

Regional Board Meeting Minutes

November 10, 2025

Board President Larry Alexander called the Southeast Arkansas Regional Library Board meeting to order at 10:30 AM. Those in attendance in person and via Zoom were board members Kim Forrest, Diane Parnell, Nancy Vittitow, Judi Fava, Ruth O'Loughlin, Vertie Staples, Larry Alexander, Mary Jo Tucker, Gaynell Jamison, Reathel Privett, Elgenia Ross, Vicki Ross, Vernestine Wilson, Cristy Dunnahoe, Regional Director Hunter Bennett, and SEARL Digital Projects Coordinator Jennifer Knight. Visitors included Robin Cooke via Zoom.

An amended agenda was presented for approval due to last minute changes. Motion made by Cristy Dunnahoe to accept the amended agenda with a second by Reathel Privett. Motion passed. Minutes from the August 2025 board meeting were presented for approval. With no corrections or additions, Vertie Staples made a motion to accept the minutes as read with a second by Nancy Vittitow. Motion passed.

Financial Report

Regional Director Hunter Bennett presented the financial report in printed form. Reathel Privett made a motion to accept the financial report with a second by Vernestine Wilson. The motion passed.

Director's Report

Regional Director Hunter Bennett gave her report on the third quarter of the year. Ronda Best is the new branch manager for Hermitage Library. Most of the third quarter was spent in trainings, including a webinar on how to help patrons use Candid, a foundation directory for non-profits searching for grants and scholarships. Candid is the new pilot program launched by the Arkansas State Library. Director Bennett reported several branches have had technology issues causing replacement of equipment. Star City Library received new phone and internet service provided by C&L Broadband through the electric cooperative. The Monticello StoryWalk is open for visitors. Director Bennett stated that several branches hosted Library Card Sign-Up Month events. The new blood pressure kiosks are installed and being used frequently. She also announced a Courthouse Kiosk was installed at the Monticello Branch, and Manager Shannon Rodriguez was awarded the Outstanding Pro Bono Community Member Service award by the Arkansas Access to Justice Project. Reathel Privett made the motion to accept the Director's Report with a second by Cristy Dunnahoe. Motion passed.

Committee Reports

The Budget/Finance Committee reported they completed an internal audit for FY2024 per the SEARL policy. The Board will have the chance to review the audit and discuss at the February 2026 Board meeting. During the internal audit, the Budget/Finance Committee recommended that the Region begin paying for the health insurance for any employees working thirty or more hours per week to make it uniform across the board as

thirty hours per week is considered full time now. The Committee also made the recommendation that once employees reach certain milestones with the Region (five years) they will be offered the opportunity for the Region to pay for dental/vision insurance and their Region-provided life insurance. Policy changes will be made and ready for approval at the February 2026 Board meeting; the Committee requested the changes go into effect January 1, 2026. Diane Parnell made the motion to accept the Employee Benefit Change with a second by Vertie Staples. Motion passed.

New Business

First item under new business was the preliminary FY2026 budget. Director Bennett discussed the changes to the budget and stated this was a preliminary budget as several line items were not finalized due to waiting on insurance information. A finalized budget would be approved at the February Board meeting. The budget also includes a three percent (3%) COLA for most employees. Director Bennett also requested that the remaining budget from FY2025 be rolled over and included in the FY2026 budget. Elgenia Ross made a motion to accept the preliminary budget, the salary raise, and rolling over the FY2025 budget with a second by Diane Parnell. Motion passed.

The next item under new business was the Christmas bonus for Headquarters staff, branch managers, and library assistants. Director Bennett presented the request to the Board. Gaynell Jamison made the motion to approve the Christmas bonuses with a second by Kim Forrest. Motion passed.

The final item under new business was a bank letter for Hermitage Branch Library. Vertie Staples made a motion to remove Lynda Greene from all Hermitage Branch Library bank accounts, create a debit card for the account, and add Ronda Best as the new manager to the library bank account. Nancy Vittitow seconded the motion; motion passed.

Correspondence

No correspondence this quarter.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Announcements

The next Regional Board meeting will be held on Monday, February 9, 2026, at the Monticello Branch meeting room. Diane Parnell made a motion to adjourn; Gaynell Jamison seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:02 AM.