

Allegany County Library Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting

March 11, 2025

4:00 p.m.

Mountain Ridge High School Theater

PRESENT:

Deb Hendrickson, Renee Kniseley, Juli McCoy, Bill Bingman, Sue Rudd, Gary Leasure, Artie Travis and John Taube.

Library Leadership Team: Lisa McKenney, Andrea Everett, Ashley Swinford, Kate Metzger, Shea Morse

The meeting was called to order by Renee Kniseley,.

A motion to accept the minutes of the regular meeting on February 11, 2025 was made by Bill Bingman seconded by Artie Travis and was approved. (Note: Gary Leasure was not yet present for this vote.)

A motion to accept both the statistical report and the financial reports of February 2025 was made by Sue Rudd seconded by Bill Bingman and was accepted. (Note: Gary Leasure was not yet present for this vote.)

NEW BUSINESS

Presentation of the FY2024 Annual Financial Audit

The audit is complete and there were no findings. Copies of the Audit were distributed to Board members. Robert Diss of Lindsay and Associates presented the results of the financial audit of FY2024 to the Board for acceptance. A motion to accept the audit report was made by Bill Bingman and seconded by Sue Rudd. The motion was approved. (Note: Gary Leasure was not yet present for this vote.)

Gun Safety Lock giveaway partnership

In partnership with the Allegany County Health Department's Local Behavioral Health Authority (LBHA) all 6 branches will have gun safety locks for free distribution to Allegany County residents starting March 24, 2025.. The partnership is aimed to promote gun safety and reduce the rates of suicide and self-harm in Allegany County. Each lock has the crisis line information, 988, as well as a wallet card with 988 contact information and suicide warning signs that may mean

someone is at risk, and an instruction guide on how to install the locks on a number of different guns.

Preparation for the replacement of Sue Rudd on the Library Board

Ms. Sue Rudd has served as a Library Board member with exceptional skills since July 1, 2020. Her current term will expire on June 30, 2025 and she has decided NOT to seek another term. At this point in the process John asked Board members to send potential candidates for replacements to consider. At the April Board meeting we will form a subcommittee to review the candidates and arrange interviews with the subcommittee.

Policy - Accepting Donations on Behalf of Outside Organizations

The library branches have been approached to serve as collection or drop off points for donations on behalf of other community organizations. John has denied these requests because he did not want to position the library or its staff members as participants in outside organizations fundraising efforts. He also wanted to avoid any potential conflicts, should any accounting or financial matters arise in the fund raising drive.

This matter came up again with the recent local fund raising efforts and we thought it would be a good idea to have a policy approved by the Board.

Juli McCoy moved to approve the policy, Bill Bingman seconded the motion and it was approved by the Board. Artie Travis abstained from this vote. (Note: Gary Leasure was not yet present for this vote.)

Discussion of preparation of the “Backup Budget” for FY2026 Operating Budget

John reviewed the results of the tally on Board member preferences for the Backup budget.

- The tally showed a strong preference for NOT addressing the “livable wage” issue in this budget year.
- The tally showed a strong preference against closing 3 library branches.
- The tally showed a majority preference against closing 2 library branches
- The tally showed a mixed preference for reducing the hours of operation at the LaVale branch.

With these major issue preferences known, John proceeded to present 3 alternative backup budgets for discussion and further development.

Each of the 3 Backup Budgets:

- assume flat funding from the county.
- NO branches close
- balance revenue and expenses.
- Eliminate funding for staff bonuses,

- Eliminate funding for individual memberships
- Eliminate funding for library cell phone service
- Eliminate funding for contributions to the FAMLI insurance fund
- Eliminate funding for voluntary Federal Flood Insurance Program participation for Westernport Library
- Retain funding for the South Cumberland Library Security Guard
- Provide funding to share the cost of Health Insurance increases

Based on the majority of preferences related to closing branches, we have prepared a **backup budget (identified as number six)** that preserves the hours and days of operation at all 6 locations and preserves all staff positions at current levels. In order to accomplish that, the collections budget would be cut by 78% of \$114,371.

An alternate “**backup budget**” (**identified as number 5**) considers the mixed preference to reduce the LaVale hours in the tally. In backup budget 5, Lavale library hours remain the same, and the remaining 5 locations lose 1 day of service per week. Backup budget 5 carries out the plan that as funding decreases, retaining services at the Lavale library as the central library location in the county will be prioritized.

Backup budget 5 also eliminates 3 part-time and 2 full-time positions, and allows funds for a 3% cost of living increase.

An additional alternative is also provided. **Backup Budget 4** envisions all 6 locations losing 1 day of service per week and the elimination of 4 part-time, and 2 full-time positions. Backup budget 4 also allows funding for a 3% cost of living increase with no reduction in collections funding.

John requested that the Board select which of the 3 backup budgets it would like the Leadership Team to further develop for review at the April meeting. The Board liked elements of each backup budget but did not select one of the three for further development.

Sue Rudd made a motion which was seconded by Deb Hendrickson and approved by the Board that John come up with a budget that does not close any libraries, that does not close the libraries on Mondays, and does not decimate the collections budget.

The Board also asked for additional backup budgets with a variation that the Washington Street library closes, that only the 12 staff members currently under the “livable wage” get any wage increases, that health insurance premiums be modified in a tiered system, and that all branches be closed on Mondays.

The Leadership Team will bring additional backup budgets for review to the April Board meeting.

Volunteer Program

Sue Rudd moved that John and the leadership team develop a library system volunteer program that can be used at each library. The motion was seconded by Artie Travis and was approved.

Fundraising policy

Sue Rudd moved that John and the leadership team develop a fundraising policy for people and/or organizations that want to help with funding the library so that when people call with ideas, we can thank them and hand them a policy as to what is allowed and what is not allowed. The motion was seconded by Gary Leasure and was approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Adjustment to 2nd draft of the proposed FY26 Operating budget

John updated the Board on the proposed operating budget that we will submit to the county for consideration. The FY2024 Audit does not indicate that we will have unspent funds from FY2024 to apply to FY26 operating expenses. We had included an anticipated \$35,000 in the proposed FY2026 budget approved at the 2/18/2025 Board meeting.

John proposed the following adjustments to the proposed budget.

- 1) Withdraw from the MML Consortium for alternate coverage of FAML I benefits. - \$3000
- 2) Eliminate \$17,000 from budget for FAML I contributions
- 3) Eliminate \$6000 from budget for annual staff bonuses,
- 4) Eliminate \$9000 from the collections budget .

Those cuts equal the total \$35,000 and make up for the elimination of carry over funds.

John shared a summary of the updated Proposed Budget and list of Highlights.

Bill Bingman moved to approve the adjustment to the FY26 Proposed Operating Budget. The motion was seconded by Artie Travis and was approved.

Leadership Team Updates

- Director of Administrative Services
- Director of Human Resources
- Director of Outreach and Marketing
- Coordinator of Public Services

PUBLIC COMMENT

John announced the following to the audience:

At the March 11, 2025 Allegany County Library System Board of Trustees meeting we will be adhering to the Public Comment Guidelines Policy approved on April 12, 2020.

Why are we following the Guidelines for Public Comment now? Why the change?

At a typical board meeting the matters we deal with are more routine and simple, and as such they can be answered on the spot.

What we learned at our February Board meeting was that the questions being raised are complicated. We can't just wing it on the spot. It would not be productive or fair to give you incomplete or unclear answers.

The matters we are dealing with now are more complex and complicated.

We want to respond in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. We want to provide you with an accurate, thorough and truthful answer.

For example, if you remember, Mayor Coburn asked if I could produce a report by noon the next day after the meeting. I responded that I thought I could. But I was wrong, we needed 2 additional days to compile the report.

So as we continue to work together to find the best solutions to the County and State's budget woes, we wanted to be upfront with you about why we are now following the Board Approved Guidelines for Public Comment.

We will take these questions under advisement and respond on our website and social media by Monday 3/17/2025.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and UPDATES

Next Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at 4PM at the South Cumberland Library.