

**Meeting minutes of the Tazewell County Public Library Board of Trustees held at the Tazewell Train Station, 135 Railroad Avenue, North Tazewell, Va., May 18, 2023, at 3:30 p.m.**

**Present:** Regina Roberts, Chair  
Ginger Branton, trustee  
Patsy Murphy, trustee  
Karel Ryan, vice chair  
Connie Bailey, trustee  
Lisa Tyson, Youth Services Librarian, Tazewell Branch  
Erica Galloway, TCPL Director  
Cassie Ogle, TCPL Technical Services Librarian

**Absent:** None

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting called to order by Chair Roberts at 3:41 pm.

**2. CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING THE AGENDA FORMAT**

**ADDITIONS/DELETIONS:** Trustee Kitts requested to add a discussion about the Richlands Branch under new business. Trustee Branton requested adding an update on the post office box and the story walk under unfinished business. Trustee Murphy requested adding an update on the Library of Congress surplus books program under unfinished business. Chair Roberts requested a follow-up on the Millions of Minutes program, the payroll budget discrepancies, and the Emma Yates exhibit under unfinished business.

Trustee Branton made a motion, with a second by Trustee Ryan, to accept the agenda with the requested additions. With all in favor, and none opposed, the motion carried.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Trustee Branton, Chair Roberts, and Trustee Kitts submitted corrections and clarifications to the April 21, 2023, minutes. There was a discussion regarding the Dolly Parton Imagination Library among the Trustees. Chair Roberts stated that the Board of Trustees would not be the organization handling the program, that they did not need to proceed with a further discussion.

Trustee Murphy made a motion, with a second by Trustee Branton, to approve the minutes with the suggested changes. With all in favor and none opposed, the motion carried.

Chair Roberts requested that the annual election of the Board of Trustee officers be added to the next meeting agenda under new business.

#### 4. DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Friends of the Library: The FOL met at Tazewell on May 18, 2023. The new little free library at Asbury Square in Bluefield was unveiled.

Foundation Update: The next Foundation meeting is on May 23, 2023 at 10:30 in Richlands. The Appalachian themed fundraising dinner is on Sunday, May 21, 2023 at the Front Porch on Main. Chair Roberts and Director Galloway met with Mr. Huber and he is currently working on the bid packet for phase II of the Richlands renovation project.

#### General Update:

- The pop-up library at the Tazewell County administration building is going well and seeing steady patron traffic.
- The construction start date for the Tazewell location was pushed back a week and is now scheduled to begin on Monday, May 22, 2023.
- Staff worked hard to cover and protect the collection at Tazewell. The youth services department has moved what they expect they will need for summer reading program out of the building and into the library van.
- Some Tazewell staff are working at other branches. The library admin staff are working at other branches and from home.
- Richlands renovation construction is going steady. Chair Roberts attended the Richlands Town Council meeting and a town council member inquired if the library would be closed during renovation. At this time, Mr. Huber does not expect to have any long-term closures during the renovation. Chair Roberts stated that they plan to wait until the Tazewell location reopens if the Richlands branch needs to close for construction. Trustee Branton sent construction photos to the Town of Richlands and Director Hall to be posted on their Facebook pages. Chair Robert also stated that the Richlands Town Council inquired about the delivery

- date for the windows as the Phase I construction is expected to be completed by the end of the month. Trustee Ryan expressed concerns about the long-term maintenance of the exterior paint by the Town of Richlands.
- Summer reading program will kick off with three performances at each of the county middle schools by Didgeridoo Down Under on June 1, 2023. The Tazewell County Board of Supervisors donated funds for petting zoos to be held in each of their districts. Lisa Tyson handed out copies of the summer reading program calendar to the Trustees.
  - There has been little participation in the Millions of Minutes Warmup that started though the elementary schools.
  - The library is continuing their partnership with Feeding Southwest Virginia for the summer reading program. There are some restrictions about sites so Tazewell will not be providing food this summer. Lisa Tyson explained the program's restrictions and logistics.
  - The post office box situation was resolved and new keys were issued.
  - Smyth County Public Library will officially join the Holston Associated Libraries on July 1, 2023. Their Sierra launch date is June 28, 2023. Staff from all HAL libraries were able to attend two weeks of training. TCPL will see a reduction in HAL membership cost with the addition of another library to the consortia. HAL directors were contacted by other area libraries that expressed interest in joining the consortia, but the high cost may prevent them from joining.
  - Kelli Hicks was hired as the custodian at the Bluefield branch.
  - Lisa Tyson will be recognized by a resolution at the June 6, 2023, Tazewell County Board of Supervisors meeting. Director Galloway will send an email to the Trustees when the meeting agenda is released.
  - The Teetotalers and Moonshiners: Prohibition in Virginia traveling exhibit from the Library of Virginia is expected to be installed at the Bluefield branch on June 12, 2023.

- The application for state aid is due soon and Director Galloway brought a form for Chair Roberts to sign.
- Chair Roberts added that Sam Johnson, CPA, mailed the tax postcard for the Foundation Board.

## 5. FINANCIAL REPORT:

- a. As of April 30, 2023, the library had spent \$996,063.20, 63.71% of the annual budget.

Director Galloway met with Aaron Gillespie last week and the payroll budget discrepancies will be discussed at the next budget committee meeting. Chair Roberts suggested following up with the budget committee in a couple of weeks.

Chair Roberts reported that the Town of Richlands made the second payment of their three installments toward phase I of the Richlands renovation project.

Trustee Ryan requested that it be noted in the minutes that the Foundation Board funded the project so far using only the funds generated from the capital campaign fundraising and has not needed to borrow any additional funds. Chair Roberts plans to work with the Town of Richlands to clarify the lease terms and to get them to support a line item in their budget for the upkeep of the building. She also committed to providing the Town of Richlands with a detailed financial report for phase I. Phase II is close to being fully funded but the Town of Richlands has not given any funds toward the second phase so far.

Trustee Branton expressed concerns that she had received from community members that wanted to know how much money was raised during the Mad Hatter fundraising dinner. Wendy Barringer, treasurer of the Foundation Board, is working on creating better procedures for tracking fundraising activities. Chair Roberts requested that when the fundraising report is finished that it be added to the Foundation Board's portion of the library's website.

- b. As of April 30, 2023, the library had received \$10,303.44 in fines and business service fees.

**6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- a. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library – Chair Roberts asked to skip this topic as it had been discussed previously in the meeting. Director Galloway provided the Trustees with a handout for the program. Chair Roberts stated that the expected cost of the program is \$30,000. Trustee Ryan asked if the focus could be shifted to funding the Babies Need Books program developed by Lisa Tyson instead. Lisa Tyson gave a history of the Babies Need Books program and the emphasis on providing board books instead of paper books to babies so that their initial experience with books is not a negative one. Chair Roberts suggested speaking with the Richlands Lions Club, presenting to the Foundation Board, and to check on getting the project started with Clinch Valley Medical Center.
- b. Louise Leslie Recognition – Trustee Ryan suggested having a portrait of Louse Leslie created in the same size and style as the one of her mother that is on display at the Tazewell Library.

Trustee Ryan made a motion, with a second by Trustee Kitts, to request that Director Galloway approach the historical society to obtain a suitable photograph of Louise Leslie. With all in favor, and none opposed, the motion carried.

Chair Roberts requested to keep the topic on the agenda under unfinished business.

- c. Story Walk in Richlands – Director Galloway researched options but asked for more direction on the styles of displays to focus on. Trustee Branton suggested that the displays should be able to be attached to lampposts. Chair Roberts requested that Director Galloway to create a budget, a list of suggested supplies,

- labor costs, and a list of people and organizations to reach out to for partnership, fundraising, and to complete the installation.
- d. Library of Congress Surplus Books Program update – Trustee Murphy spoke with Caleb Dishman from Morgan Griffith’s Abingdon office. The selection of books from the Library of Congress was completed and a box of books were shipped to each library. Director Galloway confirmed that the box for the Tazewell library was received. Chair Roberts suggested to send a thank you letter to the Washington DC office staff that went to the Library of Congress to select and ship the books. Chair Roberts also asked for an itemized list of the books received and to keep the topic on the agenda for the next meeting.
  - e. Library Association Recognition – Trustee Ryan wants to ensure that the application process is started in enough time. Director Galloway stated that it is on the July meeting agenda. Chair Roberts asked for Director Galloway to research and present the details of the application process and deadline at the next meeting.
  - f. Emma Yates Exhibit Event – Trustee Branton plans to speak with the Historic Crab Orchard Museum staff about an event at the end of the Emma Yates exhibit. Chair Roberts requested that she present her ideas at the next meeting.

**7. NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. Review of Fine Free Policy & Results from the Past Year – Director Galloway handed out the patron comment and statics documents. Most patron comments were positive, with only two negatives. Trustee Kitts made note that many of the comments mention a reduction in stress. Cassie Ogle presented the statistical findings including the financial impact.

Trustee Ryan made a motion, with a second by Trustee Murphy, that upon finding that the impact on the budget is negligible, to make youth cards fine free permanently. With all in favor, and none opposed, the motion carried.

Trustee Branton asked if this would need to be reviewed in the future. Director Galloway stated that all policies should be reviewed regularly.

- b. Review of Strategic Plan – Trustee Ryan made a motion, with a second from Trustee Branton, to table the topic until the next meeting. With all in favor and none opposed, the motion carried.
  
- c. Richlands Branch Discussion – Trustee Kitts read aloud a letter that she wrote to the Trustee members regarding the vote to replace the curtains in the Richlands branch children’s department. Trustee Ryan suggested asking the Virginia Library Association for legal guidance on how to address this and similar situations such as censorship. Chair Roberts stated that there was a quorum and a vote, but Trustee Kitts stated that a call for the vote was not clear on the recording and the vote may not have followed parliamentary procedures. Trustee Kitts also made note that the vote was based on an anonymous complaint tied to fundraising and the complaint was not made to the library director or staff. Trustee Ryan also expressed concern that the board voted based on an anonymous complaint. Chair Roberts stated that any item causing a disruption should be considered, especially if it is something considered a symbol for a special interest group. Trustee Ryan said such disruptions are opportunities to educate people. Trustee Ryan asked if complaints could not be brought forth during the Public Comment section of meetings. Trustee Kitts stated that she wanted to continue the discussion at the next meeting and Chair Roberts agreed to keep the item on the agenda.

Trustee Ryan made a motion, with a second by Trustee Kitts, to ask the director to research what the Virginia Library Association recommends as the best practices

and standards for anonymous complaints and requests for censorship. Chair Roberts asked to also include documentation regarding special interest groups. During the discussion after the motion, Trustee Kitts stated that if someone wants to submit a complaint, it should be presented by that person at a board of trustees meeting or be brought to the attention of the whole board for discussion and review. She also stated that the guidance for the director regarding a complaint should come from the board of trustees, not the chair of the board. Chair Roberts stated that she approached Director Galloway with the complaints about the curtains because the board does not dictate what programs to have or not have or how to decorate the library and did not view it as a board matter. Chair Roberts also stated that if the board of trustees feels that the director is a problem through the programs that are offered in the community, the board has the authority to replace the director. Chair Roberts added that she also approached Director Galloway with the complaint because she believed that political involvement, agendas, and ideas were putting pressure on the chair. Chair Roberts stated that she wrote the letter not as the chair of the board, but as a citizen and to attempt to take pressure off herself. Trustee Kitts quoted the letter from Chair Roberts as saying that she had directed Director Galloway that it would be in the best interest of the library to take down the curtains. Chair Roberts rebutted that she did not direct Director Galloway to take the curtains down, it was a suggestion that in the best interest of the library that it should not be perceived that the library is catering to any special interest groups and that Director Galloway did not remove the curtains.

Roll Call Vote:

Trustee Ryan – Aye

Trustee Kitts – Aye

Trustee Murphy – Aye

Chair Roberts – No

Trustee Branton – No



With three in favor, and two opposed, the motion carried. The topic will remain on the agenda for the next meeting under unfinished business.

Trustee Branton wanted to note a clarification that the curtains were already going to be taken down when the windows were replaced so she volunteered to replace the curtains at her own expense.

**8. PUBLIC COMMENT:** No members of the public present.

**9. ADJOURNMENT:** Motion by Trustee Ryan, with a second by Trustee Murphy, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 pm.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 22, 2023, at 3:30 pm at the Tazewell County Administration building.

**Respectfully submitted,**

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**Cassie Ogle, Technical Services Librarian**

**Tazewell County Public Library Board of Trustees**

**Regular Meeting**

**May 18, 2023**

**Tazewell Train Station,**

**Tazewell, Va.**

**3:30 p.m.**

**MEETING MATERIALS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- 1. Agenda**
- 2. DRAFT Minutes of April 21, 2023**
- 3. Director's Report**
- 4. Letter to Tazewell Post Master**
- 5. Fine Free Statistics**
- 6. Fine Free Patron Comments**
- 7. Dolly Parton Imagination Library Handout**
- 8. Letter and accompanying documents from Trustee Kitts**



# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

march-april 2023

## FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY

- Met in person last week
- Unveiled a Little Free Library in Asbury Square in Bluefield

## FOUNDATION

- Next meeting is 5/23 at 10:30 at Richlands
- Appalachian dinner being planned for 5/21 at The Front Porch on Main in Tazewell

## LIBRARY UPDATES

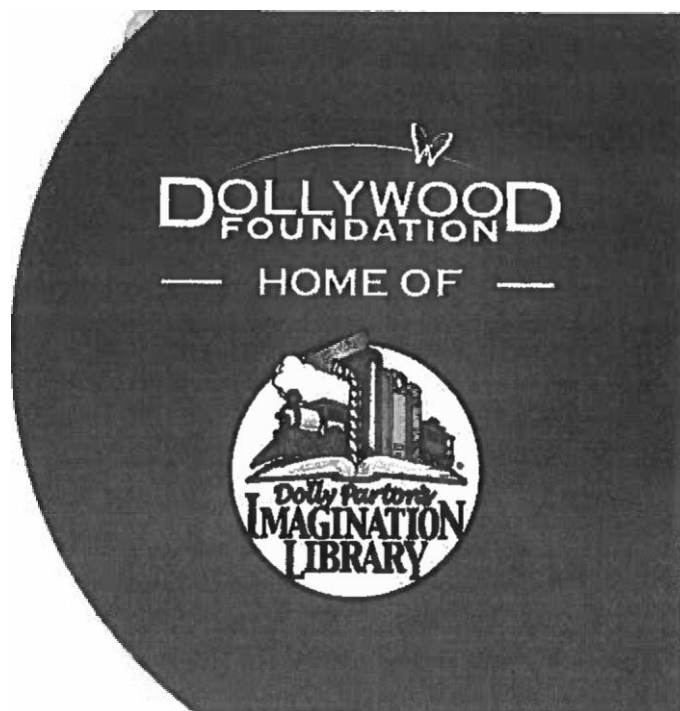
- Pop-up library in Tazewell Wed-Fri 11-1
- Update on Tazewell building
- Update on Richlands building
- Summer Reading
- Millions of Minutes
- Feeding SWVA
- PO Box issue fixed
- Smyth County migration update
- New hire- Kelli Hicks, custodian in Bluefield

## LIBRARY UPDATES & CALENDAR:

- May- Millions of Minutes "spring training"
- May 22- start of drilling on Tazewell
- June- Millions of Minutes, SRP begins; see Summer Reading Calendar!
- June 6- Lisa @ BOS meeting
- June 12- beginning of Teetotalers and Moonshiners: Prohibition in Virginia

That's it - It's that  
Easy!

Visit [www.imaginationlibrary.com](http://www.imaginationlibrary.com)



"You can never get  
enough books into  
the hands of enough  
children."

*Dolly*



# ▶ Quick Start Guide

**Hint:** Connect with local library, hospitals / birthing centers, daycare, preschools, pediatric medical facilities to locate families with eligible children.

## 5. Review Operations & Reference Guide

- ▶ Attend a virtual training hosted by The Dollywood Foundation team on the Book Order System (BOS)
- ▶ You will receive email with login and instructional information

a Facebook page, Twitter account etc.

Schedule event to coincide with a festival or other event. Have a booth. Give away books!

Invite local leaders

Have a prominent local leader read a book from the

Imagination Library

## 6. Host Rollout Event - Have Fun!

- ▶ Tell your local community about Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and start enrolling children!
- ▶ Send information to local media (Radio, newspapers, and television stations)
- ▶ Start a Facebook page, Twitter account etc.

### Operations manual provides details on:

- ▶ Instructions for database use & registering children
- ▶ Setting up your program website
- ▶ Promotion suggestions
- ▶ Brand Guidelines
- ▶ Authorized Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Photos & Videos
- ▶ FAQs
- ▶ Other resource materials

# ▶ Quick Start Guide

## 3. Secure Funding

- ▶ Forecast costs for the first few years and talk with local organizations to fund your program.

### COMMON FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS INCLUDE:

- ▶ Service Clubs (United Way, Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Key, etc)
- ▶ Community Foundations, Educational Foundations
- ▶ Friends of the Library
- ▶ Local Businesses · Churches · Local Governments
- ▶ School Systems (Title 1 Monies)
- ▶ Private Individuals
- ▶ Electric Co-Ops.

## 4. Reach out to your Regional Director and Complete the Paperwork

### ▶ Review and Sign:

- ▶ Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)
- ▶ Affiliate Information Sheet (AIS)
- ▶ Mailing Regulations Form

**Note:** You will have support and assistance every step of the way.

# Quick Start Guide

## 1. Define your Coverage Area

Choose Zip Code(s). School District or entire County

- ▶ The eligibility criteria for the Imagination Library is defined only in terms of the child's age and residence.
- ▶ Please do not limit registration based on socioeconomics, risk factors, participation in certain programs, parental factors or by any other means other than a child's age and residence.

## 2. Forecast Cost

Get the population total for "Under 5 years" and enter into DPIL Cost Estimator to understand how much

funding you will need.

[MCQ\\$/imaginationlibrary.com/usa/cost-estimat@r/](mailto:MCQ$/imaginationlibrary.com/usa/cost-estimat@r/)

## Steps to Get Started

1. Define your Coverage Area
2. Forecast Cost
3. Secure Funding (2 years min)
4. **Reach out to your Regional Director and Complete the Paperwork**
5. Review Operations & Reference Guide
6. Host Rollout Event - **Get Started!**



## Responsibilities of a Local Program Partner (Affiliate)

- ▶ Local Partner **must be or partner** with a 501(c)(3) or be a School District
- ▶ Publicize the program
- ▶ Register children via online registration (also use QR Code poster) or paper registration into The Dollywood Foundation database system
- ▶ Fundraise and pay the monthly invoice (annual cost is ~\$26/child/year or an average monthly cost of \$2.20/child/month)
- ▶ Connect with local post office and regularly pick up undeliverable books



## Start a Program

Getting Started is Easy!

  
DOLLYWOOD  
FOUNDATION  
— HOME OF —



Timestamp	Eliminating fines on kids cards is a positive policy change. (Required)	How has removing fines impacted (or will impact) your life? (Optional)	Additional comments or suggestions (Optional)
6/1/2022 13:35:04	5	<p>I think that it will be a great thing for children, I do worry about the parents like myself who have checked out books and kids books for them under our names, we will still have the fines to pay.</p> <p>I think it would be great to start this out with no one owing fines if you really want to get to the bottom of why people in this county is not going to the library. Its because of the fines, wouldn't it be amazing to start fresh with every account.</p> <p>The last time I went to pay fines over 2 years ago, they didn't take cards. My fines didn't get paid because I didn't have cash. At some point we need to evolve and have a system online.</p> <p>Also, we live in a poor community. You want to encourage the children to come and read when the parents aren't going to bring them because the have fines.</p>	<p>I wish there was a way to 1 sign up online, 2, Pay fees online. 3- Track your accounts online.</p>
6/10/2022 9:31:34	5	I can see a parent having to pay their fine before their child could sign up for a free card, hence why letting everyone start fresh would be amazing.	
	5	stress free for parents to visit library more	
6/10/2022 9:32:23	5	Less stress and fear of having books back late - more likely to checkout more books	
6/10/2022 9:33:04	5	Been a blessing having 4 kids...sometimes things come up and cannot get to library	
6/10/2022 9:33:31	5	this will be easier for Noah since he is homeschooled	
6/10/2022 9:33:55	5	Thank You	
6/10/2022 9:34:10	5		
6/10/2022 9:34:35	5	If we forget, we won't be fined!	
6/10/2022 9:35:18	4	It will positively impact my life...one less thing to stress over.	
6/10/2022 9:36:04	5	In case we cannot make the due date due to the increase in gas prices	Library activities are great
6/14/2022 9:54:26	5		
6/14/2022 9:54:57	4	This hasn't affected me.	
6/14/2022 9:55:27	5	Not	
6/14/2022 9:56:21	5	Considering I live outside library reach, its nice allowing my nieces to check all they want. Thank you!	
6/14/2022 16:29:53	1	We need to teach all group of people responsibility. Not at all - I will bring the books back in 2 weeks just like the adults.	
6/21/2022 10:47:30	5	Allowing children to learn responsibility through their own card is beneficial; however, a child should not be held responsible if someone is not available to transport them to return materials on time.	
6/23/2022 11:11:13	5	worry free library time!	
7/5/2022 10:54:12	5	With my crazy schedule I sometimes forget the due dates and I am on a limited income. Fine free helps me so much and I can actually afford to have my kids read new books.	
7/5/2022 14:36:49	5	Due to having two kids things get busy and sometimes forget what days to bring them back	
7/8/2022 14:18:34	5		
7/8/2022 14:18:50	5		
7/8/2022 14:19:14	5	Much appreciated!	
7/8/2022 14:19:37	5	Yes!	We love it
7/8/2022 14:19:50	5		
7/11/2022 12:47:38	2		
7/11/2022 15:54:26	5	I simply forget to return them on time. It makes me stress less and enjoy returning.	



7/19/2022 14:24:24	5	Sometimes I forget, it is nice to have a second chance, and no extra expense. Thank you!	We love our library!
7/19/2022 14:24:49	5	My children can now enjoy the library. Thanks.	
7/19/2022 14:25:08	5	Great for Parents	
7/19/2022 14:26:00	2	I think after a certain age (14) students should be held responsible to return books	
7/19/2022 14:26:11	5		
8/17/2022 10:05:49	4	I noticed the children's new books don't get returned as fast now. I wait over a month on most.	
8/17/2022 10:06:35	5		
8/17/2022 10:07:07	5	It makes it better for families who can't afford them.	
9/9/2022 10:40:43	5	letting my kids pick out more books and not worrying	
9/20/2022 17:24:20	5	It allows my child time to forget and remember to finish reading his books without the worry of renewing them and forgetting to	I love love love this policy
9/27/2022 9:06:58	5	Now I'll let my kids use their own cards at an earlier age.	
9/30/2022 9:22:43	5	It saved me \$ when our lives in total chaos & I could barley keep track of anything! Thank You!	
11/1/2022 14:47:33	5		
11/1/2022 14:47:49	5		
11/1/2022 14:50:13	5	help families in need, encourage literacy	
11/1/2022 14:50:24	5		
11/1/2022 14:50:41	5	It helps save money	
11/16/2022 9:27:31	5	Able to have card for each child. Yay! And I think this is good policy - fine free!	
11/16/2022 9:28:29	5		
11/16/2022 9:29:04	5	Given us more flexibility	
11/17/2022 13:41:48	5	Not as stressed if something comes up and I am unable to return for a few days after due date	
11/29/2022 9:37:56	5	I would be poor since I don't have fives to pay	
12/16/2022 10:05:54	5	Many children who utilize library services are low income and cannot pay fines that my have happened due to circumstances outside of their control. Eliminating those fines gives them more opportunity to continue to use library services.	
1/19/2023 11:50:40	5	I LOVE it! As a mom I have a hard time getting them back on time. If you had late fees I wouldn't check anything out!	
3/16/2023 11:07:11	5		
3/16/2023 11:57:25	3		
3/17/2023 21:14:06	5		

### TCPL Youth Card Fines Summary

All fines on youth cards recorded between 10-11-2001 and 08-08-2022\*

<b>All Charges Prior to 8/8/22</b>	<b>Charges</b>	<b>Payments Received</b>
Replacement Cost	\$ 73,936.36	
Less Amount Reduced for Returned Books	\$ (18,312.24)	
<hr/>		
Actual Replacement Cost	\$ 55,624.12	\$ 1,762.37 Manual Charge
\$ 202.99 Overdue	\$ 23,328.90	\$ 1,062.39
		12,920.18
<hr/>		
Total Charges	\$ 80,015.41	\$ 14,885.54 Total Payments Received
Waived/Non Payments		\$ 7,387.84
Total Money Owed as of 8/8/22	\$ 57,742.03	

\*This report does not contain information for past patrons that no longer have a patron record in Sierra or patrons that accrued fines when under age 18 but are now an adult.

#### One Year Fine Free Update:

##### Charges Accrued On Youth Cards From 5/23/22 to 5/8/23.

Manual Charges	\$ 18.10	Replacement Costs	\$ 4,604.94
Lost Books			\$ 85.57
<hr/>			
<b>Total Charges</b>			<b>\$ 4,708.61</b>
Total Unpaid Fines as of 5/8/23			\$ 4,137.71
<b>Total Fines Paid or Waived</b>			<b>\$ 570.90 12%</b>
<b>Current Total Number of Youth Cards</b>			<b>3342</b>
<b>Number of Youth Cards With Unpaid Charges</b>			
<b>Accrued Between May 22 to May 23 as of 5/8/23</b>			<b>76 2.27%</b>
<b>Total number of Juvenile &amp; Young Adult Items</b>			
<b>Total number of Juvenile &amp; Young Adult -</b>			<b>39,120</b>
<b>Items checked out May 2022 - April 2023</b>			<b>32,613</b>
<b>Total number of non-returned or damaged</b>			
<b>Items May 22 to May 23</b>			<b>192 0.49%</b>
Total Outstanding Amount Owed as of 5/8/23		\$	60,135.88
Outstanding Amount Accrued Prior to 5/23/2022		\$	56,293.01
<hr/>			
<b>Total Change in Outstanding Amount</b>		\$	<b>3,842.87</b>

05/17/2023

To: TCPL Board of Trustees

From: Connie Bailey Kitts, Trustee, Eastern District

Fellow Trustees:

I was not present for last month's Trustee meeting, but I have listened to the recording that goes along with the minutes. Parts were hard to hear and I might have missed it, but on the agenda item regarding the Richlands Branch and the motion on the curtains, it sounded like there was no clear call for a vote and abstentions, according to parliamentary procedure. Could someone verify?

It was clear from the meeting discussion and attachments to the minutes, that the decision to remove the rainbow curtains in the Richlands branch was influenced by the complaint of an anonymous person(s) who perceived that the curtains were promoting the interest of a group of people who use a rainbow as a defining symbol. And that it would be best for our fundraising to remove the curtains.

This raises some questions and concerns:

1. What procedures or policies do we Trustees have for handling complaints like this, including anonymous complaints or feedback?
2. Are we even allowed to act on an anonymous complaint? Our public comment policy requires citizen identification and verification of being a county resident. You may have seen that a councilwoman on another public body was recently criticized in a newspaper editorial for introducing an anonymous complaint (attached).
3. How would we handle similar complaints in the future? For example, if someone complained about a Christmas tree or a book someone does not like?
4. Could we be legally or ethically liable <sup>1</sup> by even appearing to make a decision based on potential monetary gain, or being controlled by special interest individuals, or acting on anonymous complaints that clearly have a discriminatory basis? Could it put grant money at risk, and hinder future grant applications?
5. Should we have waited until all Trustees were present to make this decision, since all districts could be affected by the precedent?
6. Was the anonymous complainant encouraged to *first* speak with the library director about the curtains and their origin? Were they donated, or chosen to match a literary theme, overall room design or educational objective?

For our own protection as a governing body, that carries legal liabilities, and to protect our responsibility to all our constituents, I recommend in this case that we backtrack, undo what was done in the last meeting, and discuss policies <sup>2</sup> and procedures for handling issues like this before we make any decision.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Page 4 <https://www.lva.virginia.gov/lib-edu/LDND/PublicLibraryTrusteeHandbook19FINAL.pdf>
2. <https://vpl.virginia.gov/tff/trustees/short-takes-for-trustees/>,  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1j8woMiuXXrhcRSyznd6a4dNIbRd1CkHi>

# Tazewell County Talk

By EARL COLE | OPINION PAGE "Everything on this page is my opinion and it is my constitutional right to express my opinion."  
THE VIEWS, CONCERNS AND STATEMENTS EXPRESSED ON THIS PAGE DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THOSE OF THE VOICE

## Anonymous letter

**A can of worms has been opened. To read an unsigned email into the record was wrong.**

By Warren Hinkle

Bluefield Town Council member Cathy Payne read an anonymous email during the March 8 meeting.

Payne said following the previous meeting, when the video went online, she had received several phone calls and an email from a citizen who did not want to sign their name because of "repercussions."

What is most concerning is that Bluefield Mayor Donnie Linkous allowed Payne to read this unsigned email.

The letter accused some members of the council of bullying other members into voting for a resolution in favor of a proposed outdoor learning center at Graham High School.

The letter said everyone knows the problems with using Mitchell Stadium, but the writer felt some of the council members jumped the gun in supporting the proposal when it is being placed in a residential area.

The anonymous author also felt that

proper procedures were not followed. But apparently that same author felt that an anonymous letter was proper procedure.

The author of the letter even accused a council member of discrimination because Payne is a woman and was not told the resolution was being brought up.

Reading from the letter, Payne stated that it should be obvious the project would not be wanted in the area.

The proposal, according to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Chris Stacy, will use tents to serve as outdoor classrooms so students can have more outdoor experiences. These will not only be used for PE classes but also can be used by the band, science and other classes. While there is a possibility of one day constructing a stadium at the school, this is not in the planning for the outdoor learning center.

The author said the behavior of the council members should not be tolerated by the community. If the author was truly that concerned, why not attend the council meeting to say so?

Should all citizens of Bluefield now write anonymous letters every time there is something the council does

that they don't agree with? Will each and every one of these letters be allowed to be read to the council and into the record, no matter which council person receives them? If they aren't, then we will know who is really the bully and who is being discriminated against.

Town council chambers are where local laws are written and many important conversations that affect every resident of the town take place. It is wrong to allow anyone to hide behind the cowardly title of "anonymous" there. But once you open that door you should move swiftly to close it for good and apologize for allowing it — or prepare to allow everyone to tell you whatever they wish ... anonymously.

All the councils across Tazewell County set aside a time for public comment at their meetings. If the author of the letter was so concerned, they should have attended the meeting in person and faced those they were accusing.

Councilwoman Payne and the mayor have opened a can of worms. Neither exercised good judgment. To use an unsigned email was just wrong.

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

"We are more powerful when we empower each other."

unknown



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March 23, 2022 The Voice

## TAZEWELL COUNTY TALK

### **Anonymous letter**

**A can of worms has been opened. To read an unsigned email into the record was wrong.**

By Warren Hinkle

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Payne has now opened a can of worms. To use an unsigned email was just wrong.