

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
ALABAMA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE
NOVEMBER 16, 2023**

The Executive Board of the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) met on November 16, 2023 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, Ron Snider called the Executive Board Regular Meeting to order at 10:05a.m., and roll was taken. The Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

The following Board members were present: Ron Snider, Virginia Doyle, Angelia Stokes, Jerria Martin, and John Wahl. Member absent: Michelle Hughes. APLS staff members present: Nancy Pack, (via video-conference); Kelyn Ralya, Jessica Everingham, Jennifer Holman, Matt Sponsler, and Vanessa Carr. Visitor attended was: Ben Albritton, Office of the Attorney General,

Mr. Snider asked if there were additions to the Agenda. A letter received from the Board of Trustees of Read Freely Alabama was added to the Agenda under Unfinished Business. Jerria Martin made the motion to adopt the Agenda as amended. Virginia Doyle seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: John Wahl, Angelia Stokes, Ron Snider, Virginia Doyle and Jerria Martin. No "nays."

The Minutes of the September 13, 2023 meeting were presented to the Board for approval. Ms. Martin made the motion to approve the Minutes as written. Mrs. Stokes seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Virginia Doyle, Ron Snider, John Wahl, Angelia Stokes, and Jerria Martin. No "nays."

Participation

Mr. Snider – Ten people will speak for three minutes each. This is a reminder that under the Administrative Code, no complaints regarding personnel or anyone connected with the library is appropriate at the meeting. Any complaints against personnel or board members should be put in writing. Also, if anyone today wishes to address any particular book in any library, tell us what library that book was in, which date they reviewed that book in that library, and in what section of the library the book was in.

Participation

- **Marisa Allison** – did not attend
- **Dallas Baillio** – Former Director of Mobile Public Library for twenty-three (23) years. Prior to that, I was director at a public library in Illinois for five years. The following documents were provided to the Board:
 - Evaluation of Clean up Alabama's mission
 - Definition of obscenity
 - Additional information about book opinions
 - 401C3 and 401C4
- Reviews provided

Look at what Clean up Alabama has published and they have what they say is where their source is. Every source comes from books. They haven't read the books; they taken them from books you see their source. I was a member of the American Library Association (ALA) since I was a public librarian. I found them very helpful. Yes, they propose libraries adopt things, but they have absolutely no power over local public libraries. The individual who has been called Marxist, is an elected official, and that position rotates. That person can't vote in the council meetings. Finally, I don't care what you all do, if you withdraw from ALA, even if I was library director, that's fine. There are ramifications to it, just like state aid, there are ramifications. State aid is something that this agency administers to libraries. It's not a lot of money, but small libraries depend on it because they don't have much local funding. If it's cut out, it will not affect this library, but the small libraries across the state. It will not affect the larger libraries.

Bryan Dawson – did not attend

Angie Hayden – Founding member of Read Freely Alabama. After months of misrepresenting young adult literature as children's books to manufacture outrage, Clean-Up Alabama said in a recent al.com article that they believe Governor Ivey's proposed administrative changes, which she will vote on today, do not go far enough. In that piece, they demand policies that would restrict access to "content regarding, sex, sexuality, and gender even if it isn't necessarily explicit." This has never been about sexual-explicit contents, so I think we can stop pretending. At Clean-Up Alabama's recent stop the sexual extinction of children in Alabama libraries roundtable event, an event by its very name, which makes vile accusations that endanger librarians. The panelists openly stated that they consider materials that affirm LGBTQ+ families as "unprotected speech and inappropriate for children." Bryan Dawson, CEO 1819 News, suggest bureaucracy and boldly called for book burning. No one objected and Hannah Rees, Executive Director, applauded. We encourage you to review the edited footage of that event on the website, readfreelyalabama.com. I wonder if he told you that he would prefer children access Playboy in public libraries, rather than LGBTQ+ affirming materials. Clean-Up Alabama and most of their supporters like Dawson are trampling the civil rights and liberties of Alabamians. We can no longer pretend otherwise. We want to make one thing clear Moms for Liberty/Clean-Up Alabama extremism is unpopular and voters are tired of it. Recent election trends show it, and Clean-Up Alabama's moderator, Sarah Sanchez acknowledged it during the event. "The other side has been winning, we are not the winners, we are not popular." Clean-Up is a minority and we, the reasonable majority, has resisted this constitutional extremism. We have had overwhelming support from voters across party lines. There is no negotiating with these groups; they will never agree to any compromise. If any of you are genuinely concerned about Alabama's libraries practices or collections, please visit a local library in your district and engage with librarians there. You will find that they care deeply about parental rights, protecting children, and practicing dynamic constitutional librarianship at the local level. We must now insist that you reject extremism and preserve the rights of Alabama's citizens and families like mine, and libraries that represent all community members.

Lori Herring – did not attend

Carol Jahns – Thanked the Board for the opportunity to allow her to speak. Folders were given to the Board with excerpts from books. Ms. Jahns wants public libraries to separate from ALA. She spoke to persons at the Dothan-Houston County Public Library about moving books from one section to another in the library. Chris Warren, Director explained to her why the books were not moved. There are age groups within the books, but there is not an age group as in who can check out the books. She was told if you have a library card, anyone can check out any book. Another library stated that you have to be eighteen (18) to check out the books in question. Finally, if you look on the left side of the folder, this is sexually explicit materials. All I am asking if you consider separating from the Alabama Library Association (ALA). The author stated the book was meant to be read by individuals struggling with their gender identity, ages 20 and up; never to be read by younger persons. There has to be a line in the sand somewhere, this has to stop. I'm not saying it's a constitutional first amendment right. The majority does not want this in the libraries. I am asking that you separate from ALA.

Matthew Layne – Good morning esteemed members of the Executive Board, friends, colleagues, library and literature lovers. I am President of the Alabama Library Association (ALLA) 2023-2024. I mentioned the length of my term to remind us all that these leadership roles are extremely temporary. I ask you to remember that fact when you consider the decision you will make today regarding whether APLS should disaffiliate from the American Library Association. (ALA). Should you vote to disaffiliate from ALA, by the time the effects of your decision are truly felt, ALA's current president, Emily Drabinski, will no longer be serving. I am aware that Ms. Drabinski has made some statements regarding Marxism, but I would remind you that the views she holds are hers, and hers alone. The ALA is composed of over 50,000 librarians, who hold religious, political, and social beliefs as diverse as the materials on the shelves of any good library. Ms. Drabinski is one voice on the ocean of voices which make up the ALA. It has been further asserted that because of *Article V of ALA's Library Bill of Rights which states a person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background or view*, that Alabama's libraries are somehow seeking to dissent the rights of parents and guardians to control what items children access and check out from the library. This cannot be further from the truth. Alabama's public libraries fully support parental and guardians right to access their children's accounts. We strongly encourage parents and guardians to be involved in the reading lives of their children. You can bet if materials were returned to the

Matthew Layne (continued)

library in damaged condition or heaven forbid, not returned at all, it's not the child who the library staff will contact, it's the parents. Finally, I would remind you before you make this vote, that Governor Ivey, herself, discourage disaffiliation from ALA in her second action request to the APLS Board, which states as follows: "the library service should amend its requirements for state aid to ensure that any expenditures of public funds to the ALA will be approved by the local library board in an open public meeting. The Executive Board of the Public Library Service should similarly require board approval of any expenditures of public funds to the ALA. Taking these actions will allow public libraries to continue to access useful resources on a case-by-case basis while ensuring greater input by the taxpayers who fund them." I agree with our Governor, do not disaffiliate the Alabama Public Library Service from ALA. In regard to Governor Ivey's first and third action request, we at the Alabama Library Association (ALLA) strongly encourage all Alabama's public libraries to have collection development policies, reconsideration of the materials policies, and unsupervised minor policies in place. My hope is that the APLS Executive Board will encourage all public libraries in the state of Alabama to adopt such policies and celebrate great parental supervision of their children in regards to library materials. This will further ensure that parents and guardians feel empowered to challenge materials they find objectionable. I enjoy a good story time as much as the next librarian, but in my opinion, the APLS Executive Board session is neither the time nor place for adults to read their favorite passages from books. Any questions or issues regarding the content of library materials should be handled at the community level. At the community level, I as the ALLA President, don't have the right to come into the Prattville Library and say I don't think you should be reading this; this shouldn't be on your library shelf. That needs to happen at the community level. Alabamians love their libraries and the services which their libraries provide. We as librarians love our amazing patrons. Alabama's public libraries are reflections of communities they serve. Alabama is a beautifully diverse state with all sorts of beautiful diverse people. Let's all continue to work together to protect our children, our First Amendment, our libraries, and the rights of individual Alabamians to control and choose the books they and their families read.

Hannah Rees – Clean-Up Alabama. That's pretty convenient data, you can shape data however you want to say only a percentage of the people are renewing books. We were told by our library that we were only allowed to submit one form per book. Most people weren't allowed to submit many complaints per book. I totally agree that we should be addressing this on the local level. Ideally, we should stick with our local library board. The problem is they all point to you. Our board say they don't handle such a thing and they point to Nancy Pack and say handle it at the next board meeting. It seems that everyone wants to point the finger at someone else for responsibility. The local library board want to point fingers at APLS; the local leaders want to point fingers at the state legislators; everyone is saying it's not our fault. The parents and people of Alabama are saying we appointed you to these positions or elected you to these positions and we expect you to do something. So far, no one has. Here we are, at the APLS Board meeting and you are here, you do have control, you are not meant to just sit here and do nothing. You are so valuable and we are asking that you utilize your positions as you should.

Sarah Sanchez – did not attend

Leah "Billye" Welburn – I am here today to affirm that we all want safety for our children. We all want them to have opportunities and a better life than we had, that's a universal human experience. I am disappointed to see there are political groups who have successfully hijacked this **inaudible**. This room is full of whole hearted people whose pure intentions have been put towards various ends and there are real harms being caused by your actions. I am speaking here today out of love and concern for all people of all ages, here in Alabama, and across the country. We need to be united as people who care about our homes and children against the forces of hate and division. We have more in common than we have differences. God's light shine in the eyes of every child until the actions of adults do something to diminish it. I worked with children all my life as a religious aspiration, a Sunday school teacher, as a nanny and baby sitter. Children are capable, resilient, loving and strong. It is true that exposure to sexual or inappropriate materials are a harm to children. These harms seem to be larger and theoretical when it comes to libraries and it is not the ultimate harm happening to Alabama's children. Censorship effort is a falsified operation. Claims are being made about child safety; in reality is an issue of parental discomfort of adults who doesn't want their children the opportunity to explore the stories of people different from their parents. To those parents, I say your discomfort is out; there's nothing wrong with being uncomfortable. I invite you to take your discomfort and talk to your

Leah “Billye” Welburn (continued)

pastors, your counselors, your therapists, your elders, not your elected officials. Your discomfort is your responsibility. Parents discomfort is not the responsibility of APLS. The anti to freedom to engage with their libraries are not, they are tools made available to challenge and have books assessed. We already have what we need. Board, the tasks set before you is to obtain a list of challenged materials that are inappropriate. I understand the pressure you are under. Governor Ivy’s recent letter reminds us that your funding is contingent upon these concerns. The work that you already do for Alabama’s libraries and the Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled are invaluable, I don’t want this put at risk. I believe in small government which are efficient and effective. I protest the proposal that our collected tax dollars be used in this manner. Already, there are many citizens and volunteers in this room who are devoting time because they care about our children. We are united and we desire for our children to have a better life. They have the freedom to read.

Mr. Snider – We appreciate the diverse views being expressed today. Since August we have seen more people attending our meetings that have attended in the past twenty- five or more years since I been on this Board. I appreciate everyone’s legitimate concerns, but I think all of this controversy which involved a handful of libraries in this state, out of two hundred twenty (220), which is a very small number that may have these books, have damaged all libraries in terms of the funding that we so desperately need. This year, we were fortunate to receive \$1.31 in state aid. That is the highest amount received since almost 25 years ago at \$1.25. For many years we fell to \$1.00 or less than \$1.00. Clearly, funding has not kept up with what is necessary. I will remind everyone that most of the libraries in the state are small libraries, one hundred thirty (130) out of the 220 with less than ten thousand people; and seventy-seven with less than 5,000 people. The average salary of a public librarian in the population of 5,000 persons are \$23,000. The librarians are working hard for very little money. That’s what we need to be focusing on. I hope all of you will address this issue in the next legislative session, we will be arguing for additional money for the librarians. This is what’s desperately needed. Finally, I have been alarmed that some of the libraries received threats of physical harm to them. There are board members called Nazis. This vitriol that is happening is hurting all libraries. As we go forward, I hope people will keep that in mind, the damage this has done.

Chairman’s Report**Letter from House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter and Responses to Speaker Ledbetter****Letter from House Majority Leader Scott Stadthagen and Response to Majority Leader Stadthagen**

Chairman Snider responded to letters addressed to the Board from the House Speaker and the House Majority Leader. They are on file and included in the Board packet.

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

Mr. Snider – The Board requested an opinion from the Attorney General’s Office. At the last meeting we had to formally adopt the Minutes asking for the opinion at the September meeting. The time table is approximately ninety (90) days from when the request is received. Presumably, we will be receiving the Opinion; perhaps the next meeting we may have the Opinion.

Mr. Albritton – It has been sixty-three (63) days. It goes through a process because the Attorney General wants to make sure his opinion is accurate. It’s the same kind of process the Supreme Court’s decision would go through. The committees are working on it. It takes time.

Status of Interviews – Alabama Regional Library for the Blind & Physically Disabled (BPD) Division**Library Operations Manager**

Dr. Pack - Approval was received from the Board to interview and hire a Library Operations Manager. Rhonda Napier, Library Operations Manager in Library Development Section, was transferred to the Blind & Physically Disabled Division. Kelyn Ralya needed to complete federal LSTA reports and this move was best for the Agency. This is a lateral transfer. The classification remains open in Library Development and it has been advertised. Presently, Jessica Everingham is over that division and the person will report to her. We are hoping that interviews will be conducted sometime in January and presented to the Board at the next meeting.

Library Technician

We have not moved forth with filling this classification due to the resignation of the Regional Librarian for the Blind and Physically Disabled Division. It is on the to do list.

Letter from Board of Trustees - Read Freely Alabama

Mr. Snider - A letter was received from Read Freely Alabama dated October 11, 2023 addressed to Mr. Snider and Dr. Pack. A copy of the letter was provided to board members. Mr. Snider reviewed the letter and spoke to Ben Albritton of the Attorney General's Office. This is a reminder that Mr. Albritton has advised the Board that the Board speaks as a Board. Individual board members do not speak for the Board, they have their own views, some of which will differ from others. I recognize that Mr. Wahl is in a different position from the rest of us because he is effectively a public official, being Chair of the Republican Party in Alabama. His opinion is asked more than the rest of us. I don't think it is either appropriate on any legal basis for us as a Board to say that any board member is prohibited from responding to any questions or making any comments. There is no authority and it's not appropriate. No other action is required.

Mr. Wahl – This grand American experiment is a such wonderful thing. It's the idea that we have freedom of speech, and I value so much hearing from people of different backgrounds. I love the idea of freedom of speech; I love the idea of open dialogue. What I see through this process is things are personal, people are attacking individuals instead of going to the root and looking up what can we do as a society to make these things better, which is what good leadership does. We all value the same things; we all want the same things. We want our families safe; we want a bright future; we want to be successful; we want to be comfortable; we want to be able to make a good living; we all want the same things. I think if we can take the negativity out of it, and look at people as individuals, and really try to make the best decisions come together so we can agree, have an open dialogue, and not get stuck in these petty differences, but be open and honest with one another, that's the best thing I have always found out. I am a little open than some people in my position might be. That gets me in trouble sometimes. It's important for me to hear opinions. When I'm invited to speak, or take part in an event, or if I'm invited to hear someone's opinion, my answer is usually yes, whenever I can because I value hearing people's opinions; that's something important to me.

With the controversy on Clean-Up Alabama event, when they invited me to that. I was on my home from speaking, but I said yes, I would be glad to stop by and hear your opinion. I also value this Board and my fellow board members. I never want to do anything that would put or any decisions we make in any way that can be criticized, so that's why I did not go to that. Not because I backed down one bit to the idea of free speech, and the idea that we should have open dialogue. I believe it is important for this Board to be independent in making our decisions and being able to listen to all sides. I do find it ironic that a group that espouse the ability to read freely would challenge to talk freely and I would ask people on all sides of this, whether it's Read Freely Alabama or Clean-Up Alabama, to respect others and to respect people's opinions because it is through that respect in sharing ideas that we hopefully find solutions to benefit our state and our communities. That's my thoughts.

Report Findings to the Board – Letter from Hannah Rees dated September 1, 2023

A committee consisting of Mrs. Virginia Doyle and Mrs. Angelia Stokes, was appointed to report to the Board at the November Meeting on the findings of a letter from Hannah Rees, dated September 1, 2023. Mrs. Doyle thanked the Chairman. The committee had full discussions about the letter, line by line. Three people signed the letter and gave their titles, with no signatures, no addresses, no phone numbers, and no way to contact those who signed the letters; but we knew the library areas they came from. From that stand point, it was just a letter received electronically. When you sign something, and if you state something about what's going on, put your information on it, if you believe it.

The summary of the Committee

- Both of us talked to Dr. Pack at length, of course, she has this letter.
- Videos were attached to the letter, we have the videos, we reviewed the videos, we transcribed the videos. We know all about the video which Dr. Pack was invited to the Board meeting of the Autauga-Prattville Library Board. The remarks made were not by the Board of Autauga County but by those who attended that meeting.

- We reviewed articles, many articles, from 1819. They covered cancellation of events and the re-instatement of events. There is no way you can reconcile dates on what they say, what we heard, and what the letter states. That's out the window.
- We read the media coverage on the Governor's Office, and everything her office has published. We have the letters that were sent to Dr. Pack as well as to our Chairman
- We have statements that Dr. Pack made to the media, we read all of that
- We have statements from Jon Wahl, we read all of that; and
- Miscellaneous items of the libraries, I think, Fox News and a few others coverage

In conclusion, after reviewing the video of Dr. Pack speaking, reading the newspaper articles, in essence, and in summary of all this, we find there is not enough material for us to take further action on it. It doesn't reach that level of taking action on anything. Mrs. Stokes and I recommend that we file this and close the file.

Chairman - Do we have a motion to that effect? Ms. Martin made the motion to close the file on the letter from Hannah Rees. Mrs. Stokes seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: John Wahl, Ron Snider, Virginia Doyle, Angelia Stokes, and Jerria Martin. No "nays."

Governor Kay Ivey Letter of October 4, 2023 Responding to APLS Report (Letter dated September 12, 2023)

Nancy Pack's Letter to Governor Kay Ivey

Memo to Library Directors

The letter included proposed revisions to the APLS Administrative Code. Dr. Pack provided information regarding the process to submit changes to the Alabama Legislative Services Agency. Before the Administrative changes are considered for changes, several documents must be submitted. When the changes are published in the Alabama Administrative Monthly, the review process begins and allows the public to comment on the changes. The review period must be no less than thirty-five (35) days from the publication date and no more than ninety (90) days. APLS held public hearings in the past and the period for review has been ninety (90) days.

Mr. Snider suggested APLS complete paperwork for submission to the Alabama Legislative Services Agency to meet the January 19, 2024 deadline, and the publication date of January 31, 2024. Further, the proposed revisions should be submitted in the areas recommended by the Governor and in the suggested areas. A public hearing should be held with notification being sent to public libraries and trustees. Mr. Wahl made the motion to authorize the publication of the proposed amendments. Ms. Martin seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Virginia Doyle, Angelia Stokes, Ron Snider, Jerria Martin and John Wahl. No "nays."

Mr. Snider – After the public input process is complete, the Board will review comments and determine certification of the proposed.

Purpose and Procedures for Parents' Inappropriate Material List

Mr. Snider – At the previous Board Meeting, the Board directed Dr. Pack to come up with a form so that people can submit objections as to what they consider inappropriate materials in a library collection. According to the Minutes, it wasn't clear what the Board intended. Questions raised are under tab F-5.

1. Who will use the list? Discussion centered around a list for library staff

Answer: The lists will be on the APLS website and distributed to public libraries around the state. The form will be available on the APLS website.

2. We cannot verify that if the person is a parent. Should the motion be made to change this to any person?

Answer: Any person can do this, not just the parents.

3. Should parameters be set to include only Alabama IP Addresses?

Answer: It should be Alabama IP addresses only, not out of state submissions.

4. Should the name of the person submitting information be confidential? APLS would have access to the information of names, addresses, and phone numbers.

Answer: Anyone submitting information should have their name, address and phone number submitted. This information will be viewable to APLS only.

Dr. Pack – Is everyone comfortable with the book review form. They are signed electronically, provide the book title, and indicate where it was found. The one thing that we missed it will be confidential and only APLS will retain that information. The APLS I.T. Division has developed the electronic form, and a staff member will be assigned to complete the website. The projected date for startup will be sometime in December.

5. Do you want an automated message going back to the submitter? If so, e-mail addresses must be collected?

Answer: We do want to acknowledge each person and each book submitted on a separate form. It was suggested that an acknowledgement be sent automated when it comes in the e-mail, it can be an automatic response of receipt.

6. What ages are we considering as children?

Answer: Any person under eighteen (18) years of age is considered a child. We don't get into judgment of the location, i.e., for children. Each library has different sections for children and juveniles. If there is a title, author or library name, we don't want to determine if the book is appropriate or inappropriate. The local libraries can make their own decisions if it's appropriate in that section or not.

7. Does APLS automatically accept the book is for children?

Answer: When filing the library has to be listed, what date, what section, and page numbers. This can serve for libraries to alert them if these books have been challenged. They can review them and make their own determination. When we require it be listed what library, what section, that is providing enough information.

8. Does APLS need to buy software such as books in print to search the titles and recommended grade level? OCLC does not provide age level or the Library of Congress.

Answer: I don't think we need to do that. Let's wait to see if this becomes a real program. It may die out. We may not get a lot of responses from it before money is spent to purchase software. This is assuming we get 50 book titles per week. If it gets to the level proposed, there must be an individual to help on this. The staff will take this on.

Discussion: After the first meeting of the Board in March, the staff and Dr. Pack conducted a search of the top books mentioned on the American Library Association list. The search resulted in 12 to 13 books listed in the OCLC database; (the Union Catalog for statewide collections) all libraries don't put their books in the database. Most of the books on the list were located in the larger libraries. Most of the larger libraries have funding for collections, while most of the smaller libraries don't have funding and are more judicious in their purchasing.

New Business

Summary of Budget Request for FY2025 – Jennifer Holman

For FY2025, October 1, 2024-September 30, 2025, we are requesting an increase in state aid to 5% and that would increase state aid to \$1.37 per capita. We are requesting an increase in funding for Homework Alabama and for operating expenses 3% increase, AVL is requesting 5% increase, overall ETF \$750,000 increase in the budget.

Administrative Code Updates – Recommendations from Governor Kay Ivey

The Administrative Code has already been discussed.

Recommendation – Not to Renew APLS Membership in the American Library Association (ALA)

Mr. Snider - We originally were going to wait for the Attorney General to give an opinion on what effect on regulation or statute. APLS' membership with ALA expires in March 2024.

Mrs. Doyle – Why can't we just say we will renew when it becomes due again and we will know more about it? We have March coming up and at that time make a decision whether or not to drop it totally or renew it. I think there will be a lot more information on where, or what, if staff or libraries working with or have a program and we don't need to cut it off today.

Ms. Martin – When we make that final vote, let's have a list of the pros and cons and have a final vote on the ruling.

Mr. Wahl - Each local library will not lose money it will only affect APLS.

Mr. Snider – A lot of libraries have individual memberships.

Mrs. Doyle – There was less than twenty (20) associations statewide at one time; approximately five hundred (500) individual memberships, and less than twenty (20) institutional memberships. Not all of the libraries are involved with ALA.

Ms. Martin – A statement was made to Clean-Up Alabama and Read Freely Alabama. You guys have spoken so passionately today. You have two things in common, the passion for reading, and the love for our kids. I would like to challenge you before you leave here today. I would like to see the members from Read Freely Alabama give their cards to members of Clean-Up Alabama. I challenge you if you can meet for one hour and discuss other things you have in common, come back to the Board, and make a presentation together. That's my challenge to you to tell us how we can better help you.

Dr. Pack asks the Board's approval to write a letter to Emily Drabinski, President of the American Library Association (ALA) to let her know how her comments have negatively impacted public libraries in Alabama. ALA has a new Acting CEO, Leslie Berger. Tracey Hall, the former CEO, resigned. Ms. Berger was ALA's President in the 1990s. The Board granted Dr. Pack's request to write the letter. Also, at the March Meeting, the Board will decide whether to renew or cancel membership in ALA. We have received great criticism from legislators and others by having a membership.

Mr. Wahl – Something that has been concerning for me is the open comments about Marxism. The President of ALA is a Marxist and pushing the Marxist agenda. They go against the value of what it means to be an American. Ask her if she has any defense for that policy or if it's just her agenda with the ALA. I was going today to make a motion to opt out of the ALA, but I think it's a lot of wisdom in looking at the pros and the cons.

Dr. Pack – A letter was forwarded to the Board with the pros and cons of being a member of ALA on August 25, 2023. I don't think we should address Marxism; I need to address the library issues and her impacting statements.

Mr. Wahl – You can put whatever comments you want in the letter. I will say to the Board, I find it concerning, statements about Marxism because it's against the government and the people of the state of Alabama. A motion was made to table the vote on whether to renew the membership with ALA until the March Board Meeting. Ms. Martin made the motion. Mrs. Doyle seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying "aye" are as follows: Ron Snider, Angelia Stokes, John Wahl, Virginia Doyle, and Jerria Martin. No "nays."

Mr. Wahl - I do believe there are concerns with the ALA, and the issues being brought up especially with their discrimination against faith-based groups. That's the item I find most concerning with ALA, and that's something I want to investigate more as well. I respect my colleagues so let's have a pros and cons. More research and information is always good.

Waiver of the State Aid Rules – Funding
Hayneville/Lowndes County Public Library

Dr. Pack - Both are very small libraries. There is a \$5,000 difference in the Hayneville Library's budget. The county did not fund the library for FY2024. Two commissioners provided funding from general grants. The city and county officials are punishing libraries and threatening with no funding because of censorship policies. Lowndes County is one of the poorest counties in Alabama. I will leave it up to the Board to decide what to do.

Mrs. Stokes – Have they ever asked for a waiver?

Dr. Pack – In 2019, they asked for a waiver and was granted by the Board. Mrs. Doyle made a request to approve the waiver of the state aid rules for Hayneville/Lowndes County Public Library. Ms. Martin seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying “aye” are as follows: Angelia Stokes, John Wahl, Ron Snider, Jerria Martin, and Virginia Doyle. No “nays.”

White Hall Public Library

White Hall Public Library is requesting a waiver of the state aid rules for funding. The Library did not receive a budgeted amount from the city for FY2024. According to our records, White Hall has not requested a waiver within the past five years. The director relies on state aid, and they are fighting to keep the library open. A motion was made to grant the waiver of the state aid rules for White Hall Public Library. Mrs. Doyle made the motion. Mrs. Stokes seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying “aye” are as follows: Ron Snider, John Wahl, Jerria Martin, Angelia Stokes, and Virginia Doyle. No “nays.”

Wilcox County Library

A letter was received from Bettie Morgan, Director of Wilcox County Library informing APLS that the library will be closed due to renovation of the building.

Presentation – Bobbie Lou Leigh for Years of Service on the APLS Executive Board

Mrs. Bobbie Lou Leigh served on the APLS Executive Board for eighteen years (18) from 2005 – 2023. During her tenure on the Board, Mrs. Leigh represented the fourth congressional district of Alabama. The Board congratulated her for the years of service and dedication to public libraries and to the state of Alabama. Mrs. Doyle made a motion to approve the Resolution honoring her years of service. Mr. Wahl seconded the motion. Members voting in favor by saying “aye” are as follows: Jerria Martin, Ron Snider, Angelia Stokes, John Wahl and Virginia Doyle. No “nays.”

Director’s Report

APLS Financial Update – Jennifer Holman

This is the budget as of October 31, 2023. Any of the higher percentages are renewals paid out at the first of the year.

Director’s Report on Activities and Front Desk Statistics

Nancy Pack –I attended the COSLA Meeting in Rhode Island. The Southern Council presented the Carl Elliott Award for sponsoring the first federal legislation and funding to be given to public libraries. The history shows that Southern state librarians met with Mr. Carl Elliott to discuss the situation of rural libraries in Alabama. Senator Elliott suggested the rural libraries need bookmobiles to go around and provide books to persons. In his honor, the Southern Council created an award incorporating a bookmobile. The plaque was awarded to Senator Jack Reed, of Washington, D.C. LSTA re-establishment for funding in the federal government will come up in FY2024.

At the meeting, a discussion panel from the New York Times talked about media. They blamed negative comments and misinformation on social media and the fact anyone was able to say what they wanted to say. The three reporters from the New York Times stated that they verify all the information they place in the New York Times.

Other items discussed revolved about legislative issues, ALA, and library funding informative. Our legislators should be working toward A.I., Artificial Intelligence, that will be impacting our libraries and our society. Other issues brought up was broadband and net neutrality, because net neutrality levels the playing field where everyone gets the same service of internet. If not, a business will pay a higher fee, where they can have all their ads and opinions, and it will relegate libraries to be third level of broadband width. The FCC is looking at net neutrality.

Also, Front desk statistics were provided for August, September and October, 2024.

Staff Activities

Stephanie Taylor and Alex Perry, Consultants in the Library Development Division, attended the L.D. Forum in Nashville, TN on November 6-8, 2023.

Solar Eclipse Activities at the Library (SEAL) Statistics – September 26, 2023

APLS applied for a grant with the federal government in relations to the solar events we are having within the next year. A trainer came from the federal government and spent the day with librarians. Approximately 33 persons participated in the workshop at APLS. Two NASA kits are being circulated to libraries around the state.

October Administrators' Statistics – October 19, 2023

The October Administrators' Meeting was held at APLS. The meeting was not video-conferenced. Statistics for the October meeting are as follows:

144 public libraries participated

132 – directors

37 – other librarians

Total – 170 persons attended

Hotspot Lending Program Cumulative Report for FY2023 and the Current Participants List – Jessica Everingham

Hotspot project has been ongoing for 2 years. It started as a small grant opportunity for libraries. We have reach approximately 200 libraries and we are just getting into the part where it has to end in September 2024. The Board thanked Ms. Everingham for the hard work and commended her on a job well done.

New Directors' Orientation – December 12-13, 2023

Jessica Everingham – The New Directors' Orientation is a two-day seminar scheduled on December 12-13, 2023 at APLS. Approximately fifteen (15) new directors out of thirty (30) signed up to attend the orientation.

Building Renovations: New Intercom System and Telephone Updates; New Exterior Entrance Doors in the Blind and Physically Disabled Division (BPD) with Staff Card Reader and Automatic Garage Doors Installed

New Intercom System and Telephone Updates – A meeting was held and according to the contract, updates will begin December 1, 2023, or when all supplies are in. The contractor has ninety (90) days to complete the project.

New Exterior Entrance Doors in the Blind & Physically Handicapped (BPD) Division with Staff Card Reader

This project has been around for one year. Finally, we are making headway with it.

Automatic Garage Doors Installed

New doors were installed in the Regional Library shipping area. The doors are automated and insulated with more safety features.

Service Certificate and Pins

Melinda Smith and Alex Perry will be awarded service certificates and pins for ten (10) ears of service with the state of Alabama. Both employees are not available to receive the presentations.

Mr. Wahl – Dr. Pack, I want to commend you on the cons and pros of the work you did on ALA. I did look at that. If we opted out and we do some state- based programs to replace ALA involvement, if it be increased cost to APLS, what would those costs be so we can talk to the legislature about replacing that with a better representative in-state.

Dr. Pack – I will do that and do my best.

Mr. Snider – State aid is nowhere approaching inflation for many years and even the direct appropriation this Agency gets is dramatically down in real dollars. When I was first appointed to this Board, there were seventy-five (75) or more employees; this Agency is down to the lower 40s now. The staff has worked a lot harder to do things. There are programs we can't provide now that we use to provide because of inflation.

Mr. Wahl –There is a burden, inflation hurts organizations just like it does individuals. That's why it is absolutely a priority for me working with the legislature to increase our money. I want

to make that clear to my fellow board members. The reason I accepted the Governor's appointment to this Library Board is because I love libraries and I want to see them successful. For me, that's my greatest sadness with the controversy over the last few months, we are the victims. And by we, I mean local libraries, this library board. So much of this we have lost; there are so many parents out there who have lost trust in libraries and library staff. We are all in this boat together. That's important. We have lost the trust of some parents; funding is at risk; and I think there are solutions and measures we can take.

Mrs. Doyle – I want to say this on funding. I don't know how, when, where or who got to the state legislators, the Governor's office, and have them threaten to take our budget away from us because of all this controversy. It is just wrong. We already know and heard how libraries have struggled, we just approved two state aid requests. To take \$1.31 away from the libraries per capita, considering the money they spend and what they do. They probably go to a flight show in Paris and spend more money than most libraries get in a year's time. It's ridiculous. If they want to cut money from the libraries that we distribute on a per capita basis, it won't hurt me and it won't hurt you. They will go home and they are going to face the people that it does hurt because it affects every library in this state, and they're the ones who will suffer. It won't be us not giving them money, it will be the legislature that voted not to give them the money.

Mr. Wahl – Let's hope we don't get there.

Mrs. Doyle – I had a legislature to threaten me, well we'll take your budget, and the budgetary things have come up; and it didn't come from this Board. This Board has sat quietly for three or four months and listened because we have no power to do anything to correct the problem at hand. Every library has a board, that board is responsible for them and their actions. If they don't have money, we do our best to give them what we can with the federal and state funds. We have staff that works with these libraries unknown how libraries, especially those who are not in the upper Absalom of income. They do a tremendous amount of work to help these people and there are people out in the field who help them every day, especially the I.T. people, thanks to them the smaller libraries keep going. If our legislature wants to cut our budget, they're not hurting this Board, they are hurting the people back home. Every library will be affected and whoever got that message to them, they can threaten our budget, and get us to act to do certain things. They would not give Dr. Pack a meeting with the Governor's office, no one called a member on this Board to have a meeting; our Chairman has made a connection he knows with the Governor's office to let them know that this Board has not done or said anything contrary to what most people think. Someone said, if our Board here at home don't do it, come back to us. We have been here a long time and we have operated.

Mr. Wahl – I want to say, you have done a great job of communicating.

Dr. Pack – I want to add one other thing, they have degraded the professional librarian, we are the ones trained to do library services; we are the ones who work hard in the field. My degree has been degraded down to that of nothing. They have no respect for the degree I received; nor, for any other public librarian in this state. To me, that is awful. It's going to be very hard for Alabama libraries to recruit staff because Alabamians feels that way.

Mr. Wahl – That is what I am saying, we are the victims here, especially this Board because we don't regulate public libraries. We are the ones people are looking for solutions and we don't have the power to give those solutions. I think any situation has controversy. If you can look past the surface and go to the root, be genuine, be honest and open, and talk about it. Like the situation with the American Library Association, we can go to the Legislature and say, look, we understand you have concerns here, in some areas we share your concerns, but that is going to hurt our efforts here to provide at the same level, can you help us with funding. That's the request, if we do this, can we actually come out with what's beneficial for our libraries. Just to yell because they are putting pressure we don't like, doesn't actually solve anything. We need to go deeper, go past that to the solutions that actually help this be better for our constituents and for the state of Alabama. I believe that can be done. That's why I made the request to look into that. If we can do things that ALA is doing in stages, I actually like that, it's closer to home, it's closer to our constituents, closer to our library patrons. If we can provide better service with the money to do it, that's actually the positive coming out of this; maybe one of the few positives that comes out of this. That would be my goal to this Board. Let's look for a way to be positive and for a way to take a hard situation and use it to create positives for the state of Alabama.

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Adjournment

Mr. Snider – I think we have had a productive meeting today on views expressed, and I will ask for adjournment. Ms. Martin made the motion for adjournment. Mrs. Doyle seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 11:49 a.m. Members voting in favor by saying “aye” are as follows: Angelia Stokes, Ron Snider, John Wahl, Virginia Doyle, and Jerria Martin. No “nays.”



Ron Snider, Chairman



Nancy C. Pack, Director



Vanessa E. Carr, Recording Secretary

