Minutes for Special Called Meeting on August 27, 2026

The special called meeting on August 27, 2026, was called to order at 5:00 pm in the meeting room of the library by President Mike Waters. Present were Merritt Cason, Heather Wren, Mike Waters, Sharon Jenkins, Kathy McDuffy, Karen Squires, Tray Murray, and Acting Director Mary Adkins. Absent was Lillie McDonald. She did however come in a few minutes later. Visitors present included Teal Lowring, Richard Strong, Virginia Webb, and District Attorney Julie Jones. Kenya Iverson arrived later. Mr. Waters led the group in prayer and in the pledge of allegiance. The minutes of the meeting held on August 20, 2026, were read by Dr. Adkins. Sharon Jenkins moved that the minutes be approved, and Kathy McDuffy seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

The old business began with comments from President Waters who encouraged all to be respectful of one another and to remember that all present were adults and should act accordingly. President Waters then introduced the District Attorney and explained that she had requested to be on the agenda so that she could address some points that she felt needed to be addressed. She explained that she is the advisor of the board when it comes to legal issues. She stated that the Library Board of Control is a public body, subject to open meeting laws. In addition, she stated that the board is not a unilateral board, and that all decisions must be made by the board as a whole. She encouraged the board to ask someone from the auditors' office or the attorney general's office to present a session on open meetings laws so that all board members can get a better understanding of the laws. Karen Squires said that she had spoken to someone about possibly going to Baton Rouge or having a zoom class so that we can all be together. Merritt Cason made a motion that the entire board attend an open meetings law class as soon as one can be arranged. Tray Murray seconded the motion, and the board approved the motion unanimously.

The next point of discussion was about an initial probationary/evaluation period for the new director when hired. She said that the evaluation period could be for 3 months or 6 months. Page 43 of the library policy manual outlines a 6 month evaluation period for library employees. Merritt Cason made a motion that we ask the District Attorney to word the policy for us and that it be adopted by the board. Karen Squires seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The third point discussed was background check policy and procedure. Unfortunately, there is not a background check policy for the Library Board of Control. DA Julie Jones said that no one should be doing background checks without the approval of the board. The application for the director's position does say that background checks may be done, but it must be a decision made by the board as a whole. Page 120 of the library policy manual states that there must be written permission from the person being checked. Mike Waters asked who creates the policy for background checks, and Julie Jones said she, as the district attorney, could draft a policy. She said that a background check could be done before or after the new director is hired, depending on how the board chooses to do it. Karen Squires made a motion that the board ask the district attorney to draft a background check policy and procedures for the Library Board of Control. Merritt Cason seconded the motion. Karen Squires also made a motion that the board ask the district attorney to include in our background check policy and procedures support staff, volunteers, contractors, and others employed by the library. This policy would also include the members of the board. Tray Murray seconded the motion. Both motions were approved by the board by a majority vote. The next question was whether the board was to continue with the second interviews for the top three applicants. Karen Squires made a motion that the board proceed to the second interviews after the board has participated in an open meetings law session, established policy and procedures for background checks, and approved the salary schedule for the director and other library staff. Kathy McDuffy seconded the motion. The motion was approved by majority of the board. At this point, President Waters spoke to the applicants for the director's position, apologizing to them that they had made time for the second interviews but that those interviews would be rescheduled for another time.

The next point of discussion involved the timeliness of submission of applications for the Library Director position. The district attorney stated that the board should have made the decision to accept the application that was submitted past the 4:00 pm deadline stipulated in the Natchitoches Times, which is the parish's journal of record. The decision should not have been made by Mr. Waters and Mr. Murray alone, but should have been brought before the board. The district attorney said that this matter should be tabled until she could gather additional information. Tray Murray made a motion to table the discussion until more information could be gathered, and Heather Wren seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Several board members asked permission to move down the agenda to the discussion of the proposed pay scale for library employees, including compensation for the new director. When Ms. Jones said that the move could be made, Ms. Sharon Jenkins began the discussion by giving all members of the board copies of the salary schedule on which the finance committee had worked. Each position in the library, including the director, was assigned a starting salary.

The salary for each position was given a starting figure. Current staff members would use that same figure but would have additional money added to the hourly wage, based on their number of years of experience. After discussion, Merritt Cason moved that the pay scale be approved for new hires. The motion was seconded by Karen Squires, and the motion passed unanimously. Merritt Cason also moved that the salary schedule be approved for current staff members, based on the information from Ms. Carolyn Hayes at the Police Jury office. Karen Squires seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. When Ms. Jenkins submits the information to the board, the board will discuss.

Prior to adjournment, Karen Squires spoke about some of her concerns about rumors she had heard and that she believed that all of our conversations need to be transparent and fair. Mike Waters, Sharon Jenkins, and Merritt Cason expressed their beliefs that it was important that all of us should deal in facts and try to be honest and not swayed by rumors.

At the end of the meeting, Ms. Jenkins made a motion that Dr. Adkins be compensated for her time as the Acting Director, since she had not received a raise since she began working as Acting Director at the end of May. Kathy McDuffy seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously. Ms. Jenkins then moved that the meeting be adjourned, and Kathy McDuffy seconded the motion with unanimous approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25.

________________________________ Board President

__________________________ Acting Director