

EAST CENTRAL ARKANSAS REGIONAL LIBRARY/
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING



February 14, 2013

Call to Order and Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 12:17 pm at the Cross County Library (Wynne location) with five (5) Board members present; Joy Lynn Bowen, George Anne Draper, Carolyn Imboden, Reta Ragland, Joy Shepherd, plus; Holly Mercer, Director.

Trustees absent: Kitty Bingham, Bill Brooks, Kip Davis, Sharon Oakes, Erleen Sawyer

Public Attendees and staff: Angie Meachum, Woodruff County Library Branch Manager and Claire Miller, Cross County Library Branch Manager, Kathleen Talbott (left at 1:00), William Wage with William M Wage Architect and Bob Chatman with Miller Newell Engineers, Inc. Pat and Tommy Lewis joined the meeting at 1:40.

Approval of Agenda: Chairperson Carolyn Imboden stated that because there was not a quorum, there would not be voting on East Central Arkansas Regional Library System and Woodruff County Library agenda items.

Reading and Acceptance of Minutes.

- The January 8, 2013 Cross County Library Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes were distributed.

George Anne Draper noted that there is an E and the end of Anne.

Joy Shepherd moved to accept the January 8, 2013 Cross County Library Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes with the correction. Reta Ragland seconded the motion. All aye. Motion carried.

- The January 7, 2013 Woodruff County Library Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes were distributed.

(Due to lack of a quorum, the minutes will be reviewed and approved at the March Woodruff County Library meeting.)

- The November 8, 2012 East Central Arkansas Regional Library Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes were distributed.

A correction on a motion was noted.

(Due to lack of a quorum, the minutes will be reviewed and approved at the May East Central Arkansas Regional Library System meeting.)

Public Participation and Communications: Director, Holly Mercer, addressed a letter that was sent to Trustees, the Arkansas State Library, and Cross County Judge Jack Caubbe by terminated employee Rebecca Hastings. Holly Mercer let the Trustees know that she had not received the letter directly from Rebecca, but that she was notified about the letter by Trustee Kitty Bingham, Chairperson Carolyn Imboden, Cross County Judge Jack Caubbe and Deputy State Librarian Dwain Gordon, and State Librarian Carolyn Ashcraft.

Director Holly Mercer stated that Rebecca has requested information after she was terminated via email about how to file a grievance against Claire Miller and Holly Mercer. Holly said that during her employment she has fulfilled the duties in her job description and all employee termination decisions have been according to the guidelines in the ECARLS personal policies and have been made as a team with Claire Miller, the Cross County Library Branch Manager. Holly said she was prepared to talk about each item in the letter Rebecca Hastings wrote.

Chairperson Carolyn Imboden stated that public, staff, and trustees w two minutes to speak on this topic.

The Chain of Command was discussed at great length by Trustees. Trustee George Anne Draper expressed that she has concerns about Holly Mercer. George Anne shared a desire to talk about Holly Mercer and current employees and past employees. She said that she had three letters that she wanted to share with the Board. Carolyn asked that in order to stay with proper Chain of Command procedures, the letters be given to Holly Mercer as Holly had not seen or been informed of the letters before the meeting. George Anne gave the letters to Director, Holly Mercer.

Woodruff County Library Branch Manager Angie Meachum expressed that she has been an employee of the library system for 24 years and that she was worked with 3 different directors. She stated that current Director Holly Mercer is innovative, current and that she has worked hard to give benefits to employees. She said that she has not seen a side of Holly that Holly is accused of having.

ECARLS Vice-Chair Joy Lynn Bowen addressed George Anne's concerns and asked for specific concerns and examples of when the Director has not followed policy. Joy Lynn Bowen expressed the opinion that the letters should not be addressed or discussed because the writers did not follow the proper Chain of Command and talk with the Director. George Anne then explained that she has concerns about Chain of Command, and the policies and procedures at the library including the Bylaws.

Trustee Reta Ragland stated that she believes it is a high turnover rate with four individuals being fired by Holly. Holly Mercer clarified and informed the trustees that she has terminated two employees and the other two Reta referred to quit, which was a surprise to Holly.

Trustee Joy Shepherd expressed that she does not want an adversarial relationship between Holly and the Trustees. Joy expressed that it her desire to have a good library for her family.

Director Holly Mercer expressed her desire to be informed of letters and other communication from the public and previous ex-employees. She stated that she wants to work in unison with the board and would like trustees to be advocates for the library. She asked that gossip about her

between trustees end and that trustees communicate with her if they have concerns and/or want more information about decisions she makes. She stated that the treatment she has been receiving is terrible and that it makes her want to seek alternate places of employment. Director Holly Mercer encouraged the trustees to look at the intent of those who sent the letters. She said that she has no way of sharing information about situations that trustees get letters about if the letters are not shared with her and if trustees don't come to her.

Cross County Library Branch Manager Claire Miller expressed that she feels that Holly Mercer is being bullied. Claire said that at the last library she worked at, the Director was awful and that she knows what a bad director is, and Holly is not one. She said that if Holly was a bad Director, she would not still be working at the library.

Chairperson Carolyn Imboden talked about the Chain of Command pertaining to when trustees receive information about the library. She also reminded Trustees that if they would like an item on the agenda, they need to talk with her and Holly Mercer. All agenda items must be in line with the duties of trustees and State policies and procedures and East Central Arkansas Regional library System policies and procedures. Carolyn stated that agenda items must come to her at least one week prior to the meeting.

Having a special East Central Arkansas Regional Library System meeting was than discussed. Carolyn stated that such a meeting would be an open, public board meeting.

Joy Shepherd made the motion to have a special East Central Arkansas Regional Library System Board of Trustees meeting on March 7th at noon to look at changing policy. Reta Ragland seconded the motion. Carolyn Imboden and George Anne Draper approved the motion. Joy Lynn Bown was opposed to the meeting.

Chairperson Carolyn Imboden asked if there was anyone else who wished to speak. As there was not, the meeting moved on to other items.

WCL Building project, presented by William Wage (this item was moved in the agenda so that the presenters would not need to stay for the whole length of the meeting).

William Wage presented information on the Expansion and Renovation Study for the Woodruff County Library. He talked about three phases and the budget estimates. Each trustee received a copy of the study.

Financial Reports and approval of bills:

- Cross County Library – The financial reports and expenditures for January 2013 were reviewed and discussed.

Clarification on the Machine/Equipment expense line was asked for. Holly Mercer said that she thought it was TLC expenses, but that she would double check.

Reta Ragland made the motion to accept the January 2013 Cross County Library financial reports as presented. Joy Shepherd seconded the motion. All aye. Motion carried.

- Woodruff County Library – The financial reports and expenditures for January 2013 were distributed.

(Due to lack of a quorum, the financials will be reviewed and approved at the March Woodruff County Library meeting.)

- East Central Arkansas Regional Library System – Trustees received financials for November 2012, December 2012, and January 2013.

(Due to lack of a quorum, the financials will be reviewed and approved at the May East Central Arkansas Regional Library System meeting.)

Operation Reports:

Trustees reviewed the circulation reports for January for Cross and Woodruff counties.

Staff Reports:

Director's report: Director, Holly Mercer, distributed and read a written report. (Written report on file).

Unfinished Business: none

New Business:

- CCL – Farm Property Lease Renewal – Director Holly Mercer stated that she thought she would have a copy of the lease renewal on the land co-owned by the Crossroads Hospital Foundation ready for the meeting, but that the lease is not yet finalized. She said that there has been a delay because of the need to have a new well on the land and it is being worked out who will pay for and maintain the well.
- WCL – Building project, presented by William Wage – (This agenda item was covered earlier in the meeting.)
- ECARLS – Collection Development – Trustees were presented with an updated Collection Development Policy. Due to lack of a quorum the policy could not be voted on, but Director Holly Mercer highlighted a few key changes in the draft policy.
- ECARLS – Library Terms and Conditions – Trustees were presented with an updated Library Card Terms and Conditions policy. Due to lack of a quorum the policy could not be voted on, but Director Holly Mercer let the board know that part of the purpose for updating the policy is to clarify in writing if St. Francis residents receive library cards at no cost.

Trustee Comment Period:

Joy Lynn Bowen asked for clarification on what policy will be discussed at the March 7th ECARLS special meeting.

George Anne expressed that it will be a meeting to discuss Chain of Command and to change the Bylaws. Holly Mercer explained the three main items that trustees are responsible for; Policy, financials, and employment of the Director. Holly also explained that Chain of Command is an Arkansas State procedure and not a procedure or policy of the East Central Arkansas Regional Library System, so it could not be changed. She said that all meetings must be in accordance with the duties of Trustees outlined by Arkansas State Law and the Arkansas State Library.

George Anne Draper expressed concerns that Holly Mercer would fight the unemployment claim of Rebecca Hastings. Holly Mercer explained that the library and director does not decide who gets unemployment. The Director is responsible for filling out the paperwork on unemployment that is sent to the library. George Anne addressed the comments that Claire Miller had made about bullying and how she disagreed.

Carolyn Imboden stressed to the Trustees that if they have a concern about the library, they need to make an appointment with Holly. Carolyn also reviewed the Chain of Command – if Trustees hear of something pertaining to the library, they need to let the Director know. If Trustees have a question, they need to talk with the Director. Carolyn used herself as an example and said that just last week, she met with Holly about questions she had.

George Anne Draper expressed that she does not have the kind of relationship where she can talk with Holly. Holly stated that she recently sent an email saying that she was available to talk if any Trustee desired. Holly also stated that she approached George Anne that morning during the Friends of the Library Chocolate Feast so that they could talk. George Anne responded with her opinion that Holly initiating a conversation that morning was inappropriate.

Carolyn Imboden said that she feels some Trustees are not giving Holly enough credit, she feels Holly is very professional. She stressed that Trustees need to focus on facts and if they have questions pertaining to the library, they need to make an appointment to see Holly. Carolyn also mentioned that terminated employees are generally unhappy. Carolyn then announced that she was canceling the special meeting due to there being no policy brought up that can be changed. There was no opposition voiced for canceling the meeting.

Adjournment:

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30.

Respectfully submitted, Holly Mercer, East Central Arkansas Regional Library Director