

**HEARTLAND LIBRARY COOPERATIVE  
GOVERNING BOARD**

Lake Placid Public Library – Meeting Room  
1069 US Hwy. 27 N., Lake Placid, FL

**Minutes to the February 23, 2022 meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Meeting was called to order at 10:40 a.m.

**ROLL CALL:**

Governing Board Members Present: Donna Storter-Long Chair Glades County; Sue Rood Vice-Chair Highlands County; Brad Goodbread Treasurer Okeechobee County ; Ann Ryals Desoto County; Judy Schaefer Commissioner DeSoto County; Jeanette Peeples Glades County; Judith George Commissioner; Julie Perry Glades County; Judith George Commissioner Hardee County; Jeannie Palacios Hardee County; Nicole Drake Hardee County; Arlene Tuck Commissioner Highlands; Denise Whitehead Okeechobee County; Lauri Benson DeSoto County; Sonya Chapa Assistant Coordinator Heartland; Vikki Brown Coordinator Heartland.

**Also Present:** Iris Perkins Librarian Glades County; Linda Waters Librarian DeSoto County; Kresta King Director Okeechobee; Dee Shackelford Librarian Hardee County; Janice Williamson Hardee County; Julie Fowler Auditor CliftonLarsonAllen; Cheryl Williams Accountant WicksBrownWilliams; Elizabeth Kenning Desoto County; Ingra Gardner Highlands County.

**Absent:** Mandy Hines Desoto County; Margaret Dewey Highlands County; Fran Syfrett Okeechobee County.

**ROUTINE BUSINESS:**

**Notice of Public Meeting:** Notice was properly given.

**Additions to Agenda:** Vikki Brown informed the Board that the financial statements had been received and the Board members would be given a copy through email; the financial statements are to be discussed and approved after the audit (5.b).

**Approval of the Agenda:** Brad Goodbread moved to accept the meeting agenda, Sue Rood seconded; unanimously passed.

**Approval of Minutes of September and November Meetings:** Sue Rood moved to accept the minutes of the previous meetings, Brad Goodbread seconded; unanimously passed.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Heartland Financials:**

- I. **CLA Audit Results Presentation**

Julie Fowler presented the audit report for the Heartland Library Cooperative in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2021. Julie highlighted points of the independent auditor report stating that the Cooperative received an unmodified or clean audit opinion. The statement of net position was also spotlighted with the Cooperative ending the year with \$666,000 in cash and overall assets of \$687,000. An amount of \$21,000 in accrued compensated absences, sick and vacation, that will come out of the Cooperative's budget for Cooperative employees, leaving a total of \$649,000 going into the next fiscal year. Julie also presented the original budget versus the adopted and final budgets for the fiscal year ending in September 30, 2021. The final budget was \$485,000, \$450,000 from State Aid and an additional \$35,000 in income from grants. Total expenditures were \$351,000 due to increased spending due to grants, resulting in an increase of \$134,000 fund balance for the year.

Julie presented the audit reports including the report on internal control, reporting that there were no findings that needed to be reported. There were also no findings that needed to be reported for the management letter. The report on compliance also found that the Cooperative was in compliance with State statutes. Julie reported that there were no difficulties that needed to be reported to the board as the audit went very smoothly.

Donna Storter-Long stated that this was a very good report. Brad Goodbread asked if any of the other county commissioners have ever had a Library representative present to the Boards of County Commissioners as a yearly report on the state of the Cooperative. Donna stated that usually only the budget and annual State Aid agreement is included for approval from the County Commissioners, but usually nothing else as far as presentation. Brad stated that this is all very good news and that usually these departments can be out of sight out of mind and it would be nice to receive a report and share the good news, services, and position of the Libraries with the Commissioners. Donna assured that Coordinators would be happy to provide the Boards with a yearly report and show the updates and changes since COVID. Donna called for a motion to approve the audit. Brad Goodbread motioned to accept the financial audit prepared by CliftonLarsonAllen as presented by Julie Fowler, Sue Rood seconded, motion passed.

## II. **Financial Statements**

Cheryl Williams presented the compiled financial statements prepared by WicksBrownWilliams as of January 31, 2022. Cheryl stated that this compilation report is not audited until year end, and includes the statement of revenues, expenditures, and changes in fund balance for the four months of the current fiscal year. Currently the Cooperative has a cash position of \$615,998; cash has gone down but this is expected as the Cooperative spends but State Aid has not yet been received. Accounts payable and approved liabilities with a little of \$4,000 booked in accounts payable with quarterly invoices still waiting to be received for staff wages. The statement of revenues, expenditures and changes in fund balance shows a current total revenue of \$6,719 and a budgeted revenue of \$653,235 with \$450,000 coming from State Aid and additional funds anticipated from grants; some of the grant funds have already come in. Cheryl reported that everything seems to be in line for the year. Total operating expenditures is currently \$65,066 which covers accounting, manpower, auditors and so on. Projected

expenditures is \$541,785 which is larger as expenditures are projected to increase to match grants. Expenditures currently exceed by \$101,000 but this is due to timing of receiving grant funds and will add up by the end of the year. Donna thanked Cheryl for presenting the Financials and for all of the good work that WicksBrownWilliams has provided.

### **Inter-locals & Public Information:**

Vikki Brown provided an update on the revisions to the Heartland Library Cooperative's inter-locals and bylaws. Vikki stated that we are working on correcting and improving the inter-locals and bylaws in order to represent how the Cooperative is today, with a focus on public records and ownership of the records by the Cooperative. The process is currently still being updated and should be provided to the Board for review in the May Governing Board meeting to send to all Counties and legal teams that represent the Counties. Donna Storter-Long asked when the last time the inter-locals and bylaws had been reviewed was. Vikki stated that it may have been in 2016 but that no major revisions had been done in a few years. The updates are needed to match the Cooperative's current guidelines and updated technology, especially concerning storing and owning of records. Donna asked where the records are stored. Vikki informed the Board that the Cooperative does have staff storage accessible by all seven Libraries where documents are stored and servers where staff emails are stored and maintained by our public records person, Paul Ramponi, who is the Cooperative's IT and ensures that the State public records schedule is followed.

### **Coordinator Evaluations:**

Vikki Brown informed the Board that the Assistant Coordinator evaluation was discussed at the last meeting and needed guidance from the Board. With the restructure of the Coordinator positions, it was stated that the evaluation of the Assistant Coordinator was to be carried out by Coordinator. Since then concern has been expressed that the Board should evaluate both positions in order to maintain fairness and an unbiased evaluation. Vikki asked the Board for guidance on whether the original statements should be followed or if the evaluations should be carried out in a different manner. Kresta King stated that she felt very strongly that evaluations should not continue to be put off as the Coordinators will soon be reaching their second year anniversary with no raise. Kresta stated that the Coordinators have navigated COVID, clean audits, maintained carry forward, received grants, and are always quick to lend assistance to the Librarians and more and are deserving of backpay at 5%. Donna Storter-Long stated that Iris as the new Glades Librarian can attest to the Coordinators assistance. Donna asked if the evaluation forms were complete. Vikki stated that she and Sonya Chapa were not involved in the process of creating the evaluation form but the Librarians were almost finished with the form. Kresta stated that there was never an evaluation form in the past, the Coordinator always received a 3% raise automatically to match their County. Kresta stated that the Board can vote today to provide the funds to the Coordinators stating that the only issue of discussion is whether the Assistant Coordinator should be evaluated by the Coordinator, and that this was stated in the hiring contracts as so. Donna asked why this was being brought to the Board from the last meeting. Vikki stated that the discussion was tabled to bring to this meeting to have a

fair representation from all Counties on the Board. Linda Waters stated that she brought the issue forward due to experiences in other Library fields, and that she felt the Coordinator should not be the sole evaluator for the Assistant Coordinator and the Board should be involved in the evaluation process for both as a means of providing protection for both positions; Linda assured the Board this had nothing to do with the current Coordinators, she was only speaking from outside experiences and wanted to ensure protection for the Coordinators. Donna agreed this was a valid point and also takes the burden off the coworkers. Jeannie Palacios stated that this was not an issue to bring forward right now as both Coordinators work well together, and the Coordinator will of course be more familiar with the work of the Assistant Coordinator than the Board, and that if the situation were to arise in the future the Board could change the evaluation process then. Donna stated that there should be a process to ratify how this is being done and the various parameters. Nicole Drake stated that she thinks that this should be done if the situation occurs as the Board is very removed from day-to-day operations of the Cooperative. Julie Perry asked if the Board could vote today to approve backpay for the Coordinators' first year of service and give staff and Board time to adjust the evaluations process in the future. Donna asked when backpay would need to be dated to; Kresta stated that the Coordinators were hired in May of 2020. Denise stated that she was comfortable evaluating the Coordinators now as they have been in the position for two years and the Board wants to make sure that the employees feel valued and recognized for the work they have been doing. Donna stated she was fine with evaluating now. Sonya Chapa asked for clarification for meeting minutes on the percentage that was being voted for the increase. Julie moved to evaluate and approve a 5% salary increase retroactive to May 2020 for both employees, Jeannie seconded, motion unanimously passed. Donna advised that the evaluation process should be adjusted to be preventative and provide protection. Ann Ryals moved to have the Board involved in the process of evaluating both the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator. Nicole Drake asked if this would be a percentage or rating scale. Linda Waters stated that it should be a Board representative. Kresta asked if the process could be the same for both Coordinators in the form of the Librarian's recommendation to the Board. Donna agreed that the Librarians know and interact with the Coordinators the most. Linda asked if the evaluation would be brought to the Board. Donna asked that the form that the Librarians use to evaluate be simple. Ann Ryals moved to have the Librarians jointly evaluate the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator to be compiled by one designated Librarian into a report and represented to the Board for approval and determination of increase amount. Julie seconded, motion passed unanimously.

### **IMLS ARPA "Outstretching Hands" Mobile Library:**

Vikki Brown presented the IMLS ARPA grant, a federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services American Rescue Plan Act Grant awarded to the Heartland Library Cooperative. This was a nationwide grant, and the Heartland Library Cooperative was one of only 101 Libraries chosen to be awarded across the country. This is a matching grant and the Cooperative will be using salaries to match a portion of the grant. This grant will provide a mobile Library that will visit each county once a month and designated spots, and will act as a mini Library with the same services as our regular Librarians. The van will also be available for

each Library to use for additional outreach and events. Vikki asked the Board for guidance and opinions on the two major purchases of the grant including the vehicle and solar powered generators. Vikki checked with the State to ensure that the purchase of the vehicle can be done following state guidelines through state purchasing contracts.

#### **I. Vehicle Choices**

Vikki Brown presented the three vehicle choices that were being considered for purchase for the Mobile Library. One of the options was no longer available at the time of the meeting due to stock issues. Vikki stated that the van choices were all listed as manageable cargo vans, easy to drive for all staff, and were priced around \$20,000 less than budgeted. Donna Storter-Long stated there may be modifications needed for shelving. Vikki stated everything would be removable from the van, nothing was to be fixed as all of the items will be removed for setup and patrons will not be entering the vehicle, but some safety modifications would be needed. Vikki also explained that the second choice presented was more expensive but also had a higher roof and that both choices would need a ramp added to accommodate loading and unloading materials. Nicole Drake expressed her support for the higher roof for the additional storage and comfort of the staff in maneuvering inside the vehicle. Vikki also stated that the van choices were local and would be easily serviced locally. Brad Goodbread stated that the higher roof would be a big factor in choosing the vehicle. Arlene Tuck asked if the van would be purchased with grant funds. Vikki explained the van will be purchased with the IMLS ARPA grant, funded to the Cooperative at a total of \$50,000, which will be matched by the Cooperative with salaries used as a portion of the match. Lauri Benson asked what the match for the grant was; Vikki stated it was 1:1. Brad Goodbread suggested the Cooperative purchase the Dodge choice due to the wheel base and provides more cargo space and is well within the budgeted funds. Julie Perry suggested starting smaller to start the program out with, and leaving the option to increase in size in the future. Denise Whitehead stated that we would not be guaranteed these funds in the future. Ingra Gardner suggested putting in more research into best practices that are being followed by other Libraries. Sonya Chapa informed the Board that the Cooperative is on a tight timeline as the grant should be completed by September 2022 and stated that Vikki has done extensive research into the options available for vehicle and other details of the grant. Brad Goodbread moved to purchase the second option presented, the Dodge Cargo Van, for the IMLS ARPA Mobile Library Grant, Jeannie Palacios seconded, motion unanimously passed.

#### **II. Solar Power Choices**

Vikki Brown provided the information on solar powered generator choices. Vikki explained that the purchase choices do not need to be approved by the Board but as they were large purchases, Board guidance was appreciated. The solar powered generators are more expensive but last longer, are quieter, and cleaner. Vikki recommended that Jackery model. Donna Storter-Long asked how the generators would be attached. Vikki stated that it would not be mounted but can be charged ahead of time and during the Mobile Library visits. Jeannie Palacios asked what items and technology would need powering. Vikki stated that the generators will provide the

laptops, printers, and hotspots. Nicole Drake asked about a power inverter option that may be cheaper. Vikki stated that she will look into more options. Donna stated that the purchasing options will be left to Vikki's discretion.

#### **LSTA ARPA Grant "Bridging the Gap" Agreement:**

Vikki Brown presented information on the second outreach grant awarded to the Heartland Library Cooperative, the Library Services and Technology Act American Rescue Plan Act grant for \$78,885 titled "Bridging the Gap". This grant provides tools to do outreach events in the community including table cloths, professionally printed brochures, tents, and more. This grant will also provide books to give away to the community. Vikki informed the Board that the main focus of the grant is to promote literacy among the community and provide outreach tools for the Libraries. Donna Storter-Long asked if the materials will be shared; Vikki stated that each Library will receive their own outreach Libraries. Brad Goodbread moved to accept the LSTA ARPA "Bridging the Gap" grant award, Sue Rood seconded, motion unanimously passed.

#### **LSTA ARPA GRANT "Reading Across Desoto": \$59,700**

Vikki Brown informed the Board that DeSoto County Public Library applied for the Library Services and Technology Act American Rescue Plan Act grant through the Cooperative. This grant was awarded to the Heartland Library Cooperative for \$59,700 and titled "Reading Across Desoto". This grant will benefit all of the member libraries through the purchase and access to additional e-resources and print materials. Linda Waters stated that Vikki Brown had done much of the planning but Linda was able to find a willing partner in the DeSoto County School Board to launch the program. Sue Rood moved to accept the LSTA ARPA "Reading Across DeSoto" grant award, Arlene Tuck seconded; motion unanimously passed.

#### **Member Comments:**

Judith George stated that she was happy to be here and is very impressed with everything the Cooperative is accomplishing.

Iris Perkins reported that the Art in the Park event was a great success for the Glades community.

Julie Perry stated that Iris has done a great job as the new Glades Librarian.

Arlene Tuck asked about the amount for the Bridging the Gap grant. Vikki Brown stated it was \$78,885. Arlene stated that we had one grant for \$50,000, one for \$59,000, and one for \$78,885, so she did not understand arguing about giving 5% to the Coordinators. Arlene asked if we needed to rescind the Assistant Coordinator rule for the evaluation. Sonya Chapa clarified that the first motion made and approved by the Board was to evaluate both Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator for an increase of 5%, and the second motion was to change the process of evaluations for the next evaluation. Donna Storter-Long stated that the next evaluation would be at the May meeting for both Coordinators.

Judy Schaefer stated that the annual report was great.

Dee Shackelford informed the Board that the Hardee Library has two new employees, Regina Ursery who has come from Highlands and Anne Caraway. Dee also informed the Board that she will be returning in July.

Lauri Benson stated that she was happy to be a part of the Board.

Linda Waters reported that DeSoto County Public Library is moving along and almost fully staffed.

Denise Whitehead stated that the Coordinators have done a great job and commended the Coordinators for the grant awards and all of the work they are doing.

Kresta King thanked the Board for letting her speak on the Coordinators behalf. Kresta stated that the Cooperative is the strongest she has ever seen it and is proud of the Coordinators and their bond.

Brad Goodbread reported that the Okeechobee Music Fest was being held next weekend, March 2nd that brings in 40,000 people to Okeechobee County. This is a big art and music festival event that is attended by people worldwide and nearly double the population of the County.

Sue Rood stated that she was glad the Library was back to normal hours and that patron levels are going up. Sue stated she likes the hotspots as they are all being utilized.

Jeannie Palacios stated that she came onto the Board when Kresta King was director and was working hard on the carry forward and she is happy to see the Cooperative has exceeded these goals.

Ingra Gardner praised Vikki Brown for her work and it is the highlight of her week to meet with her and is happy to have her as an employee.

Vikki Brown informed the Board that Highlands County is using some ARPA funds to provide 24/7 book vending stations to Highlands County. She is very excited for the community's access to these machines and the benefits it will bring to the County.

Sonya Chapa thanked the Board for their kind words and evaluations of the Coordinators. Sonya stated that Vikki Brown has worked extremely hard this past year on finding and completing grant work to provide resources to all of the Libraries. Sonya stated that like Sue Rood she was very happy to see how busy the Libraries are becoming again due to increased patron usage. Sonya stated that she was also happy that Okeechobee Library has been able to reach new communities with new programming and outreach and is excited for the new opportunities provided by the grants.

Vikki Brown informed the Board that the Cooperative has applied for two more grants including a board games grant to provide additional and new programming and a graphic novel grant to bolster graphic novel collections and Comic Con style programming.

Donna Storter-Long stated that she is happy to hear about more grants. Donna stated that the Board appreciates all of the efforts of the Coordinators. Donna has been on the Board since 2006 and appreciates everyone's attention and participation on the Board.

**Next Meeting:**

Wednesday, May 18, 2022.

**Adjournment:**

Arlene Tuck moved to adjourn the meeting, Brad Goodbread seconded, motion unanimously passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:04 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sonya Chapa