

Hamblen County Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – February 22, 2022

The meeting was called to order at noon in the *George S. Hale Community Room* by Board Chair, Alpha Alexander.

Attendance: Alpha Alexander; Roxanne Bowen, Teresa, Kay Senter; Debra Williams, Rob, Liz Campbell, David Tilson, Kevin Smith, and Treva Purkey. Also present was Morristown-Hamblen County Library Director, Shelly Shropshire and Jennifer Breuer, regional librarian. Additionally, visitors present were as follows: Jeff Gardner, Steve Lawrence, EC Reed, Todd Frommeyer, and Nancy Norris.

The meeting began with a request from Jeff Gardner, the Administrator of elections for the Hamblen County Election Commission. He introduced EC Reed as the Chairman, and Steve Lawrence as the secretary for the election commission. Gardner stated they have run out of room at the courthouse to hold elections and would like to use the Community Room for elections. The space formerly used for elections at the courthouse has been taken by juvenile case managers. He also stated that many of the schools did not have handicap-accessible entrances, so they are not a good fit. On even years, the room would be used three times a year and on odd years, unless something changes, it would only be used once a year.

There was discussion about set up (7-8 AM) and tear-down (after 8 PM), which all would be done on election day. The board also discussed with the Election Commission representatives about hours of operation, access to the room, parking, and other logistical information. Several board members felt this would be good for the library and draw more people to it.

Roxanne Bowen made a motion that we allow elections to be held in the Community Room. Treva Purkey seconded the motion and it was carried by unanimous vote.

All visitors left with the exception of Todd Frommeyer and Nancy Norris.

Next the Personnel Committee brought forth a report.

Elizabeth Campbell, Chair of the Personnel Committee gave a synopsis of the meeting of the Personnel Committee and Director Shropshire. Director Shropshire had an issue she wanted to address dealing with an employee. Ms. Nancy Norris is the employee in question and she is in attendance. Ms. Norris has worked for the library as a part-time employee. Over the past few years, Director Shropshire has had some issues with Ms. Norris in terms of customer service. Shelly had counseled her in this area on several occasions. Director Shropshire has given both oral and written directions on how to improve. Ms. Norris has been given several customer training videos to participate in and has worked with her at length to resolve the issues. Unfortunately, the issue has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the Director. Therefore, Director Shropshire recommends that Ms. Norris be terminated. Director Shropshire met with the Personnel Committee for review. The policy manual says that employee actions are to be held in conjunction with the Personnel Committee's recommendation, and that is what is being brought to the full board today. Before the board acts, Ms. Norris asked to speak to the board. Ms. Campbell stated it was the appropriate time for her to address the board.

Nancy Norris stated she is not used to speaking in front of people. She also states she understood her shortcomings and has done her best to resolve them. She stated she thought she had done a lot of good things for the library and that she knows that customer service is not her strong point. She stated she has tried her best and done everything she can think of, but she is not sure of some of the things- she said she doesn't actually know what she did to even have it written down. She said there were a couple of things brought to her attention. She says she doesn't know why she was called a, "bitch" for something that she doesn't even know what she did. Ms. Norris stated she didn't know if she needed to go into detail or not, but there were a couple of things that she knows was wrong, but she doesn't know what else to say about that. She said she has done her best, but it is the board's decision. She said she had been in personnel lots of times in her life and HR and she understands how this is, but there are several things and that she tried her best. Ms. Norris stated she did the videos that the Director suggested, but she still doesn't know what all she has done. Ms. Norris said she probably shouldn't say this but she knows there's an employee... she was told when she first came here that a certain employee would go to the Director and say something, like tattletaling. She again said that she tried her best and whatever the decision is, she will go along with it. At this point in her life she did not want her working days to end in a termination. She has tried everything she can. She stated we can look at her personnel file and everything she has done besides the Postal Service and if people are not happy, they just are not happy. She said we could ask her questions. She also asked about her personnel file.

Director Shropshire gave her a copy of everything from her file that was given to the Personnel Committee to review. It should be noted that this included formal disciplinary actions taken that Ms. Norris signed when she received them.

Elizabeth Campbell stated Ms. Norris is currently on suspension with pay until the board makes their decision. Ms. Norris was given time to look over the file.

Ms. Norris then stated she didn't understand why verbal warnings were written down if they were "verbal warnings"

Director Shropshire reminded Ms. Norris that they had spoken several times about the issues.

Kay Senter stated that what Shelly provided, each time there was a chance for Ms. Norris to sign off on and respond to what Shelly was talking about.

Ms. Norris stated she is not good at commenting and everything she says is pretty short and to the point. She continued to read over the file and commented a few times, including never accusing a patron of lying. She said Shelly could have talked to her. She stated she knows she is impatient. She stated several times, "I didn't know I was that bad a person".

Elizabeth Campbell stated that the Personnel Committee brings forth the motion recommendation of termination of Ms. Norris effective immediately. The committee unanimously agrees with the motion. The Board unanimously upholds the recommendation.

Board Chair thanked Ms. Norris for coming.

Ms. Norris asked if she would get a separation notice. Ms. Alexander stated we had more decisions to be made and we would continue with the board meeting and that her separation notice would be created later that day. Ms. Alexander said we could send her the letter via certified mail so she could sign off on receiving it.

The meeting was then brought back to the order of the agenda, starting with the Secretary's Report.

Secretary's Report: Minutes from the January. Ms. Breuer gave us the correct spelling of her name.

Treasurer's Report

- Treasurer, Debra Williams, reviewed the financial information.
- Line 3100- Income from the City of Morristown- correspondence has been in regard to the amounts from the city and county not being the same and the city will send the amount to cover the difference.
- Other issues discussed included income being down due to Covid (fines and copier charges) and explained other line items including subscriptions, gutter replacements, and problems with the front door. Also, wages are down because of sickness and illness within the staff.
- Atmos energy donated \$4,000 for children's programs and Friends of the Library include a grant match (\$4,880), food for play fundraisers, staff picnic, play equipment, 2022 Summer Reading Program and other programs.
- The report was filed for audit.

Public Comment – Regarding Agenda Items Only

- No comments

Committee Reports

- Finance – Debra Williams, Chair
 - Budget- Shelly is proposing 3% increase of salaries across the board with exceptions due to retirement.
 - Someone asked about income from hotspots and it has gone down because people can them from other places at good deals.
 - Budget Committee recommends that Director Shropshire send the proposed budget to the city and county and the board unanimously approved
- Personnel – Elizabeth Campbell, Chair- Nothing else other than earlier issue
- Policies – Kay Senter, Chair
 - Three policies were given to the whole board for review and vote:
 - Freedom to View (not updated since 1990 since it was written so well)- deals with what we allow patrons to view
 - Freedom to Read- supports what can be read
 - Sexual Abuse and Molestation

The first two policies are very important for our patrons and community. Ms. Senter read some of these to policies to emphasize their importance. The board discussed the economic benefits and impact of these policies. We are just affirming we agree with these policies and adopting these.

In regards to the Sexual Molestation policy, this needs to be created for our insurance policy. We have had statements in other policies touching on these issues, but not had all in one policy (Children's Safety policy and the Child Left Unattended policy).

A motion to adopt the Freedom to Read policy was made by committee and seconded by Debra Williams.

A motion to adopt the Freedom to View policy was made by committee and seconded by Debra Williams.

A motion to adopt the Sexual Abuse and Molestation policy was made by committee and seconded by Debra Williams.

All three motions passed unanimously.

Board Chair Alexander asked if the Policy and Personnel committees could meet to discuss the policies regarding hiring and firing of library staff. Kay said they met today and are going to consult employment lawyer Jeff Cranford. Board Chair agreed with this and stated we wanted to avoid the situation that occurred today. Regional Director Breuer stated she would help also because she has extensive experience writing policy for libraries.

Board Chair Alexander thanked the committees and David Tilson for working on these issues.

Ms. Senter also said they were looking at the composition of the board and being able to communicate with our funding bodies, so they are looking at language in regards to these issues.

- Long Range Planning- Kevin Smith Chair
 - Nothing to Report
- Building and Grounds – David Tilson, Chair
 - Security cameras. Reel did some research into the non-local vendor. His recommendation is to go with the local vendor. This committee will send this to Purchasing. Treva said Rob is on purchasing and has talked with him about this recommendation. To remind what this is- these are outside cameras to monitor safety of the patrons, some of whom have been harassed in the past. Debra said she saw someone going through the trash last night after nine.
 - Gutters-We were one bid short. Shelly stated we did get a third bid, but it was higher than what was needed for the county to accept it. Bill Brittain is taking all three bids and we are waiting to hear from the insurance company.
- Nominating and Public Relations – Debra Williams, Chair
 - No report other than we need a determination on Dewayne
- Purchasing – Treva Purkey, Chair
 - They took the Building and Grounds recommendation on the security cameras. They went with Murrell. They want to give Shelly the authority to contact our funding bodies to see how they want to handle payment.

A motion was put forth by committee and was seconded by Kay Senter. The motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

- Nothing

Public Comment – General

There were no public comments

Morristown-Hamblen Library Director - Director Shropshire provided the following report:

- Recommended the library stay at current Covid protocol
- We did have a staff member to pass away. Shelly is taking up money to help the family.
- The Library was curbside only February 4-12 for deep cleaning and the patrons noticed and were pleased.
- Vanda Murphy is retiring- tomorrow is her last story time. Amanda McNally is taking the place as the Youth Services Librarian. She has a Masters in Library Science
- There was staff training yesterday and it went well. It is training the state put online that all staff members can train in various areas and core competencies. Once the staff member completes all 10 modules, they receive a pen and a certificate.

Mentioned Events

- The Library continues to provide kits for teens and adults in the Life skills series Shelly has started. The March kits are home budget kits.
- Rita Wood is talking about starting seeds with earth-friendly materials.
- Two authors are coming in March- Danita Dodson and Vince Vawter

Board Chair stated it is a delight to have authors come in. She stated she will also ask the new Youth Services Librarian to meet with Teresa about the event in July.

Regional Library Report - Director Breuer provided the following report:

- She handed out packets to give us a brief overview of the training on the 10 modules Shelly mentioned earlier.
- Talked about Overdrive training on Friday
- New TOPS grant due April 7th. It has a 20% match for our population and they are expanding what can be purchased including solar charging tables and digital navigators pilot project- up to \$20,000.
- She is looking at all libraries and looking at the standards. We are doing very well however there was a blank section, so we need to get input for that. Again, we are doing well in comparison to other Level 5 libraries, but she is looking at ways she can work with us to move the “no’s to “yes”.
- Doing an analysis of funding and a cost-per-serve analysis and where we lay and where there are opportunities. She has visited every library and spoke with directors or assistant directors to see how we can work more effectively.
- Board Chair asked about Critical Race Theory and how this affects our guidelines such as books we have (example is nudity). Regional Director Breuer stated that the public library does not censor other than obscenity laws for children. Libraries should have a full collection of different viewpoints. It has been said that every library should have some that offends everyone. It should be timely, relevant, and well balanced. The collection should represent people from different lives, different persons and different people. YO should have a broad range of authors and both sides to everything. Librarians should not let personal bias dictate what they purchased- circulation should dictate what is taken out of circulation.
- If we haven’t already, we should look into adopting a Library Bill of Rights-Shelly said we do.
- We should have open access and parents should discuss reading material with their children.
- Patron privacy is very important and people should not feel judged by what they are borrowing.

- Kay Senter asked about the Regional Board – Ms. Breuer said it is sunsetting in June but TACL will replace it and she will send Shelly info on how to apply. It will have a different focus than the Regional Board did.

New Business

- Nothing

Meeting Adjourned until the fourth Tuesday in March, which is March 22, 2022.

Respectfully submitted by,

Roxanne Bowen