

**HEARTLAND LIBRARY COOPERATIVE
GOVERNING BOARD**

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

Minutes to the May 24, 2023 Meeting

CALL TO ORDER:

The Meeting was called to order at 10:34 a.m. Invocation and pledge was led by Jeannie Palacios.

ROLL CALL:

Governing Board Members Present: Jeannie Palacios Chair Hardee County; Commissioner Judy Schaefer Vice-Chair DeSoto County; Commissioner Brad Goodbread Treasurer Okeechobee County; Lauri Benson Desoto County; Ann Ryals Desoto County; Commissioner Donna Storter-Long Glades County; Nicole Drake Hardee County; Sue Rood Highlands County; Margaret Dewey Highlands County; Denise Whitehead Okeechobee County; Vikki Brown Coordinator Heartland; Sonya Chapa Assistant Coordinator Heartland

Also Present: Iris Perkins Librarian Glades County; Linda Waters Librarian DeSoto County; Regina Ussery Librarian Hardee County; Kresta King Librarian Okeechobee County; Robbi Sumner Okeechobee County; Brian Chase Executive Director SWFLN; Amy-Jane McWilliam SWFLN.

Absent: Commissioner Arlene Tuck Highlands County; Julie Perry Glades County; Jeanette Peoples Glades County; Commissioner Judith George Hardee County.

ROUTINE BUSINESS:

Notice of Public Meeting: Notice was properly given.

Additions to Agenda: Vikki Brown informed the Board of the addition of the financial statements to the Consent Agenda.

Approval of the Agenda: Donna Storter-Long moved to accept the agenda with changes, seconded by Lauri Benson; unanimously passed.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: Sue Rood moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Brad Goodbread; unanimously passed.

NEW BUSINESS:

CONSENT AGENDA:

Vikki Brown explained the consent agenda format to the Board; the coordinators are available for questions but all items can be voted on simultaneously. Donna Storter-Long moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Denise Whitehead; unanimously passed.

- I. **Grant Agreement for “Help in the Heartland”**
 - A. **Activities had to be revised and approval is needed to receive reimbursement from the State.**
- II. **Financial Statements**

ACTION AGENDA:

Coordinator & Assistant Coordinator Evaluation and Merit Increase

Vikki Brown informed the Board that Linda Waters was chosen as the Heartland Librarian staff representative to coordinate the evaluation responses; the coordinators are not part of the process in the interest of fairness. Linda presented the evaluations to the Board. Linda stated that the evaluations are based on the items tasked of the Coordinators by the Governing Board and all Librarians participate in evaluating both Coordinator positions. Based on these responses, the Coordinators received exceptional reviews with marvelous comments, with the only area of concern being technology which is usually an ongoing issue reflective of funding. Linda prepared a summary and average of the scores which was presented to the Board, asking for any questions from the Board. Linda informed the Board that the suggested merit increase based on the evaluations was 2.67%. Kresta King stated that the averages may have been affected by areas where the answers were N/A; Linda stated that this shouldn't have an impact on the scores as there were not enough of these instances. Linda informed the Board that due to the State legislature and funding that is not being provided for Libraries, the cost of a 3% merit increase every year needs to be taken into account for future budgets as this could quickly add up. Vikki Brown stated this information was not offensive to the Coordinators; Vikki stated that the Cooperative is financially fine now but an annual percentage increase is a cause for concern as it is not feasible for a long term because the Cooperative is on a fixed budget. Kresta King stated that the Cooperative needs to support the staff and their work, and that the merit increase does not even meet a cost of living increase. Vikki stated that Highlands County takes very good care of her as she is granted both a merit increase and a cost of living increase as budget permits. Jeannie Palacios asked if there was a merit increase last year; Vikki stated yes and the Board voted to annually evaluate the Coordinator positions with up to a 3% merit increase. Donna Storter-Long asked for clarification if Vikki was stating that the Coordinators are fine without merit increases to the amount suggested as she thinks the Board should still provide something; Vikki stated that the Coordinators are fine with the Board's decisions as there is consideration for the future to be taken into account as well. Sonya Chapa stated that the Coordinators do not feel owed an increase just because we receive good evaluations as we are cognizant of fixed funding, but we are still very appreciative of the comments and are fine with whatever the Board decides to do. Denise Whitehead stated that she understood and appreciates the generosity of the Coordinators, but also knows how much work the

Coordinators put in and feels that the Board needs to acknowledge that and that Coordinators are deserving of a raise. Nicole Drake stated that the Board can't continually get into the habit of a 3% raise as that will back the budget into a corner over a long term. Kresta stated that the Coordinators are also bringing in additional funding through grants. Donna asked Linda if funding for Libraries has been cut this year; Linda stated that the Cooperative funds have been kept flat and individual funding to the counties are back to 2017 numbers, which are less than last year. Donna asked if there were other grant opportunities; Vikki stated that there are smaller grant opportunities still available, however one of the primary grants available, the LSTA grants, are no longer available. Linda informed the Board that legislators have defunded Libraries to the point where Libraries at the state level are unable to meet the contributions necessary to receive federal grant funding directly to Libraries, only state-level projects. Jeannie asked about the budget surplus; Vikki stated that the Cooperative is in a good position and has a full year plus additional funds to carry the Cooperative forward should funding be cut. Linda stated that she is not saying that a raise should not be provided but the Board should be aware of all of the parameters before making a decision. Nicole asked for the salary amounts for the Coordinators; Vikki informed the Board that she is at \$20,600 and Sonya is at \$15,600. Jeannie clarified for the Board that the salaries are split as they are due to the creation of an Assistant Coordinator position and a shared workload between the Coordinators. Denise Whitehead moved to grant a 2% merit increase for both the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator; Donna Starter-Long seconded; unanimously passed. Denise thanked the Coordinators for their work this past year. Jeannie stated that she wishes the merit could be much bigger. Sonya thanked the Board, saying that the Coordinators understood the situation and the Cooperative overall. Vikki thanked the Board as well stating that the part of the position is understanding the full scope and appreciation in other ways. Donna asked if there was more that the Board can do in addition to a raise; Vikki asked the Board to please advocate for the Libraries at both the local and State levels, particularly in advocating for more staff. Linda informed the Board that the Cooperative is currently working on minimal staff, some of the lowest staff per capita, but is still doing great things. Vikki, stated that at conference she learned about huge systems doing the same things we are doing in the Heartland Cooperative even though we have lesser staff and funding.

INFORMATIONAL:

Information from Southwest Florida Library Network (SWFLN)

Brian Chase presented the Board with information on the Southwest Florida Library Network (SWFLN), a regional multi-type Library Cooperative similar to the Tampa Bay Library Consortium of which the Heartland Library Cooperative is already a member; Desoto County Public Library is also a member of SWFLN. SWFLN's purpose is to help Libraries succeed and to optimize resources to best service Southwest Florida communities; a focus on developing and assisting Libraries with staff development, trainings, and retention is also a priority for the organization. Another focus is on exposing staff to emerging technologies in a low cost and impactful settings; the Bits and Bites program is a technology lending program that allows Libraries to borrow, use, and train with a variety of technologies and technical education for all ages though a courier service. SWFLN is also looking to serve as a clearing house for information for Libraries

in a variety of topics including policies, grants, long range plans, etc. Amy-Jane McWilliam provided more information on SWFLN's interest in serving Libraries through continuing education for Library staff at all in a variety of topics in staff and leadership development, technology training, customer service skills, and emotional intelligence training which is particularly important for smaller libraries as staff do a little bit of everything and are in need of comprehensive training opportunities. SWFLN is also forming interest groups to provide opportunities for staff to share ideas and network.

Vikki Brown stated that a SWFLN membership has been in the budget, but was not utilized due to the transitions of the organization over the last couple of years. Sonya Chapa attended the program symposium at Desoto County Public Library and the feedback from Heartland Library staff is that they would like to join the organization and utilize the technological services and training. Vikki informed the Board that the Cooperative has already received the benefit of using technology items and cataloging training through Desoto's membership; Regina informed the Board that Hardee County Public Library already has items such as the Spearo bots reserved for Summer Reading programs through Desoto. Sonya Chapa also informed the Board that SWFLN is interested in partnering with the Cooperative for staff training events. Denise asked the costs; Vikki stated that the budget is approved for a membership of \$2,500, if the updated membership costs exceed this she will present to the Board for approval. Jeannie Palacios asked how SWFLN was funded; Vikki stated that multi-type Libraries are primarily funded through LSTA funding, and are currently the only type to receive this funding due to the impacts in previous years where funding for these types of Cooperatives were cut. Sonya Chapa informed the Board that the work is being done at the state level to prioritize this funding. Jeannie asked if Heartland should be offering training and other services for surrounding Libraries similar to these organizations. Vikki and Sonya both explained that these services are provided through the multi-type Cooperatives as they are conducted on a larger scale and are usually too expensive to conduct at a local level; Linda stated that services provided by multi-type cooperatives are available to any Library in the state due to their funding parameters.

Mobile Library Van Update

Vikki Brown informed the Board that new van has arrived and we are working on getting it fully tailored for the Cooperatives' Mobile Library purposes and safety. In the meantime the Cooperative Libraries will be testing it to see how the van will be utilized as each Library is working on Mobile outreach in different manners; as such we want to ensure the van is easily adaptable for each Libraries' needs. Vikki stated that everyone is excited to finally have the van and get it up and running.

Member Updates

Donna Storter-Long stated that there were still some issues being worked out regarding Glades County Public Library's Library Advisory Board. Vikki Brown recommended reaching out to the State Library for more help on Advisory Boards. Donna informed the Board that this is her last term as Glades County Commissioner. Donna also stated that Glades has approved a large land

development. Donna commended the Coordinators for how much the Cooperative is able to do.

Iris Perkins informed the Board that the Glades County Public Library is getting ready for Summer Reading.

Linda Waters thanked the Coordinators for everything they do and thanked the Board for the spirit of working together to make the libraries a better place for our patrons, stating it was marvelous to operate the Cooperative this way.

Regina Ussery informed the Board that summer programming is coming up at the Hardee County Public Library and is partnering with the Sheriff's office and the Hardee Help Center for new programs. Regina also stated that the Library would be distributing food packages. Regina also informed the Board that Hardee is looking for more partnerships and will be using the Mobile Library to partner with the School Board go Parent Nights.

Kresta King introduced Robbi Sumner as the president of the Friends of the Okeechobee Library. Kresta also informed the Board of a \$25,000 programming grant awarded to the Okeechobee County Public Library for the upcoming year to increase diversity programming.

Margaret Dewey stated that the Friends of the Sebring Library bookstore is finished and is beautiful. Margaret also informed the Board that there have been whole middle school classes brought to the bookstore by teachers and the kids love buying books.

Sonya Chapa thanked the Board for their kind comments and support and asked them to please say a thank you to all of the Library staff, we couldn't do everything we do without them, even with minimal staff all of the Libraries are going above and beyond to serve our communities. Sonya also informed the Board that the Okeechobee Library is now using the Mobile Library to visit the Okeechobee Healthcare nursing home facility which has proved to be a very successful program for the Library and residents.

Vikki Brown agreed with Sonya stating that without our staff we wouldn't be able to do as much as we do. Vikki also informed the Board that Highlands County will be unveiling the vending machine Library in the Spring Lake area in Highlands County and will be able to be used by all Cooperative Library users. Vikki stated that the Highlands Libraries are partnering with the Sheriff's office to continue therapy dog reading program in the summer as well; this program has proved to be very successful in raising test scores.

Judy Schaefer stated that she appreciated everything the coordinators do as they do it tirelessly. Judy also stated her appreciation for Linda Waters for everything she does for Desoto County.

Nicole Drake thanked the Coordinators for their work.

Jeannie Palacios thanked the Coordinators as well. Jeannie also informed the Board that Hardee County does so much with a small staff and is very grateful for the work that they do.

Adjournment:

Nicole Drake moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Judy Schaefer; unanimously passed.
Meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonya Chapa