

Jasper Municipal Library Board Meeting
January 21, 2025
Held at
Carolyn Stewart Public Library

M I N U T E S

This is the first meeting of the newly established Jasper Municipal Library Board. The meeting was duly advertised in compliance with Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 8, Chapter 44, Section 103, Open Meeting Law.

Call to Order. With a quorum present, the inaugural meeting of the Jasper Library Board was called to order by Ann Gray, interim Library Director at the CSPL promptly at 5:00 p.m. The following members were present: Les Price, Ann Brown, Greg Hutchins, Carolyn Stewart, Ben Bumpus, Sally Moore, and Amy Fowler. Absent: None. Others present: Kate Huddleston, Stones River Regional Director, Ann Gray, Director of CSPL, Barb Roberts, President of the Friends of the Library (FOL), Jarret Goodman, Report for the Marion Tribune, and Mayor Jason Turner.

Introductions: Ann Gray welcomed everyone and thanked them for finding the time in their busy schedules to contribute to their library. Public libraries are important and the Jasper community and the Town of Jasper have always been extremely supportive of their library. This always has made this library and this community different from the others in Marion County. The circulation is the highest (by 5 times) and has the most patrons (by 6 times). The fact that CSPL will now be overseen by its own designated library board will make a huge difference in progress and growth in the future. Everyone knows that the current footprint of the facility is too small. The library was built in 1968, expanded with the addition of this community room in 1988 and now the space is completely filled with the various department collections: adult, young adult, children, audios, movies, and computers. More room is needed to program more than one event at a time – one room has its limitations – and then special programming can be separated from library activities.

After everyone introduced themselves (and confirmed their contact information for future communications), it was re-stated that CSPL and the town are truly fortunate to have everyone – with diverse backgrounds and knowledge – willing to serve on the new library board.

Review of Board Member Responsibilities. Kate Huddleston distributed packets of new board member information. Within each packet was explanation of the oversight and support of the TN Secretary of States Office, State Library & Archives, applicable state laws to how business is conducted and exactly what business it is that the new board will undertake. All library board members are required to take on-line training classes. At the end of the training, each member will receive a certificate. While this is individual training taken at each individual's own time, all

training must be completed by June 2025. The importance of this is two-fold: one – new board members will have a better understanding of the context of their work and what they need to do for the library. And two – with a fully trained and engaged board, the state awards extra points when and if the library applies for Technology Grants. She further explained that her role is advisory but we are one of many library boards that she attends, she has most likely encountered a similar library issue and will gladly provide advise us as how to move forward. The primary take away is there is a firm foundation of state government that is there for all local library boards administration – therefore as a new municipal library board, know that we are not alone – and conversely, library support is deep and wide.

The Start of a New Era. The shift in administration from the Marion County Library Board (MCLB) to the Jasper Municipal Library Board has not been smooth. CSPL checking account, established in 1972 for library operations, was confiscated. While this account was publicly audited by the MCLB, it belonged to this library. Builtwell Bank allowed our \$17,900 - an accumulation of fines, fees and donations- to be taken by the county library board without any notification to the co-signers on the account. Discussions with the state comptroller's office and our attorney continue on this matter.

Additionally, the Marion County Commission evenly allocates funding to the MCLB for re-distribution to each library. When Jasper terminated their involvement with the MCLB in October, the first quarter of 2024-2025 fiscal year was complete. Since CSPL funding amount was \$67,000, our remaining county funds amount to approximately \$50,000. The mayor has requested to meet with the MC Finance & Budget Committee has since October. We were advised by the State Librarian to approach them and request a re-allocation of funds that would provide equal fund sharing. Since all the libraries remain as MC libraries, we continue to provide services to all the citizens in MC. For the record, CSPL serves over 12,900 peoples -the largest segment of MC population.

Several comments were made during the meeting expressing concern of inappropriateness and possible illegal actions taken by the MCLB. It was important that the Jasper board members understand the financial complexity of where CSPL stands – that the library has limited available funds and we start out. In addition, it is just as important for the new board to understand the opportunity of being on a board responsible for one library. And the direct impact it can make on its future. The new library board can focus exclusively on finding funding to do that. Focus can also be on writing programming grants that the funds will remain here and not be given to another county library. This new library board will allow the library to become even more important to the town and MC through more dedicated services and expanded capabilities.

Attached to and made part of these minutes is a monthly circulation report of CSPL.

Election of Officers. In getting started, officers needed to be elected. After a brief discussion, the following individuals were nominated:

Chair: Sally Moore

Vice Chair: Les Price

Secretary: Amy Fowler

A motion was made by Greg Hutchins, seconded by Ann Brown to adopt the aforementioned slate of officers and to have this slate be the first executive committee of the Jasper Municipal Library Board. All voted aye.

Since the library is now a department of the town and all the librarians are town employees, human resources and personnel matters are managed by the town. If there needs to be additional support, discussions, or involvement of the library board relative to library financial matters in the future, the library board may choose to appoint a special committee to address this matter.

Memorandum of Effort (MOE). Attached to and made part of these minutes is the revised 2024-2025 Public Library Maintenance of Effort Agreement from the Office of the Secretary of State. As you can see, the Town of Jasper appropriates \$192,000 annually to the library. They will continue to commitment to this funding level. (To remain in compliance with state law, the town cannot reduce their amount of funding to their public library once it has been committed. Funding can increase but not decrease). However, to navigate through the loss of county and library operation funding for the current 2024-2025 fiscal year, the town has agreed to make a one-time gift to make up the missing library funding so that the library can continue to operate without interruption. With the election of officers, Kate Huddleston will send a revised form and Chair Sally Moore will execute the revised MOE on behalf of the Jasper Municipal Library Board.

Recommendation to Board of Mayor & Aldermen – Library Director. Attached to and made part of these minutes is a job description for the Library Director. For the record, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen appointed Ann Gray as interim library director in October. She has served as the library director at CSPL since February 2023 but was hired by the MCLB. In accordance with state law, TCA Title 10, Chapter 3, it is the responsibility of a municipal library board to nominate an individual to serve as the library director to the town's governing body. **A motion was made by Les Price and seconded by Amy Fowler to nominate Ann Gray to be the CSPL Library Director. All voted aye,**

Other Updates. CSPL lost its website in November. Without any warning, we were removed from the MC Public Libraries website and it became an immediate problem for us and many patrons that use the CSPL website for information and to review the library's card catalog. The

town posted the library's card catalog to the CSPL Facebook page in December. But as of Friday, January 17, 2025, CSPL new website can be found at www.Jasper-tn.com/, Click on Departments, Click on Municipal Library. We have connected our website and our Facebook page so that it is easy to go back and forth. The website houses the Library Calendar of Events, announcements, and other programming information. This is also where meeting agendas and approved minutes of the Jasper Library Board will be posted.

Summer Reading Program (SRP). This is an annual children's literacy program across the state and CSPL has participated with it for over 50 years. This year the theme (as dictated by the Tennessee state-wide summer reading program consortium) is "Color My World". The library is already brainstorming on how to interject Art in our programming and readings. Ann Gray has written a Dollar General Literacy Foundation Grant (asking \$1,600). This is a national competition and while she wrote a successful grant in 2024, the funds were redirected to Whitwell's library. According to Ann Gray, the odds of another application from this area being funded is low but nevertheless, she wanted to try to secure funding to the children that participate with the program here – again, the largest crowds in the county for the entire 6-weeks of programming. In addition, Ann Gray will be seeking local funding from the Marion County Chamber- Spencer Wayne Small Business Administration Grant (asking \$300-\$500) and the Sequatchee Valley Electric Coop – SVCares grant (asking \$500), as well as reaching out to local individuals and business sponsors for their fiscal support (in 2024 the library received over \$6,000). Programming is just beginning. Our annual SRP budget is approximately \$4,000-\$4,500.

While everyone had received a copy of proposed bylaws and policies in December, they were not discussed due to the lateness of the meeting. Ann Gray will reach out to everyone individually to discuss impressions, approach, areas of concern, and how to move forward. And, if needed, a special-called committee meeting can be held to begin the work of reviewing and adopting governing documents.

Name of the Library – Carolyn Stewart Public Library vs. Jasper Public Library. IF the name of the library was going to revert back to Jasper Public Library – now would be the time to do it. The Board of Mayor and Aldermen named the library after Carolyn Stewart, when she retired in 2020 after 45 years as the Library Director. In recognition for her public service and excellent work, the Jasper Public Library was changed to honor her. Ann Gray approached Carolyn Stewart and asked her what her wishes were. Carolyn Stewart acknowledged the it was an honor and privilege to have the library named after her and that she wanted it to remain. She greatly appreciates the honor. End of discussion.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 15, 2025, 5:00 p.m. at CSPL.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:25.