Darlington County Library System
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Locations
Darlington
Hartsville
Lamar
Society Hill

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

January, 2025

Darlington Branch January 15, 2025

OPENING OF MEETING

A. The meeting was called to order by Vice President, Gail Gandy, at 2:59 p.m. A quorum was met with the following members present: Gail Gandy, Bobbie Gardner (via mobile), Ken Hughes, Gene Norwood, Vernessia Patterson, JoAnn Lee (via mobile), and Carol Hill.
Member(s) absent: Barbara Carraway.

B. The following visitor(s) attended and were recognized: Antoinette Fernandez, IT Manager; Christy Lamb, Administrative Assistant; Tracy Tuplin, Darlington Branch Manager; Caitlin Whitt, Darlington Branch Youth Services; Jane Proell, President of The Friends of the Darlington Library; and, the following member(s) attended remotely and were recognized: Kelly Shull, Lamar Branch Manager; Lynn Anderson, Society Hill Branch Manager; Martha Brown, Hartsville Branch Manager.

C. A motion was made by Gene Norwood, seconded by Ken Hughes, and carried to approve the agenda.

OPEN FORUM

A. The President of the Friends of the Darlington Library, Jane Proell, introduced herself to the Library Board. Mrs. Proell made a formal request that full administrative rights for the Friends of the Darlington Library Facebook page be granted to the Friends President. Library Director Jimmie Epling stated the request had been previously granted.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. A motion was made by Gene Norwood, seconded by Carol Hill, and carried to approve the November minutes.

FINANCIAL REPORT

A. County government requires a “fund balance” reserve of 35% of a department’s annual budget to be maintained in case of emergency or slow tax collections. Ideally, maintaining a fund balance at 50% of the annual budget is recommended. The 2024 audit estimates the fund balance to be just over $2 million. This amount is about $100,000 more than the library expends in a year. The surplus in the fund balance enables the Library to proceed with facility improvements. Capital improvement projects discussed for the coming year were:

a. A Ford F-150 pickup truck, estimated to cost between $40,000 and $50,000.
b. The renovation of the 744-square-foot garage at the Darlington branch into usable space. This space was originally built to accommodate the needs of a bookmobile service, but because of changing needs and significant drainage

issues due to its sloped design (water currently drains toward a grate that frequently becomes clogged, causing the garage to flood). The goal is to convert this space into a more functional area, potentially including a server room, staff area, a designated Friends of the Library area, and space for cataloging and processing. The estimated timeline for this project is two to three years. The first step involves hiring an architect or engineer to explore possible solutions, design options, and project's feasibility. The board will need to request approval from the County Council to allocate up to $40,000 from the fund balance to hire an architect for the project. Given that new library construction costs average between $350-400 per square foot, converting this space is estimated to cost approximately $260,000 to $400,000. The goal is to initiate the actual renovation in the 2027 fiscal year.

c. Board member Gene Norwood brought to the board's attention that the front steps at the Darlington branch are in poor condition and pose a safety hazard. Library Director Jimmie Epling proposed incorporating the repair of the front steps into the garage renovation project, as concrete work will already be part of that effort.

B. The Library is halfway through its Fiscal Year 2025 budget. We have expended about 54% of our original budget. It is important to note large ticket expenditures have been made and paid for.

C. The REPAIR/REPLACE COMPUTERS (43100) budget line was debited for the Darlington Branch public computer upgrades that were purchased with funds from our fund balance.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – The Director's report included the following:

A. With assistance from Antoinette Fernandez, quotes for the van wrap are currently being obtained.

B. Youth Services is actively working on Summer Reading and Learning Program (SRLP) planning and programming.

HOST BRANCH MANAGER'S REPORT – Tracy Tuplin, Darlington Branch Manager:

A. We're excited to welcome Jane Proell as the new President of the Friends of the Darlington Library.

B. There have been some great updates to our holiday programming, thanks to Youth Services Librarian Catlin Whitt.

C. A couple of adult program name changes: "What the Fork" is now the "Darlington Potluck Club" and "Sip N Paint" is now the "Paint Workshop."

D. Caitlin Whitt, Youth Services Librarian, was introduced and addressed the board. She is enjoying her role and looks forward to upcoming programming. Recent programming has been successful. The New Year's Dance Party was a hit with the Library's mascot Darcy joining in on the fun! Story Time and Crafts with Santa was well attended with approximately 80 children and their families. The Friends group passed out cookies and juice and kids received their very own copy of "The Biggest Snowman Ever" after meeting with Santa and Mrs. Claus. The Darlington Library also had the pleasure of hosting the MG Burno Head Start for a two-day library tour.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS
None

NEW BUSINESS

A. **FY 2026 BUDGET COMMITTEE –** The Library's annual budget proposal is usually due at the Finance Department in late March. Board approval of the final budget before it is submitted is possible this year at the March Board meeting. A 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is expected and will be included in the proposed budget. A motion was made by Vernessia Patterson, seconded by Ken Hughes, and carried to approve the appointment of Gene Norwood, Carol Hill, and JoAnn Lee to the Budget Committee.
B. **SC LAWMAKERS PRE-FILE LIBRARY FUNDING BILL –** State Senator Rex Rice has pre-filed a library funding bill to codify in a statute a 2024 budget proviso. The bill requires that before a public library can receive any State Aid it must certify with the State Library that any books of a prurient sexual nature are not shelved with children's materials. The Darlington County Library System complied with the 2024 proviso which included a library must have a reconsideration policy in place for county residents and cardholders who wish to challenge materials they find objectionable have a method to do so. The legislative session begins January 14th. The Board will be kept informed of this bill's progress, if any, through the legislature.

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING
None

EXECUTIVE SESSION
None

ADJOURNMENT
A motion was made by Gene Norwood, seconded by Ken Hughes, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 3:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by
Christy Lamb, Administrative Assistant