

**HEARTLAND LIBRARY COOPERATIVE
GOVERNING BOARD**

Lake Placid Public Library – Meeting Room
1069 US Hwy. 27 N., Lake Placid, FL

Minutes to the September 15, 2021 meeting

CALL TO ORDER:

The Meeting was called to order at 10:43 a.m. by Donna Storter-Long. Invocation was led by Arlene Tuck. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Donna Storter-Long. Roll Call was led by Donna Storter-Long with an introduction of Glades new Librarian, Iris Perkins to the Heartland Governing Board Members.

ROLL CALL:

Governing Board Members Present: Donna Storter-Long Chair Glades County; Sue Rood Vice-Chair Highlands County; Jeanette Peeples Glades County; Julie Perry Glades County; Judy Schaefer Commissioner DeSoto County; Jeannie Palacios Hardee County; Margaret Dewey Highlands County; Arlene Tuck Commissioner Highlands; Ingra Gardner Highlands County; Denise Whitehead Okeechobee County; Brad Goodbread Commissioner Okeechobee County ; Sonya Chapa Assistant Coordinator Heartland; Vikki Brown Coordinator Heartland.

Also Present: Julie Fowler Accountant CliftonLarsonAllen; Cheryl Williams Accountant WicksBrownWilliams; Iris Perkins Librarian Glades County; Linda Waters Librarian DeSoto County.

Absent: Mandy Hines Desoto County; Fran Syfrett Okeechobee County; Nicole Drake Hardee County; Rene Wyatt Commissioner Hardee County; Ann Ryals Desoto County.

ROUTINE BUSINESS:

Notice of Public Meeting: Notice was properly given. Donna Storter-Long thanked Vikki Brown for the meeting reminders.

Additions to Agenda: Vikki Brown informed the governing board that the financial statements and ledger provided in each board member's packet were not included in the agenda as they are for informational purposes only.

Approval of the Agenda: Vikki also asked that the LSTA Grant Agreement be stricken from the agenda as there is still a delay in the required documents. Motion to accept the agenda with the change was made by Brad Goodbread, seconded by Judy Schaefer, unanimously passed.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: Motion to accept minutes made by Margaret Dewey, seconded by Jeannie Palacios, unanimously passed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Heartland Library Cooperative – What is it?:

Vikki Brown gave an overview and brief history of the Heartland Library Cooperative for new governing board members. Vikki informed the board that the cooperative was formed in 1996 to maximize resources for Hardee, Desoto, Highlands, and Okeechobee Counties, with Glades County joining later. Vikki also informed the board that the Cooperative is a special entity of local government and as such must abide by Sunshine Law rules. Vikki also stated that as a special entity the cooperative has an official governing board and not a committee. Vikki informed the board that the cooperative receives funding through State Aid to Libraries as a cooperative which supplements the individual state aid to funding for each county; this funding provides technology, staffing, and courier services for all Libraries in the Cooperative, along with additional grant work and funds. Vikki pointed out that without the Cooperative, some of the counties would not receive any funding as they do not meet the State requirement of a Master's degree level Librarian/Director; as such the Cooperative ensures that each county is receiving the maximum funding available. To demonstrate this point, Vikki provided a budget estimate for each county without Cooperative funding. Donna Storter-Long thanked Vikki for providing the information, commenting that the smaller counties would not be able to operate as fully with Cooperative aid.

Grants in Process:

Vikki Brown informed the governing board that the Heartland Cooperative has applied for an IMLS American Rescue Plan Act Grant for Museums and Libraries for \$50,000. This is a federal grant and the focus of the application is for a mobile library service to increase outreach services for all seven libraries. Vikki stated that Libraries selected will be notified by October 1st.

Vikki also informed the board that the Cooperative was awarded an LSTA grant that will provide equipment for video production to provide digital services for socially distanced patrons; the Cooperative will be able to move forward with notice.

Vikki also informed the board of the Cooperative's application for a Florida American Rescue Plan Act Grant for \$79,000 which will provide outreach materials and focus on literacy initiative to help combat lowering test scores in the counties; the Cooperative will receive notice of this grant by November 1st.

Vikki also informed the board that the Cooperative did not receive the NASA at My Library Grant; this grant was awarded to a small number of Libraries and was open to the entire country.

Vikki also informed the board that Desoto County Library applied for a DLIS LSTA American Rescue Plan Act Grant that provides funds of \$59,700 to support student sharing of online resources, and eventual physical resources, between the Desoto Library and the Desoto County School District. Vikki stated that this grant will benefit the entire cooperative through digital and other e-resources.

Annual Plan of Service 2020-2021 Update:

Vikki Brown provided an update on the current Annual Plan of Service. Vikki stated that some of the items have been completed. Vikki stated that the update to the interlocal agreements and bylaws was still in progress and would continue into the new year, along with the revision of Cooperative policies. Donna Storter-Long asked if a committee had been formed to work on these items. Vikki informed her that at the moment the Librarians would be working on the updates which will then be presented to the governing board.

Coordinator Evaluations:

Vikki Brown informed the governing board that part of the stipulations in hiring the new Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator, Vikki Brown and Sonya Chapa, stated a required evaluation of both employees. Vikki informed the board that the Librarians were working with the State Library and other Multi-county Cooperatives to form an evaluations process for the cooperative which will be brought before the board for approval when complete before initiating the evaluation.

State Aid to Libraries Grant Agreement:

Vikki Brown informed the governing board that there were no changes to the Heartland Cooperative's application for State Aid this year. Donna Storter-Long explained to the Board members that each library has to submit an individual application at the county level in addition to the application for the cooperative. A motion was made by Brad Goodbread to adopt the State Aid to Libraries Grant Agreement, Judy Schaefer seconded, unanimously passed

Certification of Hours Agreement:

Vikki Brown explained to the governing board that the Certification of Hours Agreement document states that the Heartland Library Cooperative offers free services and access to library materials for our communities with a minimum 40 hours per week. Donna Storter-Long read through the document for the governing board. Discussion was held over the various hours of each Library; at the moment all Library are open Tuesday – Saturday, with the exception of Hardee Library who is open Monday – Friday with an additional Saturday each month. Sue Rood moved to accept the Certification of Hours Agreement, Julie Perry seconded, unanimously passed.

Annual Plan of Service 2021-2022:

Vikki Brown informed the board that the goals for the upcoming year are to continue updating the interlocal agreements, bylaws, and policies for the Heartland Cooperative. Vikki also stated a focus on outreach services and resources for the new year along with a revision of the current long range plan as the current long range plan expires in 2025. Donna Storter-Long thanked the Coordinators for their dedication and time to these goals as each item will take time to accomplish. Jeannie Palacios stated that she was a Friends of the Library member in Hardee and was happy to hear that the Cooperative will be focusing on outreach as the Friends group also has a particular focus on outreach initiatives as a method to form connections between the

community and the Library. Jeannie asked about ways for the Friends group to partner with Cooperative on this outreach focus to assist the Libraries and avoid a duplication of services. Donna Storter-Long introduced Little Libraries as an outreach action, asking how many of the counties had these. Jeannie stated that Hardee County has three little libraries and attempts to put them in low income and senior communities. Donna stated that Glades County also has a Little Library, and asked Iris Perkins to elaborate on the outreach efforts happening in Glades County. Iris informed the board that the change in hours at the Glades Library, now open Tuesday – Saturday and patrons are still getting used to the new hours but door count is beginning to pick up. Donna stated she is happy with the changes Iris has initiated. Sonya Chapa suggested partnering with local organizations and departments for outreach as Okeechobee Library has done with Okeechobee County Parks & Recreation for Little Free Libraries that are well used by the community. Donna stated that outreach is an important service for the every community.

CliftonLarsonAllen Engagement Letter:

Vikki Brown presented the CliftonLarsonAllen engagement letter to the governing board. Julie Fowler was available for questions and comments but stated that there were no changes to the letter itself from the previous year except for a small fee increase of \$150. Donna Storter-Long stated that the service was great and our records had not created any problems these last years. Judy Schaefer moved to continue engagement with CliftonLarsonAllen auditing services, Jeannie Palacios seconded; unanimously passed.

WicksBrownWilliams Engagement Letter:

Vikki Brown provided a copy of the engagement letter from WicksBrownWilliams. Cheryl Williams stated that Sonya Chapa had picked up the original letter and that there were no changes from the previous year, with services remaining at the same fee. Donna Storter-Long stated that the accounting processed have worked well with Sonya located in Okeechobee and WicksBrownWilliams having offices in both Okeechobee and Sebring. Brad Goodbread moved to continue engagement with WicksBrownWilliams, Julie Perry seconded; unanimously passed.

2021-2022 Budget:

Vikki Brown presented Heartland Library Cooperative's budget for upcoming 2021-2022 year stating that this budget would look slightly different than previous years. Vikki informed the board that one addition is the LSTA grant funding that is to be received by the cooperative. Vikki also listed other additions including salary increases that are set to occur after evaluations, an increase in travel and per diem to facilitate staff training and development, and increases to repair and maintenance for the courier vehicle. Donna Storter-Long asked about the decrease in office supplies and other charges; Vikki explained that she and Sonya did not anticipate any need for more office supplies and the decrease in other charges is due to ending the service of OCLC for interlibrary loans as the cooperative is utilizing a free service, FLIN, provided by the state library that provides interlibrary loans throughout Florida. Margaret Dewey asked about lending items outside of Florida; Vikki stated that most Libraries do not lend items outside of Florida as it can be costly. Donna asked about the increase to operating

supplies. Vikki stated that two of the cooperative Libraries are in need of new Jamex machines, the vending device that allows patrons to pay for printing services, and that other Libraries are in need of new computers and scanners. Sue Rood asked about the previous plan to replace the courier van. Vikki stated that the contingency fund has been increased by another \$5,000 and the plan is to use this as a savings to eventually replace the van. Donna asked about the change to education and training; Vikki stated that this is to support library staff development. Brad Goodbread moved to accept the presented budget for 2021-2022, Sue Rood seconded; unanimously passed.

a. Spending Limitations lifted for LSTA Grant:

Vikki asked the board to also vote on increasing the Coordinators' purchasing limit for the LSTA grant as it will prevent the need to reach out to the board for all technological purchases that will exceed the current spending limits. Donna Storter-Long stated that this made sense as it would ease the process for the future grant purchases. Jeannie Palacios moved to increase the purchasing limit for the Coordinator to allow for grant purchases above the current limit, Sue Rood seconded; unanimously passed.

2021-2022 Meeting Dates:

Vikki Brown presented the following dates for the Heartland Library Cooperative's Governing Board: November 17, 2021, February 23, 2022, May 18, 2022, and September 14, 2022. Donna Storter-Long asked if the meetings would be held at the Lake Placid Library meeting room and if there were any concerns about closeness due to COVID; Vikki stated that no concerns had been expressed. Judy Schaefer moved to accept the proposed meeting dates, Brad Goodbread seconded; unanimously passed.

Desoto County Library MOU:

Vikki Brown presented an overview of the Memorandum of Understanding between the School Board of DeSoto County, Florida, the Heartland Library Cooperative, and the DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners to facilitate the project to improve student access to library materials throughout DeSoto County. With this project, students in DeSoto County will have access to e-books through the DeSoto County Public Library and provide Heartland Library Cooperative library cards to all students. Donna Storter-Long asked if this MOU had been executed already. Linda Waters stated informed the board that DeSoto's BOCC and School Board approved the MOU yesterday on September 14, 2021. Donna asked Linda to share more details about the project. Linda stated that the intention is to share resources with the school system, and that this project was based on Vikki's previous work in Highlands. Linda expressed her hope that this endeavor will lay the groundwork for our other counties. Linda also informed the board that the e-book companies used by the Heartland Cooperative already provide an adjoining piece of software that allows this to be an easier process in partnering with the school system, creating a no cost win-win situation, and that while there is work that needs to be done on different components by the school and Library personnel there will be no need to hire additional staff. Linda also informed the board that project will be done in steps, beginning with sharing Axis 360 resources, then moving to Overdrive, and eventually sharing print resources in

the summer. Judy Schaefer moved to approve the MOU as written, Jeannie Palacios seconded; unanimously passed. Donna wished DeSoto good luck in this endeavor.

Member Comments:

Linda Waters informed the governing board that DeSoto County Public Library has hired a new children's library manager who has a lot of enthusiasm and is moving forward with great ideas.

Denise Whitehead gave kudos to the Okeechobee County Public Library for partnering with other departments on various projects. Denise mentioned the latest project between the Library and Veteran's Services on a display to honor the 13 fallen soldiers. Denise thanks the Library for providing for the community in its various services and programs and for working well with other County departments and organizations to provide these services.

Margaret Dewey informed the governing board that the Friends bookstore was still having issues with staffing as it is open 5 days a week but there are few volunteers and fewer customers. Margaret asked for any ideas on new ways to advertise both the bookstore and the need for volunteers.

Iris Perkins introduced herself as the new Librarian for Glades County Public Library with four months in the position now. Iris stated that she was still learning and getting a feel for the budget and Librarian procedures, along with a new county manager, but she has already begun recruiting new Friends members and implementing changes. Iris asked for any help available for the Art in the Park event. Donna Storter-Long commented that she believes Glades made a good choice in picking Iris to be the new Librarian.

Julie Perry stated that she is delighted the Glades Library is now open on Saturday and enjoys the new hours. Julie also informed the board that the Glades Library and the Friends group are working towards being better coordinated with the schools; Julie asked for ideas on how to bring about a school partnership. Julie stated that they had an idea to invite teachers and school administration to the Library for an information event, but would appreciate any other suggestions. Jeannie Palacios mentioned that Hardee has markets its upcoming programs to the schools which sends information to students, teachers, and principals. Jeannie also mentioned that when the Hardee Friends bookstore is overflowing, the Friends will offer a \$5 voucher to teachers for classroom resources or personal books. Vikki Brown also informed the board about the Mometrix services available through the cooperative which offer study resources for the Florida teacher certificate exams. Donna Storter-Long stated that this was great information as there has recently been a certification issue with the schools in our area. Vikki informed the board that Mometrix is located on our myhlc.org website, and that it provides the full study text book.

Brad Goodbread informed the board of the update to Okeechobee County's Cattle Drive sculpture in the park, which is set for a ribbon cutting and unveiling on September 28th. Brad stated that this has been a long work in progress but the community has rallied to raise the funds. Brad also informed the board that there is still no mask mandate in Okeechobee County. Donna Storter-Long informed the board that the mask mandate is still in place in the courthouse and other government buildings in Glades County.

Sue Rood informed the board that it has been a slow year for the Sebring Library. Sue stated that this may be due to quarantine of the books but thinks it is more due to people being afraid to return to the Library. Sue also wanted to compliment Vikki for her work on the Cooperative's Facebook page stating that the more we can promote digital and social media we will reach the younger generations.

Donna Storter-Long informed the board that today is the first day of the new county manager in Glades County. Donna also informed the board that the City of Moore Haven is creating a new Veteran's Park bronze statues to honor veterans and thank them and law enforcement for their services.

Vikki Brown informed the board that Highlands County has a new Librarian, Bari Lotts.

Sonya Chapa thanked everyone for their attendance at the governing board meeting and hopes that we continue to have such great turnout. Sonya also informed the board of the various programs and projects at the Okeechobee County Public Library including the Halloween Drive Thru, Floating Pumpkin Patch, Mystery Escape Room, and Veteran's display which are all being well received by the community; Sonya credited the success of the Okeechobee Library to outreach and partnership within the community.

Jeannie Palacios informed the board that Hardee County Public Library is testing out Saturday hours to increase access to the community. Jeannie also informed the board that the Hardee Library has partnered with the Friends group and other entities to provide local programs and events on the open Saturdays including presentations by K9 officers, the fire department, and park rangers, along with a Hispanic heritage month event featuring Spanish dancers & food trucks, which have all boosted attendance at the Library. Jeannie also informed the board that Hardee has hired two new employees.

Judy Schaefer stated that she was very thankful for Linda Waters as the DeSoto Librarian. Judy informed the board that Linda was able to keep the Library running and successful while only being half-staffed, stating Linda knows what needs to be done, is very knowledgeable, and hardworking. Judy also expressed her appreciation for the new children's assistant who will bring in new ideas.

Arlene Tuck informed the board that Highlands County is working on funding for a Medal of Honor Park and that it was finally approved this year; this will make Highlands County the first to have a Medal of Honor Park in the state of Florida. The park will have an educational room and gazebo and will be near the government center.

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 at 10:30 a.m.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonya Chapa