

**BLACKWATER REGIONAL LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
July 16, 2025**

Present

MeChelle Blunt – Southampton County
Ora Briggs – Sussex County
Sylvia Claggett – Isle of Wight County
Deborah Dawson – Surry County
Charlene Herrala – Isle of Wight County
Pam Lease – City of Franklin
Karen Richardson – Sussex County
Judge Alfreda Talton-Harris – City of Franklin
Johanna Wiggins – Isle of Wight County
Ben Neal – Library Director
Bonnie Lauver – Assistant Library Director
Debbie Carter – Budget & Finance Manager

Remote (via Zoom)

Absent

Jennifer Cuthbertson – Southampton County
Kathy Lippard – Isle of Wight County

Chair, Deborah Dawson called the meeting of the Blackwater Regional Library Board of Trustees to order at 3:12 p.m. at the Franklin Branch.

Consideration of Remote Meeting Participation Requests

None

Agenda

Ms. Lease moved, and Ms. Herrala seconded that the agenda be approved as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Minutes

Ms. Briggs moved, and Ms. Lease seconded the minutes be approved as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Public Comment

None

Correspondence

None

Library Director's Report

Libraries served as cooling centers during heat wave in late June.

Summer Reading Program is off to a solid start with over 5,000 children's books checked out during kick-off week!

Library held first Community Conversations event for Strategic Planning process at Storehouse Coffee in Franklin. About 20 members of the community attended, and future events are being scheduled for late summer.

Mr. Neal presented a Fiscal Year Statistical Update highlighting changes in library use, growth in circulation and active users, and market penetration of our service area.

Committee Reports

Budget & Finance – Ms. Lease – no report

Personnel & Policy – Ms. Briggs – no report

Long Range Planning – Mr. Neal – working on the next Community Conversation in Carrollton. There is a micro community conversation planned in Sussex on July 19, 2025. Board Retreat in September will be a planning/work session to draft the Strategic Plan.

Accounts Payable

Ms. Briggs moved, and Judge Harris seconded that the accounts payable be filed for the Annual Audit. The vote was unanimous.

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

Amended FY2025 Annual Budget – A draft of the amended FY2025 Operating Budget was included in the mailed Board packet. Ms. Lease moved, and Ms. Herrala seconded the amended budget be accepted as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Committee Assignments – Committee assignments for FY2026 were distributed in the meeting handouts.

Board Member Comments/Announcements

Ms. Herrala – was saddened that Windsor's summer reading program was cancelled on 7/15

Ms. Wiggins – Smithfield's 100th Anniversary celebration was covered in the newspaper

Judge Harris – enjoyed Franklin's Community Conversation and is hopeful that the conversations will be learning tools

Ms. Richardson – happy to be on the Board

Ms. Briggs – Community Center will be helping 125 families with meals for one month!

Announcement of Next Meeting

The next Blackwater Regional Library Board of Trustees meeting will be Board Retreat on September 17, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. at the Franklin Branch. The Board meeting will immediately follow.

Adjournment

Ms. Lease moved, and Ms. Richardson seconded the meeting be adjourned. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Carter for
Ora Briggs, Secretary