contribute. This is not in Archives & History, and not in your regular history books. Mrs. Elizabeth Beamguard was one of the prominent librarians as well.

Mr. Wahl – Are you opposed to delaying that once again because it sends a bad message to public libraries. We are telling local libraries we can’t give you funds, but we are spending money on history. Does it hurt anything to delay this for three to four months?

Mr. Snider – I think we ought to do it. We are talking about \$10,000.00 a year over a two-year period.

Dr. Pack – We would have to do another RFP and the people who submitted the RFP will rescind it. They allocated their time to do this project. When I tell them we are not funding this RFP at this time, they will move on to other projects.

Mr. Wahl – Is there a deadline on this?

RFP for Writing History of APLS

Dr. Pack – Yes. I have to report back on Friday whether we are accepting or I can call state purchasing and get it delayed until Tuesday. This also covers the BPD how it was in Talladega and how it moved to APLS.

Ms. Stevens – Will this writing or resource be available on line or hard copies?

Dr. Pack – It can be any way. In the RFP we have copyrighted materials. It will be ours and all the documents setting. If there was a natural disaster, it will be documented.

Mr. Snider – Our current budget is approaching \$18 million this year. You are talking spending \$10,000.00 a year for a project. Mr. Snider made the motion to approve the RFP writing for APLS history. The motion was not seconded.

Dr. Pack – If I am available to raise the funds to do this, I will go out this afternoon to some organizations and see if they will give me the money. If I am able to successfully do that, would it be approved by the Board to do so?

Mr. Wahl – Is there any objections?

Ms. Martin – No objections. This can wait – if we weren't in this situation.

Mr. Wahl – This is not a no, let's just wait and see what happens.

Statistical Report – APLS Website

The APLS statistical report is on the website for all to review.

2025 Summer Reading Kickoff and Statistics – January 8-9, 2025

The 2025 Summer Reading Kickoff was held on January 8-9, 2025 at APLS. The statistics for the kickoff were provided.

Administrators' Meeting – January 23, 2025

The January Administrators' Meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. The next meeting will be held on April 17, 2025 via video-conference.

Discussion – Nancy C. Pack

Mr. Wahl – I want to recognize that I received a letter from Dr. Pack with her resignation for September 30, 2025 and I accepted that resignation. I appreciate the time you have served as the APLS Director.

Mrs. Minton – This is not personal, and I want to thank Dr. Pack for her service at the APLS organization. I appreciate that she recognizes the need for her resignation. However, I believe APLS needs an immediate shift in direction and for that reason, I move to make a motion to the Board pursuant to the authority under Alabama Code, Section 41-8-3 to terminate the employment of Dr. Pack effective immediately.

Mr. Wahl – We have a motion. Do we have a second? Mrs. Windsor seconded the motion. Is there any discussion? If no discussion, we will take a vote. All in favor by raising of hands, Amy Minton, Debra Windsor, Jerria Martin, Kasandra Stevens, and John Wahl. Ron Snider opposed. Motion carries by majority vote.

Mr. Snider – This is an awfully dark day for Alabama libraries and the people of Alabama who love libraries. Dr. Pack is being terminated not because of her performance. During her tenure at this Agency, state aid for local libraries increased sixty (60) percent. She's being terminated as a result of unfounded attacks on her by extremists, including on this Board, who believe she is not sufficiently supporting censorship, and who are not satisfied that their own local libraries and library boards can have the authority to determine what is in their own libraries. This action is going to be viewed in future generations in the same way that the civil rights era, forced resignations. Very, very dark day for this state.

Discussion – Nancy C. Pack

Mr. Wahl – I will say that it is incredibly important for any board to have a director that is implementing their vision and that they feel supports their work. I heard from multiple board members over the past six months who felt like they were not given the respect that was due them. They were treated very negatively and their positions were not respected.

Dr. Pack – I just want to say one thing, I am leaving. I would like to have permission for a couple of weeks to come and clean my office out. I am asking permission to get my files in order for someone to come in. I can walk out right now and that will be fine with me because I have done a great job for this agency. I hope the new director doesn't have board members sending in information to newspapers saying "old man winter" saved her. We know which board member did that. As long as you have board members like that, I don't want to work for this organization. Some of the things that went on in this meeting made me realize, libraries are no longer what they should be and I have no desire to work for APLS and to better the Alabama's libraries. I've done my duty; ten (10) years I've made them what they were. I've worked for state aid from 78 cents to \$1.29. I've worked with legislators; I have legislators that respect me. I'm sorry some of the Board members' feelings are hurt, but you have to have a strong leader in this position and a strong voice if you want to be heard. That is what the Board hired me to do, and I appreciate your vote of non-confidence. John, do I have permission to come in and clean out my office; it's going to take a while; I mean I want to get my files in order.

Mr. Wahl – The termination is immediate.

Dr. Pack – It's immediate.

Mr. Wahl – Let me converse with counsel - let us get together after we adjourn.

Ben Albritton – John, we have already discussed this. The termination is immediate. She will be asked to leave today. The staff will inventory and have all personal items at a certain time.

Dr. Pack – Alright, I'm gone.

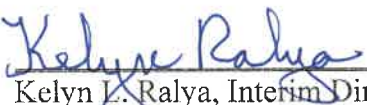
Mr. Snider exited the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Mrs. Minton – I need to make a second motion. I move pursuant to the Board's authority under Alabama Code, Section 41-8-3, that the Board appoints Kelyn Ralya as Acting Director to begin immediately and to continue as Acting Director until such a time a permanent Director is appointed. Ms. Martin seconded the motion. Vote taken, all in favor, motion passed by majority vote. The Board congratulated Kelyn Ralya as Acting Director of APLS.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.


Chairman


Kelyn L. Ralya, Interim Director


Vanessa E. Carr, Recording Secretary