

St. Charles Parish Library
Board of Control Special Meeting
September 29, 2025 at 6:00pm

MINUTES

A special meeting of the St. Charles Parish Library Board of Control was held at 6:00pm on Monday, September 29, 2025 in Council Chambers at the Courthouse in Hahnville.

Members Present: Beverly DeLaune, Robin Robicheaux, Stephanie Mire, Charlene Alexander-Armstrong, Sarah Sacra, and Holly Fonseca

Members Absent: Annie Harmon and Randy Matherne

Staff Present: Leann Benedict and Lauren Pitz

Others: Justin Aubert and Lauren Stelly

Mrs. DeLaune called the meeting to order and asked all to stand for a moment of silent prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. DeLaune asked for approval of the minutes of the July 15, 2025 meeting. Mrs. Mire moved that the minutes be approved as e-mailed. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Armstrong and passed unanimously.

The attendance report for board members was completed.

The next agenda item was Public Comment. There were no requests for public comment.

The next agenda item was the Librarian's Report. Mrs. Benedict gave the following report:

We closed out another successful summer reading program at the end of July, and I've given you two charts showing reading challenge completion and program attendance. 2,406 patrons signed up for the reading challenge, a slight increase from last year making it another record-breaking year for sign-ups. 1,491 patrons completed the challenge of reading at least 360 minutes. This is a 2% increase in the number of completions compared to the previous year, with a small decrease in teen and children's completions but another record-breaking number of adults completing the challenge. This year, our community reading goal was 2,750,000 minutes and our patrons rose to the challenge and read 3,181,352 minutes. This beat last year's record by more than 389,000 minutes. Great job reading St. Charles Parish! We held a total of 357 programs throughout the months of June and July, with a total of 7,728 patrons attending. We did see a slight dip in overall program attendance from the previous year, but overall, we still saw great attendance.

The grand prizes were once again generously provided by our Friends of the St. Charles Library, and we thank them for their continued support! This year's summer reading challenge prize winners were:

Kids

Kids Tablet: Maverick Metrejean
LEGO Set: Rubie Harrell
Bike and Helmet: Riley Santacruz

Teens

Fire Tablet: Aiden Lewis
LEGO Set: Maddox Sockwell
Drawing Tablet: Elijah Bourgeois

Adults

Kindle: Danna Plaia
Lafon Center Tickets: Jeanna Broussard
Artist's Gift Basket: Miaojuan Xie

September is Library Card Sign-up Month, and we have been encouraging library cardholders to tell us what they love most about our Library for a chance to win a library prize pack. Patrons still have time to enter and can go to <https://www.myscpl.org/librarylove> where they can enter their contact information and tell us what they love most about our library. All ages can enter but you do need to have a valid St. Charles Parish Library card to be eligible to win. One entry per person. Winners will be randomly selected at the beginning of October. Library staff and board members and their immediate family members as defined by the Louisiana Ethics Board are not eligible to win but can still go in and tell us why you love the library. Below are just a few of the comments we have received so far:

- The makerspace is awesome. I also love having our tiny library in Norco. The library is the last space in America that you can go and not have to spend any money. Y'all are a treasure.
- I love the diverse programming, the attractive and welcoming facilities, and most of all—the people. Dedicated, hardworking, kind and responsive librarians make me proud to be a resident of St Charles Parish.
- I love all the activities provided for my kids! I am a foster parent, and it is a blessing for me to be able to provide great enriching activities for the kids who stay with me. They love it too!
- I love that the St Charles Parish Library got me back into my love for reading! The staff is always wonderful, and the summer challenges are so awesome.
- The library continues to evolve to address community needs. From adding digital resources, computer access, great meeting spaces, activities for all ages, to the recent maker's space addition. The library has it all!

Patrons who don't have a library card or who have misplaced theirs can stop by any library branch to get a free library card! As a reminder, anyone who lives, works, goes to school, or

owns property in St. Charles Parish is eligible for a free card! So come by and see us to get a library card!

In August, the library joined the *Check Out Louisiana Museums* program. This is a statewide initiative led by the State Library of Louisiana to provide public library patrons with free access to museums and cultural destinations through electronic passes. The program supports lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and community engagement. All adult cardholders can reserve an electronic pass to participating museums to explore our state's unique history and culture at no cost. Most passes are good for two adults and two to three children. Visit CheckOutLouisiana.org to see the list of participating museums and reserve your pass. Some of the museums included are 1850 House, The Cabildo, Capitol Park Museum, National World War II Museum, New Orleans Jazz Museum at the Old U.S. Mint, The Presbytère, and the West Baton Rouge Museum.

The library has a new partnership with Loyd Bourgeois of LJB Legal to offer free notary public services to residents of St. Charles Parish. This walk-in service will be offered once a month to support individuals who may need help notarizing personal documents, affidavits, or school forms. No legal advice will be provided, and documents will not be drafted or prepared. If a document requires witnesses in addition to the notary, patrons must bring their own witnesses. All parties signing documents must present valid photo identification to verify their identity. The first one was in August at the West Regional Library and the second was on September 18th at the East Regional Library. The next one is scheduled for October 16th from 1-3pm at the Paradis Branch and another one will be held on December 18th at the Norco Branch. Patrons can drop in at any time between 1pm and 3pm on those dates with their documents.

On Tuesday, September 23rd at 2pm, we held a ribbon cutting to celebrate the opening of our Makerspace at the West Regional Library. Approximately 30 people attended the event, including parish president Matt Jewell, Parish CIO Anthony Ayo, Councilwoman and our board ex-officio Holly Fonseca, our board president Beverly DeLaune, board member Sarah Sacra and many others. The Friends of the Library provided refreshments for the event.

On Wednesday, October 8th at 10am in the large meeting room at the East Regional Library, the library will be receiving a donation of a Tactile Braille American Flag and an accompanying plaque from the Louisiana/Mississippi Blinded Veterans Association Regional Group, Inc. Members of the BVA will speak about the flag at the presentation. The Bronze Braille American Flag is 12"x13" wide and weighs about 15 pounds. The accompanying plaque is 8"x10" wide. The flag and plaque will be installed at the East Regional Library in a location to be determined that will be easily accessible to all our patrons, including those in wheelchairs.

In staffing news, Stephanie Whittington joined our team in June as a part-time Floater, Bailey Favalora joined the team in August as a part-time Makerspace Assistant, and Marvel Bennett is our new part-time Custodian for the Norco and Hahnville branches. I'd also like to congratulate our Hahnville Branch Supervisor Destani Cornell who recently received her

master's degree in library and information science from Louisiana State University. We are very proud of her for her hard work and dedication!

The next agenda item was Communications. Mrs. Benedict informed the board that Mrs. Annie Harmon has submitted her resignation from the Library Board, effective September 30, 2025.

The first item of unfinished business was the Hahnville Branch Library Project. Mrs. Benedict let the board know that Justin Aubert from Grace Design Studio and Lauren Stelly from Woodward were present in the audience and would be able to answer any questions the board may have. Mrs. Benedict then gave an update on the status of the project. She informed the board that the library received the 30% cost estimate from the CMAR at the beginning of August. The initial estimate, which was based on the plans the board had seen at a previous meeting, came in much higher than expected at 10.3 million. The library has since been working with the architect and CMAR to make some cost-saving changes to the plans which were sent to the board with the agenda. Some of the cost-saving elements being considered included the following:

- Reducing the size of the meeting room from 2259 square feet to 1274 square feet (for comparison purposes the East Regional Large meeting room is 1284 sq ft)
- Removing the Bonus Room (505 square feet). We would add 142 square feet to the Teen Room to make more room for there to be "hang out" space for our teens in this room.
- Reducing the size of the parking lot from 100 parking spaces to 62 parking spaces (38 are required by code, but the library would like to ensure there is adequate parking for when they do larger-scale programs)
- Moving the building forward on the property to help reduce the amount of concrete needed
- Decrease the size of the canopy in the front of the building

With these changes the revised 30% CMAR estimate is \$9,178,357. Mrs. Benedict informed the board that she is working on the 2026 budget, which will be sent to the board soon, and she anticipated including an increase in the budget line for this project. The library's current fund balance is \$16,576,074 so Mrs. Benedict believes that with the changes made, there are enough funds available for the project with the proposed changes. The library will continue working with the CMAR and architect to try and reduce costs. As they work towards the 60% estimate.

Some discussion followed and Mr. Aubert and Mrs. Woodward answered questions from the board. Issues discussed included the detention ponds, the amount of parking, meeting room capacity, and a generator for the building. The discussion concluded with the board requesting that the architect and CMAR provide estimates for a larger parking lot and for a generator for the building.

The next item of unfinished business was Hurricane Ida Recovery Update. Mrs. Benedict informed the board that she has spoken to legal and Parish President Jewell and the matter is still under litigation.

The next item on the agenda was New Business. The only item of new business was the annual evaluation of the Director. Mrs. Armstrong moved that the board go into executive session for the purpose of the annual evaluation of the Director and Mrs. Robicheaux seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Following the evaluation, Mrs. Alexander moved that the board end the executive session and Mrs. Mire seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The final agenda item was Public Comment. There was no public comment, but Mrs. Benedict did add two items to the librarian's report. Mrs. Benedict informed the board that the library was one of 50 libraries in the nation to host the Americans and the Holocaust Traveling Exhibit. This is an educational initiative of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the American Library Association. The display will be at the East Regional Library from December 5, 2025 through January 10, 2026. There will be special programming held during that time. The library has partnerships with the school system to bring students to see the exhibit. More information will be coming soon so stay tuned to the library's website, social media, and the newsletter. Mrs. Benedict also informed the board that they have just finished recarpeting and repainting the meeting room area of the East Regional Library.

There being no further business, Mrs. DeLaune called for a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Mire moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mrs. Armstrong seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.

APPROVED:

Beverly DeLaune, President
St. Charles Parish Library Board

Leann Benedict, Secretary
St. Charles Parish Library Board