

**Minutes for Board Meeting (Called) of June 22, 2017**  
Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Library Board Meeting / July 25, 2017

Members Attending: Anna Brown, John Clements, Sherrysue Davis, Ben Jacobs, Anne Jordan, Mayor Mark Masee, Marsha Stembridge, Chairman Steve Taylor, and Virginia Watson. Staff Attending: Director Martha Powers-Jones. Guests Attending: Brad King and Philip Jay

The Meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairman John Clements.

Chairman John Clements welcomed board members.

Clements asked Director Martha Powers-Jones to provide a summary of the funding reduction. Powers-Jones stated that on June 9, 2017 Chairman Steve Taylor presented a letter to her announcing a 50% cut in County funding from July 1 – December 31 due to the County's budgetary crisis. Powers-Jones reached out to GPLS to see about getting a Maintenance of Effort Waiver. She explained that the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) rule requires that local funding agencies must maintain their level of Library funding to receive State funding. If there is a cut, a MOE waiver can be submitted, and if approved, allow the Library to continue to receive State funding during the months where funding was cut. However, the waiver is contingent on (1) showing financial distress, (2) showing that the cuts were equal across all non-essential departments, and (3) if funding is restored to any department, the Library is restored by the same percentage. She stated her concern was that the cuts were not equal across all County departments and therefore the Library would not qualify for the waiver. This would mean losing PINES and Internet service and an equal percentage cut from the state in financial funding for the Director's position, the Assistant Director's position, books & materials monies, and other funding, totaling around \$145,000. She presented her concerns to the County Commissioners on June 19<sup>th</sup> and Commissioner Mooney stated their intent was to work on the budget and provide the necessary information to successfully apply for a waiver; no vote was taken, this was just a verbal commitment.

Chairman Taylor pointed out that the County Audit will come in shortly and they will have their final numbers in hand. This information will allow them to finish their budgetary adjustments. Anne Jordan asked Taylor if there were any legal issues with cutting funding mid-year when there was an agreement in place with the City to fund Library services equally. Taylor said that there just was not the money to sustain their level of funding. Jordan emphasized how much the Library meant to her personally and how much it meant to the community. Philip Jay asked to address the Board; Clements approved. Jay said that he was there in support of the Library. He also said that he appreciated the difficulty facing the Commission as the budget crisis has existed for some time, including during his tenure as Chairman. Jay emphasized that the County funding issue is a real crisis.

Mayor Mark Masee pointed out that the initial cuts were all to Joint Services. He was concerned about Joint Services being particularly affected and how hard the Library was hit by this cut. Mayor Masee stated that he hoped the cuts to the Library would be reconsidered as "we can't afford to close the doors." Clements emphasized that we could lose everything that makes the Library matter to the community and it would have a huge effect; the Library would close. He reiterated how important it was to get the MOE waiver. Ben Jacobs agreed and said that education and literacy directly affect the economy. Jay added that this Library goes back to the very beginning of Fitzgerald and it's loss would profoundly affect our ability to go forward as a community. Chairman Taylor ensured that the Commission would have a discussion concerning the MOE waiver. Taylor said that Board members should also share their concerns with the other commissioners.

Clements asked Powers-Jones to present the Budget Adjustment Proposal. Powers-Jones stated choices for cuts in the budget were limited since it was mid-year. She said that they would freeze all spending in categories that allowed for such action; the exceptions being in line items where funds were already obligated and in Building-related line items. She said that she did not see where else she could cut to make the difference and felt that the only option was to cut personnel and operating hours; specifically, the proposal calls for a 25% reduction in hours or wages for staff members and an eight (8) hour reduction in weekly operating hours. Powers-Jones asked if the Board would want to discuss Personnel costs in detail, and if so, they would need to go into Executive Session.

Mayor Masee moved to go into Executive Session to discuss Personnel; Sherrysue Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Clements thanked Jay and Brad King for attending.

After completing discussion on the topic of Personnel, Davis moved to leave Executive Session; Jordan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Clements called for a motion on operating hours. Jordan moved to reduce Library operating hours from 53 hours per week to 45 hours per week or an eight (8) hour reduction in weekly operating hours beginning August 1, 2017; Anna Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Clements called for a motion on Personnel cuts. Watson moved to reduce non-administrative staff hours by 25%, or wages by 25%, depending on the minimum needed to retain benefits; Jacobs seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Clements called for a motion on the Budgetary Adjustment proposal. Jacobs moved to approve the proposal as presented; Watson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Having no further business, Clements thanked the Board members for their diligence during this difficult meeting. He noted that the next meeting will be on Tuesday, July 25, 2017. The meeting was adjourned.