

Central Arkansas Library System  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
September 26, 2019  
The Bookstore – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Meeting Room

Board Members in attendance were Nancy Rousseau, Andre Guerrero, Brandon Grice, Marilynn Porter, Stephanie Gibson-Branton, Sarah French, John Bush, Sheila Wright, Bob Brown, Sophia Said, and Annette Herrington. Kelly Moss and Marian Berry were absent.

Staff members in attendance were Nathan James, Nate Coulter, Lisa Donovan, David Stricklin, Lance Ivy, Jo Spencer, Joe Hudak, Tameka Lee, Mark Christ, Kay Kay DeRosette, Candace White, Carol Coffey, Pam Rudkin, Ellen Samples, Rosslyn Elliott, Polly Deems, Linda Ellis, Elizabeth Newbern, and Nathania Sawyer.

Also in attendance were Pam Smith, Director of Communications for the Little Rock School District (LRSD) and LRSD Superintendent Mike Poore.

**Action Items**

**1. Approval of Minutes**

Vice-president Nancy Rousseau, filling in for Marian Berry, asked that the Minutes be considered for approval.

Bush moved to approve the Minutes without correction. Gibson-Branton seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**2. Financial Report**

Herrington reported that as of August 31, 2019 CALS assets totaled to \$116,463,040 with net losses of 1,633,090.

Brown asked if CALS was solvent considering those reported numbers. Herrington responded that the library is solvent and that CALS expects to receive the bulk of its annual tax collections in November, which usually offsets the losses.

Brown, additionally, asked if there was anything to report about the Walmart suit, for which the Board authorized approval to hire representation in opposition last month. Coulter said the appeal has been filed but there have been no further developments yet.

On behalf of the Finance Committee, Herrington moved that the financials be filed for audit. The motion was approved unanimously.

**3. Approval for Vehicle Purchase**

Ivy explained that the Strategic Plan that the Board approved in May outlined a plan to find a way to reach rural areas in Pulaski County that are currently underserved. CALS has proposed to do this by purchasing an outreach vehicle that can bring library services closer to them by having a Pop-Up Library

in local adult living facilities, churches, and other community focal points. Ivy said that he and Spencer have found a Ram Pro Master that they have determined will fit our needs. He noted that there still need to be some adjustments to the vehicle made before it is outreach-ready, such as adding a ramp, shelving, and some exterior detailing that identifies it as a CALS vehicle. However, that said the total cost for the vehicle will be \$30,000 since we get a discount deal through the state purchasing agents. Ivy asked the board to approve using money from reserves to purchase the vehicle.

Said asked if this is the first vehicle that the library has ever purchased. Ivy responded that we have vehicles for our maintenance staff and book transport, but this is the only outreach vehicle we have purchased. Coulter added that a long time ago, the library did have a bookmobile, but that was when the system had much fewer branches and it only circulated around the city to the best of his recollection.

French asked if this issue creates a problem with the budget. Spencer said that the reason CALS is asking the Board to use reserve funds is because it has not been specifically budgeted. CALS has \$1.9 million in reserves at Stephens and several other similar accounts at a few other banks in Little Rock.

Guerrero asked if this must go out for bid or is this purchase too low or small an amount for that. Coulter responded that CALS is not subject to the state statute, but it is able to take advantage of state pricing. Rousseau asked if the Board will approve CALS purchase of the outreach vehicle.

Bush moved to approve the vehicle purchase. Guerrero seconded the motion and the move was approved unanimously.

## **Information Items**

### **1. Partnership Presentation: Little Rock School District**

Coulter introduced Little Rock School District Superintendent Mike Poore. He noted that Poore came to Little Rock from Fayetteville and upon his arrival he immediately started to work on the Tech Card program, which has been enormously beneficial to LRSD students, teachers, and parents. Coulter added that Poore is an exemplar of creating collaboration within the community and has also been involved in CALS' Be Mighty Program.

Rousseau added that as the principal of Little Rock Central High School, she was all set not to like Superintendent Poore, but has been happily surprised by how well they work together and very impressed with his work for the district.

Poore thanked Coulter and Rousseau for their kind words and said that he wanted to start his portion by first celebrating the many accomplishments that the LRSD has achieved this year. One significant development is that according to Zippia.com, the LRSD was named one of the best places to work for 2018. Another big accomplishment is that our enrollment is up about 100 kids from the previous year after years of declining enrollment. Considering that there were also more than 1700 charter school seats that opened in the last two years, this is truly an amazing achievement.

Next, Poore wanted to discuss community partnerships and wanted to particularly mention Volunteers in Public Schools (ViPS), which has provided work effort worth \$27 M through volunteerism throughout the district. ACT growth scores for D & F schools are moving up. He also wants to mention all the work that

CALS has done with the LRSD. He said that he believes that the library is important to our community and our schools.

LRSD partners include but are not limited to AR Hunger Relief Alliance, CALS, the City of Little Rock, and Rock Region Metro. Working with these partners has helped us add 18 schools to our dinner program, give Tech Cards to all our students (53,000 people total), participate in CALS Summer Reading program, expand career development opportunities, and help us bridge the gap with Private and Charter school groups in the area. Additionally, the LRSD now offers online courses through its partnerships with the Catholic private schools that allow students who are unable to make it into class or unable to make enrollment for certain courses the opportunity to take them.

Poore briefly touched on how the LRSD and other public entities might be affected if Walmart's suit is successful, which include the Fire Departments in the county and Children's Hospital. He said that it is important to realize how widely the repercussions of the suit will reach in the community in order to fight it.

He said that the LRSD has been working hard to ensure student engagement in public schools. A large part of those efforts involves gaining kids trust that the adults at school are about them and their success and working hard to implement activities in the classroom that encourage hands-on work. Elementary school teachers have taken on a large chunk of this burden and they have gamely taken on the challenge. He added that if you have any LRSD elementary teachers in your lives you should thank them for all their hard work.

In reference to the recent statements by the State Board of Education where they stated plans to return local control to only some of the district, Poore said that he does not agree with the Board's approach. He said that the district will be more successful if all the schools it supports are under one system. This will help the district build on its current success and ensure that all public school students receive support in an equitable way.

Brown asked what was happening in respect to the public schools and UA Little Rock. Poore said there are currently no efforts in the public school sector, but a state charter school was working on UA Little Rock campus. He understands that they have encountered problems that they are still working through. High school students and parents have very different needs than college students and parents.

Guerrero asked what the demographic was for the 100-student increase. Poore said that it was a good question and he does not have the answer for that. However, he does know that in the LRSD it is primarily made up of 65 % African American, followed by white/Caucasian, and growth in the Hispanic population. Guerrero additionally asked what effect the decertification of the teacher's union would have on teacher's salaries. Poore replied that another positive effect of the district working with other organizations in the county and the state has been that the Governor recently passed a bill that increases teacher's salaries up to \$36,000, with plans to continue to push for further increases down the line.

Brown asked if there had been any work to increase resources to special needs students. Poore said that this is something they are working on doing, but they have encountered opposition getting funds.

## **2. Marketing & Resource Development Report**

Lee reported that CALS has geared up for banned books week with exciting book displays, movie adaptations of banned titles screened at the Ron Robinson Theater, including *Fight Club*, and a talk given by Roli Delgado, a jujitsu competitor.

CALS will also be having Susan Orlean give the talk on Saturday, September 28 at 6:30 p.m. It is currently reserved out, but there will likely be spots available the night of the event. The Ron Robinson Theater will also be showing the film *Adaptation* on 7 p.m. on Friday, September 27 at the Ron Robinson Theater; the film was based on Susan Orlean's book *The Orchid Leaf*.

Lee said that there are a few other events coming up for the Ron Robinson Theater, including:

- *Period. End of Sentence.*, a documentary film that will be shown on Monday, October 7 at 7 p.m. This event was co-sponsored by Arkansas Women's Outreach.
- 2019 J.N. Heiskell Program will occur at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 10. It will feature Walter E. Hussman Jr., the publisher of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*.
- Susan N. Herman, president of the American Civil Liberties Union since October 2008, will speak about her work on Thursday, October 24 at 6:00 p.m. This lecture is co-sponsored by the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service.

She said the theater will also be showing a lot of movies this month through our Hitchcocktoberfest series and the Scary movies series.

Guerrero asked about the recent news of the Arkansas Women's Outreach providing period products for library visitors in need and if this involves teen programs. Samples answered that the teen programmers at CALS are already fairly involved in this issue, since they had been providing these products out of their own product before AR Women's Outreach offered to help, but she would approach them about programming ideas.

### **3. Roberts Library Report**

Stricklin reported that the upcoming Finding Family Facts program will take place at Terry Library on October 10 at 10 a.m. He also added that CALS will host the Arkansas Society of Printmakers on Saturday, October 12 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the parking lot, where they will be creating prints with a steamroller.

He noted that the ACANSA opening earlier this month was a huge success with the reception and opening event going off without any problems.

### **4. Statistical Report**

Coffey reported that total circulation was up 2 %. Digital circulation was up 7 %, and physical circulation was up by 700 items, which equates to 0 % but it does mean that it was not going down, which is a positive development. She said that door counts were up 6 %, although she noted that the door counters at Main and at the Roberts Library were broken so some of those could be slightly skewed. She also said that program attendance was up.

Nathan James said that he would take a few minutes to help clarify the difference between print circulation and digital circulation. For print titles, libraries pay the same amount of money for materials as

consumers do. However, with digital products libraries pay much higher rates for materials and they do not get to keep those materials indefinitely. The pricing structure for digital items (eBooks & digital audiobooks) is quite complicated since each of the Big 5 Publishers have a slightly different pricing structure. However, the reason that he brings this to the Boards attention is that McMillan, one of the Big 5 publishers, just put a restriction on digital eBooks and audiobooks that libraries can only purchase one of all newly released titles for the first 8 weeks of its release. This means that CALS can only guarantee that 4 people will be able to read these titles until the moratorium lifts, which is a problem since this includes authors such as Nora Roberts, James Patterson, and several other very popular authors. CALS is asking that people sign the *Ebook for All* petition and to protest this by contacting McMillan PR through email.

James noted that he would be including all this information in a large blog post that will be published in the next several days. Right now, the pricing structure is already making it very difficult for libraries to meet the reading needs of library users and this will only increase this difficulty. McMillan and the other Big 5 Publishers argue that the reason to do this is to help bump up their sales. However, attacking libraries will not do that. Amazon is their real true competition in this arena. Libraries assist publishers because they help foster people's love of reading and desire to be book collectors themselves.

## **5. Building Report**

Ivy reported that solar panel installation at Children's library is progressing smoothly and that CALS has successfully installed a new sculpture that was donated to them by the city.

## **6. Committee Reports**

There are no committee reports to be conveyed at this time.

## **7. Update on Strategic Plan Process**

Nathan James noted that he has been working on getting the dashboard document in a cleaner format. It has now been successfully converted into an excel spreadsheet, but he is still working on cleaning up the format now it has been converted.

He added that CALS branch service coordinators have been working on a proposal to create more access to our services on Sundays. Currently, the only two locations that are open are the Main Library and Children's Library. These two locations require 23 staff members to run and Main is the most expensive branch to open from an operations standpoint. The branch service coordinators recommend instead that CALS close those two branches and open four of our other branch locations. This change will only require 16 staff members to work on Sunday and will reduce building operations expenses for that day as well.

Coffey noted that one difficulty of opening on Sundays is getting enough staff to work those hours.

Donovan noted that there was some concern about closing Main for those library users who are members of the homeless population. Rebecca Beadle recommended that CALS might open the Darragh Center and have them use that space to check-out laptops and access resources without creating transportation/accessibility issues.

Brown asked if staff had asked library users who do currently come on Sundays what they think about this proposed change. Donovan said that they had planned to ask the community for feedback, and they would be sure to get the opinion of current attendees. She added that branch manager staff who had been approached about this change had been very supportive of the idea.

Said asked if they planned to roll this out through a pilot program first before they made any permanent changes. She added that she thought a pilot combined with a survey period of 12 weeks would probably allow for the most feedback. Donovan said implementing a pilot of the proposed change is a good idea and would help CALS gather feedback. She said CALS did intend to survey the community ahead of the change being implemented, although not for a period of 12 weeks. She added that based on Sunday numbers from the past several years, usage at the currently open branches has been down.

Donovan said branch service coordinator staff currently planned to implement this change in 2020, although they may follow the Board's suggestion to unroll it as a pilot program.

## **8. Director's Report**

Coulter reported that CALS has been working on delivering its promise to give staff a living wage that they committed to do in 2017. There were several years that CALS did not fulfill this promise, and CALS is looking seriously at the budget for 2020 to find the money to do this for the coming year. He said that as the public library in the region, he feels that CALS should be an exemplar for what other public agencies should aspire to be.

He also noted that CALS has been approached by the provost's office from UAMS to assist in a venture. UAMS is looking to create a childcare center for its employees that would be built near the Children's Library location. As a partner in the venture, CALS would also be able to have this space serve our employees' childcare needs, which is something that would be of great benefit to CALS staff. The Provost Office at UAMS said they have about 40-50% of the approximately \$4 to 5 million needed for the venture to be successful. They are hoping that CALS can join UAMS and other interested parties in helping to make this a reality, although it is not yet clear how CALS will contribute, we do know that it would be of great benefit to the organization and to Children's Library in particular, which is located near the perspective site.

## **9. Other**

Rousseau asked the Board to consider dates for the December Board of Trustees meeting, which is currently unscheduled. Newbern mentioned that December 12 or December 19 would be the two most likely Thursday dates. The Board indicated a preference for December 12 if the CALS Foundation Board meeting, also scheduled for that date, could be pushed back.

Rousseau called the meeting adjourned at 1:32 p.m.

  
President

  
Secretary