

Minutes, Spanish Fort Library Board, Monday, April 21, 2025

The Board of Directors of the Library Board of the City of Spanish Fort, Alabama, met Monday, April 21, 2025, at 3:00 p.m., at the Spanish Fort Community Center, that being the scheduled date, time and place of such meeting.

The following Board of Directors were present: Curt Smith, Carl Gustafson, Shane Perry, Stephen Winn and Mary Brabner. Mayor McMillan, City Attorney David Conner, Librarian Shanavia Reed and City Clerk Rebecca Gaines were also present.

Director Brabner gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the prior meeting of January 6, 2025, meeting, were distributed to each member, and Chairman Smith called for any corrections. Chairman Smith announced that the minutes were approved as submitted.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Chairman Smith opened the floor to public participation. The following individuals addressed the Board:

1. Kristy McClellan, 86 Ciasson Trace, Spanish Fort, stated that she has spent numerous hours in the Spanish Fort Public Library with her 9th grade son, in all sections of the library, to find books on his reading level. Ms. McClellan indicated that it was for parents to determine what books their children should read. Ms. McClellan remarked she did not favor a policy of automatically removing books from circulation if they were challenged or received complaints.
2. Elizabeth Denham, Mobile, Alabama, stated that she lived in Spanish Fort for 10 years. Ms. Denham stated that she objected to a policy which presumes LGBTQ books are obscene or violate state standards. She noted the Library Board has directed books on LGBTQ, eating disorders, suicide and other topics to be moved to the adult section. Ms. Denham remarked that LGBTQ books were removed to the adult section without a hearing, including board books aimed at 1-3 year old children which were moved to the young adult section. Ms. Denham remarked that courts have determined that moving books can constitute censorship. Ms. Denham further remarked that the Library Board is overreaching the mandates of state policy and that LGBTQ books are not sexual content. Ms. Denham remarked that books with LGBTQ characters and books with sexual content are not the same. Ms. Denham also asked why Library Board meetings are not recorded and why Library Board minutes and agendas are not posted on the Library website.

3. Mara Henderson, 331895 Bob White Road, Loxley, Alabama, stated that she is a licensed therapist. Ms. Henderson stated that reshelving some LGBTQ books into the adult section was an overreach of state mandates. Ms. Henderson stated that representation matters, and there is no one right way to be a family. Ms. Henderson stated that children need to know different families exist, and if a line is drawn starting with LGBTQ, then where does it go from there.
4. Nathaniel Pendergrass, 7182 Maury Circle, Spanish Fort, Alabama, addressed the Board. Mr. Pendergrass stated that the policies under consideration define LGBTQ as obscene. Mr. Pendergrass stated that the policy is discriminatory and compared the policy to discrimination against women involved in the suffrage movement and those involved in the Civil Rights movement. Mr. Pendergrass invited the Library Board to discuss the policies with the Spanish Fort LGBTQ community.
5. Angie Hayden of 910 Silver Creek Court, Prattville, Alabama, remarked that it is important to take material as a whole. Ms. Hayden remarked that placing books with LGBTQ orientation and gender in the adult section was prejudicial and harmful. Ms. Hayden remarked that people who are on the side of relocating books claim to doing such to protect children, but they are not protecting all children, only those who are like them.

NEW BUSINESS

Librarian Report

Chairman Smith called upon Librarian Shanavia Reed who presented the Librarian's Report. Ms. Reed stated that the library has seen 26,000 items circulated since the January Library Board meeting and has 131 new borrowers. There was a wonderful turnout for the Spring Break movies days, with 78 attendees for two movies. The Friends of the Library provided popcorn and cookies. There will be an Easter-themed story time on April 22, 2025. Ms. Reed discussed Summer Reading. The theme is "Color Our World". Sponsors are donating gift cards, and Newk's sandwich artists have presented a sandwich-making class. The Library is working on an Adulting 101 program to teach skills to young adults. The romantic book club meets on Tuesdays, and the quiet book club meets on Thursdays. Discussion followed.

Holiday Closings

Chairman Smith called upon Ms. Reed who presented a request for additional closing and/or early closing dates for the Library. Discussion followed.

A motion was made by Board Member Brabner and seconded by Board Member Gustafson to add additional Library closures on May 24, 2025, July 5, 2025, August 30, 2025, November 29, 2025, and early closure at 4:30 on December 31, 2025. Discussion followed. Chairman Smith called for the polling of votes. Voting "aye" were Directors Gustafson, Perry, Winn, Brabner and Chairman Smith. Voting "nay" were none. Chairman Smith announced the motion carried, and the additional closings approved.

Discussion of Effects of Elevator on Library Functions

Chairman Smith called upon Ms. Reed who discussed the impact of the elevator on Library functions. Ms. Reed also remarked on the need to rearrange Library collections to protect small children from accessing the elevator area or the Senior Center hallway area. Discussion followed.

A motion was made by Board Member Brabner and seconded by Board Member Gustafson to rearrange the Library, close the Library as needed during that time and paint the walls near the existing children's area as needed. Discussion followed. Chairman Smith called for the polling of votes. Voting "aye" were Directors Gustafson, Perry, Winn, Brabner and Chairman Smith. Voting "nay" were none. Chairman Smith announced the motion carried.

Discussion of Library Policies

Chairman Smith called upon Shanavia Reed and City Attorney David Conner who discussed Alabama state policy requirements for libraries and proposed amendments to the Spanish Fort Public Library policies. Discussion followed.

A motion was made by Board Member Perry and seconded by Board Member Winn to postpone action on the proposed amendments until the next meeting to be held on May 5, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. Discussion followed. Chairman Smith called for the polling of votes. Voting "aye" were Directors Gustafson, Perry, Winn, Brabner and Chairman Smith. Voting "nay" were none. Chairman Smith announced the motion carried.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Adopted and Approved this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Rebecca A. Gaines
Secretary