

Central Arkansas Library System

Board of Directors Meeting

March 27, 2025, at noon

Hybrid Meeting: Maumelle Library & Zoom Video Call

Board members in attendance were Karama Neal, Alexis Sims, Audrey Evans, Dustin McDaniel, David Finkbeiner, Ginann Swindle, Madhav Shroff, and Ryan Davis. Stacey McAdoo, Jennifer Jamison, Esperanza Massana-Crane, Luke Underwood, and Joyce Elliott were absent.

Staff in attendance were Nate Coulter, Jo Spencer, Ellen Samples, Kate Matthews, Hannah Saulters, Nathan Smith, Pamela Bandy, Carol Coffey, Joe Hudak, Elizabeth Clements, Ray Terry, Brant Collins, Amanda Orgel, Sarah Jane Rawlinson, Polly Deems, Leslie Blanchard, Liz Gershon, Amanda Orgel, and Glenn Whaley.

Also in attendance were Matthew Lehner with CDI and Joe Flaherty with the Arkansas Democrat Gazette.

Davis chaired the meeting until Neal's arrival.

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes

Davis asked the Board to approve the February Minutes.

Evans moved to approve the February Minutes as presented. Sims seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

2. Approval of January Financials

Spencer reported that as of February 28, 2025, CALS assets totaled \$109,672,504, with a net loss of \$1,998,142. Tax receipts as of March 2025 were \$2,919,486. The year over year increase is approximately 11%, or \$296,000.

McDaniel asked if the report was consistent with the projections. Spencer noted that the increase was a little more than expected, due to the increased amount in the Homestead Tax Credit.

Davis filed the February Financials for audit.

3. Motion to Lease Concordia Hall to the Little Rock Convention and Visitors Bureau (LRCVB)

Coulter discussed the potential partnership CALS would have with the LRCVB and how that would benefit CALS. Evans asked about the location of Concordia Hall. Spencer

clarified that the LRCVB would lease the space that is the space currently being used for children's programming and books at the Roberts Library while Main is closed.

Sims asked whether the lease stipulated a monthly or yearly rent payment. Spencer answered that the lease is for 10 years with monthly payments, with an added escalation every three years. Sims mentioned that \$11 per square foot seems low for that space. Spencer noted that the price is low for fair market value for that space, which is approximately \$18 per square foot. Spencer added that this is a partnership between CALS and LRCVB and the LRCVB would continue to support the Six Bridges Book Festival.

Sims asked why the donation would go to the CALS Foundation. Spencer mentioned that donating to the Foundation takes some of the fundraising work off the Development department and it is money that is not allocated from the yearly CALS budget. Coulter added that this donation would be unrestricted so CALS could use it in the ways it is needed most to support the book festival.

McDaniel asked if CALS could restrict signage and advertising for LRCVB, if necessary. Spencer stated that that could be specified in the leasing agreement. McDaniel added that he would like the Board to see the finalized leasing agreement before it is voted on and executed by the library.

Sims noted that having a higher amount on the lease agreement would allow CALS to fund items that have been discussed in the last few meetings, like electronic resources. McDaniel added that he thought a partnership with city entities was a good idea. Spencer added that it would be hard to find a "perfect tenet" for that space.

Finkbeiner noted that the agreed leasing amount seems low but that a partnership with the LRCVB is a great opportunity. Schroff applauded the CALS staff for their work in negotiating the partnership and finding a use for an under-utilized space. Davis added that he views the CALS Foundation as an extension of CALS and its mission.

McDaniel made a motion to allow CALS staff to negotiate a lease for the area known as Concordia Hall, consistent with the March 11 letter, while revisiting the \$10,000 annual donation to CALS as opposed to the CALS Foundation, and provide the Board with five days' notice from the time its ready to execute to the time it is executed.

Neal seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Information Items

1. Director's Report

Coulter thanked Liz Gershon and the Maumelle Library staff for hosting this Board meeting. Coulter noted that this was the first Board meeting Davis has attended since his mother's passing. Coulter extended his sympathy and thanked Davis for his service to the Board.

Coulter highlighted a few items from his written report:

- **Main Remodel:** Coulter introduced Lehner with CDI who explained the new August 1, 2025, substantial completion date. Lehner explained the delay is due to steel modifications to the new east stairwell. Finkbeiner asked what exactly caused the delays. Lehner answered that unforeseen issues with the steel and restructuring, and the resulting additional planning cost time on the project.

McDaniel asked about the pigeon problems at the Main Library and asked Lehner's opinion on the best pigeon abatement option. Lehner explained that Main currently does not have an issue with pigeon roosting and that he did not have an opinion on the best option for pigeon abatement at Roberts Library.

- **Strategic Planning:** Coffey stated that the Strategic Planning Team will finish the first draft of the plan soon and reminded the Board of the timeline going forward; the Board will receive the Plan at the April Board meeting and vote to approve the Plan at the May meeting.
- **Update on the USCT Sculpture Project:** Coulter mentioned the dispute between the historians and artist on the USCT Sculpture Committee. Neal added that one member of the Sculpture Committee raised six issues with the artist's preliminary design. Neal facilitated a discussion with the parties involved and reported that the design has been finalized, and the project can move forward. Sims asked about the completion and location of the USCT. Neal answered that the estimated completion date is October 2025, and the statue will be located on Library Square.
- **Programming Updates:** Samples updated the Board on two upcoming events, both at the Ron Robinson Theater. The first is a screening of the documentary, *Free For All: The Public Library*, on April 1, 2025. The screening is in conjunction with Library Giving Day. Amanda Jones will discuss her book, *That Librarian: The Fight Against Book Banning in America*, as part of the CALS Speaker Series on April 17, 2025. Evans mentioned that she had attended two events at the Ron Robinson Theater recently and both events were well-attended by the public at-large. She complimented CALS staff on this.
- **Next Board Meeting:** The next Board meeting will be April 24, 2025, at Rooker Library.

3/27/25

2. Move to Adjourn

Neal called the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to be "Neal", written over a horizontal line.

President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "K. L. ...", written over a horizontal line.

Secretary