



**Jane B. Holmes
Helena Public Library
Board Meeting**

Meeting Date: September 18, 2025

Submitted by: Ginger Klein, Secretary

Attendance: P=Present A=Absent

Minutes Approved:

P	Mr. Brian Peters, Chair	P	Mr. Dan Dearing (Library Director)
A	Mrs. Karen Scott	P	Mrs. Laura Joseph (City Council Representative)
P	Dr. Michelle Wilson	A	Ms. Nancy Farris
P	Mrs. Ginger Klein	P	Ms. Tracy Arnold (Library employee)

The meeting was called to order at 4:33pm by Mr. Brian Peters. Mrs. Scott and Ms. Farris were absent from the meeting. The remaining board members were present so there was a quorum.

Mr. Peters asked for any corrections or additions to the minutes from the May 8, 2025 meeting. No corrections/additions were noted. A motion was made by Dr. Wilson and seconded by Mrs. Klein to approve the minutes as presented. There was no opposition to approve the minutes from May 8, 2025.

New Business:

1. Library Report:

- a. Mr. Dearing asked Mrs. Klein to update the board on the discussion at the last city council meeting regarding the library's potential role in helping the city become a designated Bee City. Mrs. Klein reported that Mrs. Jill Jones, a Helena resident, gave a presentation at the September 8, 2025 council meeting to recommend suspending or modifying the city's mosquito spraying regimen. Mrs. Jones also suggested that Helena could attempt to obtain Bee City status which would further help pollinator populations. Mrs. Klein had talked with Mrs. Jones about the possibility of

the library assisting in that effort by providing a location for a pollinator garden, a venue for pollinator education through their periodic presentations, and as a place to swap or donate pollinator-friendly plants at the library's plant swaps. Mr. Dearing expressed some concern about a pollinator garden at the entrance to the library due to the potential of bee stings. It was decided to wait and see what progress is made toward becoming a Bee City and the library's ability to be involved.

- b. Mr. Dearing reported that Donna Willis, former Friends of the Library President, brought a metal file box and \$950 in cash that she had recently rediscovered and had been the property of the Friends group. He suggested contacting a lawyer to see what to do with the money. He thought perhaps the money could be deposited into the general fund or into the library foundation account which is used to hold funds from the Belk fundraising sales. Mrs. Joseph suggested reaching out to Brian Hayes, city attorney, for guidance.
- c. Mr. Dearing informed the board that Representatives Paschal and Hulsey and Senator Weaver will be presenting their grant checks to the library at the next city council meeting on September 22, 2025.
- d. Mr. Dearing stated that the city spent \$23,000 to install a new air-conditioning unit and \$2,300 to repair the skylight at the library. He also reported that the new furniture had been assembled and placed in the seating area of the library.
- e. Mr. Dearing said the library will have a table at the Buck Creek Festival which will take place October 10-11, 2025.
- f. The next library book sale is scheduled for October 16-18, 2025.
- g. The Helena Belles have continued to volunteer in the library assisting with projects.
- h. Storytime at the library has gained in popularity and crowd size has reached toward 60 patrons which is close to capacity.
- i. Mr. Dearing reported that the library had historically purchased advertisements in the Shelby County Reporter in an effort to support the local newspaper and also to promote the storytime events. He showed the board what a typical ad space would look like and reported that the cost is \$15 a week for 8 weeks. He said that they had not purchased the ad space for the past year and wanted to know if the board thought it was worthwhile to begin paying for the ads again. Dr. Wilson and Mrs. Klein stated that they did not think it was worth the cost since the ad space was so small, the paper distribution was questionable, and the storytime was already reaching capacity so there was no need to promote it. Mr. Dearing will let the paper know that the library is not interested in purchasing ad space at this time.

- j. The library sporadically receives enquiries from residents wanting to read to children at storytime. Sometimes the requests come from people wanting to promote their businesses or organizations or from public figures. Recently Miss Shelby County approached the library about the opportunity to read at storytime. Mr. Dearing would like to get a policy in place for consistency. He will reach out to other libraries to see if they have policies in place to help guide him and Ms. Arnold in drafting a policy to review at the next board meeting. For the time being, only library employees or contracted professionals will be allowed to read at storytime.
- k. Mr. Dearing said that he had submitted the library's budget proposal to the city but approval is still pending. Mrs. Joseph stated that the current council suggested a 90-day pause on approving the budget in an attempt to allow the incoming administration the opportunity to have input since they will ultimately be responsible for maintaining the budget.

2. APLS Letter :

- a. Mr. Dearing provided a copy of a letter drafted on July 15, 2025 by Mr. John Wahl on behalf of the Alabama Public Library Service regarding federal grant funding and compliance with a January 20, 2025 presidential executive order on gender ideology. A copy of the executive order was attached to the APLS letter. Basically, libraries are immediately required to "review their collections, programming, and policies to ensure that no federal grant funds are used to promote gender ideology in any form." Mr. Dearing said that the library staff has not found any books or programs that were problematic. He also indicated that the storyteller had been made aware of the restrictions.

3. State Aid Report:

- a. Mr. Dearing stated that State Aid must be spent by October 1st. According to the report provided, \$11,035.47 was spent on print, \$1,207.45 on audio/video, \$1,472.01 on Operations, and \$7,742.35 on programming for a total of \$21,457.28. He stated that an extra check totaling \$1,600 had been received and will be used to pay the storyteller.

4. Grant Report:

- a. Mr. Dearing provided a summary of the grants received and/or anticipated. They included a \$1,000 grant from a new donor, The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Their representative requested the funding be used to purchase adult and juvenile books

about STEM, the building trades, job trades and training, and Birmingham and Alabama History.

- b. The \$5,000 check from Representative Leigh Hulsey arrived two weeks ago. Mr. Dearing is proposing to use half of the funding for juvenile and teen fiction and half for replacing grid shelving where the paperbacks are currently located.
- c. The \$10,000 check from Senator April Weaver has not yet arrived. Library staff will review their wish list and revise and will have a proposal for the board at the next meeting.
- d. Last year Representative Ken Paschal provided a \$3,500 grant. The plan is to request/utilize the funding for large print books, new games and Legos for existing programs, and other programming and collection needs.
- e. The library received \$5,000 last year from Representative Russell Bedsole. The plan is to request shelving upgrades and books for non-fiction and biography sections.
- f. Vulcan Materials typically provides a \$1,000 grant. If received, the request will be to use it for STEAM books for young people.
- g. Last year Representative Arnold Mooney gave a \$2,500 grant. He prefers his funding spent on materials for children. Library staff would also like to consider using some of the funds for Hoopla, Libby, or Hot Spots if the city decides to cut any of those services.

Old Business:

- 1. Required Document Review.
 - a. Due to time constraints, review of the by-laws was once again tabled until a future meeting.
- 2. Upcoming Board Meeting Dates.
 - a. It was decided to cancel the previously-scheduled October 16th meeting since it would be so close to today's make-up meeting. The existing board will be dissolved on Monday, November 3, 2025 when the incoming mayor and city council members will be sworn in. Applications for the new library board will be collected and once the new members are appointed they can set future board meeting dates.
- 3. No one from the public was present, so there were no public comments.

Mr. Peters asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Mrs. Klein to adjourn and was seconded by Dr. Wilson. The HPL voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:42pm.