VENUE: Eudora Welty Library / Virtual Meeting

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Rickey Jones called the meeting to order at 4:09 p.m.

MEDITATION: Mr. Chester Ray Jones gave the Invocation.

ROLL CALL:

**Trustees Present at Welty Library:** Chairman Rickey Jones

**Trustees Present via GoToMeeting/Virtual Conference:** Dr. Alferdteen Harrison, Mr. Chester Ray Jones, Mrs. Sue Berry, Mr. Ricky Nations, Mrs. Imelda Brown, and Mrs. Mary Garner

**Trustees Absent:** Dr. Earline Strickland and Rev. Danny Hollins

**Also Present:** Ms. Kimberly Corbett, Interim Executive Director, Mr. Justin Carter (Director of Finance), Mrs. Brenette Nichols (Human Resources Assistant), Ms. Miao Jin (Director of Technical Processing), Ms. Shannon Presley (IT Administrator), Mr. Joe Schutt (IT Technician), Mrs. Ellen McLean (PR/Publicity Coordinator), and Mrs. Judith Turnage (Executive Secretary)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF OCTOBER 27, 2020

Mr. C. R. Jones moved, second by Mrs. Imelda Brown, to approve the Draft Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting held on October 27, 2020. With neither opposition nor abstentions, the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA FOR DECEMBER 1, 2020 MEETING:

Dr. Alferdteen Harrison moved, second by Mrs. Imelda Brown, that the Draft Agenda be approved as revised. With neither opposition nor abstentions, the motion carried.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS:

Finance Director, Justin Carter


*Check Register – October 1, 2020 through November 23, 2020

*Gifts and Donations Report for November 2020

Mr. Carter opened by stating that he had not sent out the bank confirmation letter of account balances but he would send them to each Trustee; the balance of the General Fund is $623,153.00, and he will send the other balances.

Mr. Carter also stated that he had sent a supplement to the revised budget for the 20/21 fiscal year to demonstrate the standing of the budget currently and how much the expenses are each month. Mr. Carter reviewed the revised budget and noted that the City of Jackson has determined it will do away with bi-monthly payments to JHLS but will remit on a monthly basis as had been done in the past.
Mr. Carter suggested that it might be advisable for the Finance Committee to meet at least quarterly to examine the status of the revised budget vis-à-vis actual income and expenses.

As there were no questions from the Trustees regarding the Financial Report, Mr. Carter continued his presentation by explaining that part of the process in getting the revised budget to balance was JHLS’ getting out of two contracts: CINTAS, Total Landscape, with the potential for withdrawing from two remaining: Pruett Contractor Services and the rent for the River Hills offices. He further stated that JHLS is approaching the three-month benchmark; JHLS has already paid $16,563 for the Pruett Contract and the River Hills rent is still owing. He reminded the Trustees the budget had been balanced on the premise that JHLS would be free of all the contracts. Mr. Carter reminded the Trustees that JHLS needs a letter from the Board to request the $70,000 stipend that had been negotiated with Hinds County.

Mr. Carter continued his remarks with mention of an abandoned vehicle that has been in the Welty parking lot for a few years. Mr. C. R. Jones questioned whether or not the Jackson Police Department had been contacted; Chairman Jones replied that contacts had been made, but to no avail. He requested the Interim Executive Director to continue that effort.

Mr. Carter reported that the RFP auditor bidding resulted in only two bids, one from the Tann, Brown, Russ & Co. firm for $19,500 (with a two-year option) and a firm in Michigan, Centuries PLLC, at a rate of $12,000 160 hours of auditing work. After some discussion, it was proposed that Tann, Brown & Russ bid would be accepted.

**Dr. Harrison moved, second by Mrs. Garner, to accept the bid from Tann, Brown & Russ Co, PLLC, to audit the JHLS accounts for FY 20/21. Mr. Nations abstained from voting, there was no outright opposition, and the motion carried.**

**Dr. Harrison moved, second by Mrs. Garner, to approve the Financial Reports as presented by Mr. Carter. There were neither objections nor abstentions, and the motion carried.**

Mr. Carter addressed the issue of the Board’s voting on the FY20/21 budget which had been distributed to all the Trustees. Chairman Jones asked for a motion to accept both the Finance Report and the FY20/21 budget. Mr. Nations questioned the budgeted furniture for Hamer Library, noting that the item had been voted on as not to exceed $10,000, whereas the revised budget showed $15,000. Mr. Carter explained how the furniture had been budgeted, assuring the Trustees that the funds were available. Chairman Jones and Ms. Corbett responded that not all the quotes for the furniture had been received when the budget was revised, and that result was that the item amount would have to be adjusted upward. Chairman Jones requested a motion to approve and accept the proposed JHLS budget for FY20/21.
Dr. Harrison moved, second by Mrs. Brown, to approve and accept the proposed JHLS budget for FY 20/21. Mr. Nations opposed the motion, but there were no other objections and no abstentions; the motion carried.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS:

Human Resources Report: Mrs. Nichols reported that at the time the Human Resources Report was printed, JHLS had a total of 72 employees, 62 of whom are full-time and 10 are part-time. There was one voluntary resignation and no promotions or vacancies. Mrs. Nichols reported to Chairman Jones that she had e-mailed pertinent information about the search for an Executive Director to him, and he requested that she send the information to the Trustees on the Search Committee.

Chairman Jones announced that during a recent Executive Committee meeting, the Trustees had discussed all the JHLS positions with an eye toward rewriting job descriptions. Mrs. Mary Garner will serve as the chair of that committee, and she will be working along with Mrs. Nichols in that effort.

Mr. Nations observed that there are far fewer employees than there were earlier in the year. He asked Mrs. Nichols what was the number of employees at the beginning of March 2020, and she said she would send that information to him.

Mrs. Berry questioned whether there had been an exit interview with the Flagg Library branch manager who recently resigned. Mrs. Nichols replied that the manager had not contacted Human Resources, and Mrs. Berry asked why Mrs. Nichols had not made an attempt to contact the branch manager, emphasizing the importance of JHLS’ being made aware of the manager’s reasons for leaving. Mrs. Nichols said that she had been on medical leave when the manager resigned, and Mrs. Berry reminded her that Dr. Longino was present when the manager resigned and should have initiated contact; the manager who resigned should have been sent (and should be sent) exit interview materials for JHLS staff to attempt to determine the manager’s reason(s) for leaving.

At this point, Mr. C. R. Jones suggested that the matter of the branch manager is a personnel issue. Chairman Jones agreed that it is, but he added there was some information, in reference to the employee, that was supposed to be sent out to the Board members because it was considered inadvisable to have discussion of the matter in “open forum.” However, the information to be sent to the Board members had not yet been received.

Mrs. Berry re-emphasized that the information relating to the branch manager who resigned must be obtained by Human Resources and that the Board needs to know the complete story. Chairman Jones said that the matter would be held in reserve until an Executive Session was held to discuss it, upon which point Mrs.
Berry insisted there was no need for an Executive Session. Chairman Jones replied that the matter was sensitive and information about it would be sent to the Board members rather than discussing it in a meeting. Mrs. Berry responded that she was not suggesting that sensitive details be discussed in open meeting, but that she wanted to know why no contact efforts had been made to the branch manager who resigned that might yet yield the “sensitive details” of her departure, such details being presently unknown.

Mr. Nations questioned the employee statistics, noting that on February 16, JHLS had 86 employees and 72 employees on December. He posed a concern as to how JHLS is still working the libraries at a good, acceptable level and also wondered aloud, “What is happening to all our people, and why do we not have any open positions?” Mrs. Nichols stated that JHLS’ circulation is down drastically; in 2013, records show that JHLS had 500,000 materials circulating through the library system in that fiscal year. Recently, she discovered that the current circulation statistics are roughly 130,000, much less. Also, Human Resources is having current employees sharing duties, stating that the employees do not have a lot to do.

Mr. Nations asked at what point does JHLS declare its status to be an emergency situation and that the library system must have additional employees. Chairman Jones discussed what has caused the significant decrease in items circulating and suggested several possibilities including the effects of the pandemic. Mr. Nations repeated his concerns that there is insufficient staff for JHLS to perform adequately, and he questioned why the staff census had been so dramatically whittled down over the past two years. Chairman Jones suggested that there is a need to map a plan for all the communities served by JHLS within an efficient budget.

Mr. Nations asked how many employees are included in the budget that the Board just voted to approve and was told 82 employees were budgeted, the current staff census being 72.

Ms. Corbett added that JHLS does indeed need more staff, but if it proceeds with adding more employees, JHLS will go over budget (irrespective of the fact that a census of 82 employees was contemplated in the approved budget), and she is mindful that JHLS must be fiscally responsible. She said that at the very least a branch manager is required at the Edwards Library. Chairman Jones responded that the committee formed and chaired by Mrs. Garner would be reviewing these concerns including circulation and, among others, comparison of previous staff census counts with those current and with what neighboring library systems of similar size are doing. The committee will thoroughly review the staffing/efficiency conundrum and report to the Board with its observations and recommendations. Mrs. Nichols added that some staff “in-house” could
possibly be branch managers at Edwards and other branches as many staff are currently in school pursuing their Masters degrees.

**Dr. Harrison moved, second by Mrs. Garner, to accept the Human Resources Report as presented by Mrs. Nichols. With neither opposition nor abstentions, the motion carried.**

**ADMINISTRATION REPORT:**

Technical Services Report: Mrs. Jin presented her report and requested approval for the two invoices. In discussion, Mrs. Berry observed that the $11,000 expense had been presented for approval to the Board at the last Board meeting and that “. . . Chairman Jones said that the invoice would need to be reviewed by the Finance Committee before it can be approved. (Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Administrative Board of Trustee on October 27, 2020, p. 7)” Mrs. Berry asked if the Finance Committee had, in fact, reviewed the invoice. Chairman Jones replied that he had not received such a report and asked the Finance Director where the expense was included in the budget. Mr. Carter replied that, “Prior to new administration, Mrs. Jin and others would bring other invoices separately and did not meet with the Finance Committee,” concluding that “. . .obviously, the problem is whoever needs to present an invoice needs to join the Finance Committee when it meets to review purchase orders.” Mr. Carter continued that he had no idea about the requested OverDrive invoice and that on the basis of that particular purchase order, Mrs. Jin would need to join in a Finance Committee to explain her expense requests; he said that the Board should go forward in that manner to consider and present purchase order requests to the Board at large.

Chairman Jones concluded that any staff requesting significant purchase order expenses to present them first to Mr. Carter who would convey the necessity of reviewing to the Finance Committee.

Mrs. Berry said that she thought the OverDrive expense is necessary and the expense, justified. Mr. C. R. Jones suggested the OverDrive platform would have a positive impact on certain age groups and might improve circulation. Mrs. Jin confirmed that younger readers would be particularly drawn to OverDrive items (eBooks and eAudios).

**Mrs. Sue Berry moved, second by Dr. Harrison, to approve the annual purchase, in the amount of $11,000.00, of eBooks and eAudios to be accessible to all library branches on the OverDrive platform. With neither opposition nor abstentions, the motion carried.**

Mrs. Jin presented her second purchase order request. There was no discussion.
Mrs. Mary Garner moved, second by Mrs. Berry, to approve the annual renewal for Proquest Ancestry.com in the amount of $1,327.04. With neither opposition nor abstentions, the motion carried.

Chairman Jones questioned Mrs. Jin about how JHLS is tracking circulation – if it just books that are being tallied, or whether there are other items that are included. Mrs. Jin replied that everything is tracked in Sirsi. Chairman Jones said that he did not see where JHLS is tracking magazines, newspapers, etc. Mrs. Jin explained that, at present, JHLS does not track magazines other than by subscription.

Chairman Jones questioned whether there might a way to track use of in-house items such as magazines and newspapers. Also responding to Chairman Jones’s concern, Ms. Corbett explained a possible method that other libraries have used: Twice a year, normally a week during Summer Reading and another week later in the school year, the in-house items in the branches would be closely monitored, and the branch managers would propose a likely estimate of circulation for each item. Chairman Jones asked if JHLS could find out if any other library systems are actually keeping track of the “other,” in-house items, because that will assist with producing more accurate circulation letters. At this point, Mrs. Ellen McLean, (PR and Publicity Coordinator) who has worked with the library system for over 17 years and has been very much involved in keeping circulation statistics added that circulation figures for in-house items have never been asked for or required by either the state or the federal government; so statistics have never been compiled for newspapers or magazines. JHLS, rather, employs a small, internal MLC (Mississippi Library Commission) model for keeping track of these items. Chairman Jones explained that his pressing concern is the expense of maintaining subscriptions for in-house items that cannot, at present, be accurately tracked or evaluated for continuation.

Ms. Corbett described a possible method for tracking circulation involving keeping items behind the desk and marking down each time an item is requested. She did point out that patrons tend to dislike having to approach the front desk for what they might consider private choices in their reading materials.

Chairman Jones requested Ms. Corbett to investigate what methods might be currently used in other library systems of JHLS’s approximate size and a citizen population similar in size to that of JHLS.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Finance Committee: Chairman Jones noted that Dr. Strickland, chair of the Finance Committee was not present at the meeting, and much of the substance of the finance report had been covered earlier in the meeting during Mr. Carter’s presentation.
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT: Ms. Corbett reported that the branches are doing a very good job at keeping the libraries sanitized, and she suggested encouraging them with acknowledging how well they are doing. She also noted that the browsing reservations have been implemented and are working well. Because of the COVID numbers being so high and considering the predicted surge, Ms. Corbett said that she is hesitant to open the libraries any further at this time; she is still keeping an eye on what other library systems are doing with respect to COVID. She and Freda are attempting to get a little supply stock of sanitation materials before they spike again as they did last year.

Ms. Corbett reported that she had been working with Anne Sanders on Grab-and-Go programming, and other branches are similarly involved. The project involves providing a little “goodie bag” to patrons as they check out for activities for children. The expense of the programs should be approximately, or less than, $500.00.

Ms. Corbett reported that JHLS cannot get the staff together for a Staff Day and/or luncheon at Christmas, as is customary. However, she proposed the possibility of continuing the longevity payments for staff, as has been done for the last five years. She said that staff has been awarded a small payment at Christmas reflective of their number of years of service. Acknowledging that funds are very tight this year, she nevertheless added that this token emolument has been extremely popular with staff, enhances loyalty to JHLS, and staff have come to expect and count on it for their Christmas shopping. She suggested that, failing longevity payments, perhaps each branch could be sent pizza – the expense would be around $250.00.

Chairman Jones did not address the traditional longevity payments for staff but asked the Finance Director if the pizza for the branches is financially feasible.

Dr. Harrison moved, second by Mrs. Berry, to approve funding for pizza. There being neither abstention nor objection, the motion carried.

Chairman Jones advised Ms. Corbett to notify the staff by e-mail of the Board’s decision regarding longevity payments.

Mrs. Berry moved, second by Mrs. Garner, to approve the Interim Executive Director’s report. With neither opposition nor abstentions, the motion carried.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT: Chairman Jones reported that the Executive Committee had discussed reports from patrons that the Welty staff does not have sufficient supervision. Also, County Supervisor Vern Gavin, regarding Clinton Library, had a staff question and a comment a room at the branch being closed, both of which were settled
with the branch manager, and Chairman Jones was able to clarify the issues for Supervisor Gavin.

As for the furnishing of Fannie Lou Hamer library, Ms. Corbett reported that she had spoken with three different vendors, two of them located in Hinds County, who were preparing quotes for the work and that such quotes could be expected soon. At that point, Chairman Jones introduced Ms. Rosemary Luckett, branch manager at Fannie Lou Hamer branch who addressed the Board enthusiastically about the progress of the renovations of and new furnishings for the branch. Ms. Luckett also noted that the neighborhood where the branch is located is, serendipitously, rich with stellar personalities, such as Margaret Walker Alexander, James Meredith, and Andrew Thomas, living there. She hoped that those individuals may be involved with promoting the library branch when the refurbishing is completed and the branch is again open to patrons.

Mr. C. R. Jones asked if the display case for the Fannie Lou Hamer materials the library possesses is ready. Ms. Luckett replied that it is and also that the library is trying to accumulate more items, hoping that the family may contribute to that effort.

Mr. Nations asked if Ms. Luckett is familiar with Sherry Miles who is an actress who does a fantastic Fannie Lou Hamer presentation (similar to John Maxwell’s presentation of “Oh, Mr. Faulkner, Do You Write?”). Ms. Luckett replied that she does know Ms. Miles and thinks that Ms. Miles would come for a performance when the library branch has its grand opening. Ms. Luckett said she is also in contact with the Mississippi Museum of History for program ideas. Mr. C.R. Jones remarked that programs associated with the grand re-opening may present fundraising opportunities to recoup expenses for the rehabilitation.

Chairman Jones said he had made contact with the Jackson Friends of the Library, advising that he has a warm rapport with that group and that Ms. Luckett may expect some support from them, as well. Ms. Luckett was very receptive to that information and asked Chairman Jones to pass along to the Jackson Friends her request for any volunteers for the Hamer Friends of the Library.

Chairman Jones then reported that the Executive Committee and the Budget Committee had met recently. The Budget Committee had discussed the administration offices in the River Hills building and is looking at the current lease, hoping to save approximately $50,000 by moving the offices from that location.

Mrs. Berry said that she wants a copy of all of the minutes of all of the Executive Committee meetings from the present but including many months
past, as well. She stressed that Chairman Jones has been told her many times that she would receive copies of those minutes, but she has “never gotten a single one.”

Chairman Jones responded by announcing that Attorney Pieter Teeuwissen, who has been representing JHLS for that past few months, had recently experienced the tragic deaths of his daughter and grandson. This tragedy has compelled him to be more with his family, and that has interrupted his work on summing up all of the matters he had been reviewing to report to the Board; furthermore, he would be unable to continue representing JHLS. In the meantime, Attorney Teeuwissen recommended Attorney Raymond Harold Broun Fraser, of The Fraser Law Firm, PLLC, in Jackson, to work with him on wrapping up his own work with JHLS and then to represent JHLS himself.

Mr. C.R. Jones stated that Attorney Fraser is fully qualified in all phases of law, and especially insurance and financial matters. Chairman Jones passed a copy of Attorney Fraser’s curriculum vitae to the Mrs. Turnage, the Executive Secretary, and asked her to e-mail it to all Trustees the next day.

Mr. Nations asked Chairman Jones if selecting Attorney Fraser is a matter for Board approval. Mrs. Berry asked what legal matters is Attorney Fraser doing for JHLS currently.

Chairman Jones replied that he will make sure that all the Trustees get all the information, and Mr. C.R. Jones described at length what he considered to be Attorney Fraser’s qualifications and that he and Chairman Jones had presented Attorney Fraser with all the relevant legal issues and information.

Mrs. Berry exclaimed: “What issues? We need all the information!” She continued that the Board needs to know what legal matters are being talked about.

Chairman Jones attempted to reassure Mrs. Berry that JHLS is in the process of insuring what whatever matters that are pending will be addressed and that whatever matters that will come before the Board will be addressed. He added that he will insure that every Board member is made abreast of any matters addressed with the attorney.

Mrs. Berry continued, “You always say that, but we never get the information.” She stressed that entire Board needs to be involved.

Chairman Jones replied that the current open Board meeting was not the proper platform to go into such details. Mrs. Berry repeated that she did not demand
details in an inappropriate forum, but insisted that she and all the Trustees be informed of the matters in an appropriate manner.

Chairman Jones thanked Mrs. Berry for expressing her concerns, and she replied that she would thank him when she receives all the information she has requested.

Mr. C.R. Jones contended that the Trustees are aware of JHLS’ pending legal issues, and Mrs. Garner added that she knew of at least one, that one concerning the former Executive Director. Mrs. Garner also questioned Attorney Fraser’s fee schedule, and added that JHLS may not be able to afford to pay Attorney Fraser; further, she noted that in previous minutes it had been noted that JHLS could not afford to pay more than $1,200 a month. She asked if Attorney Fraser charges more than that, then what could the Board do?

Mr. Nations asked who was on the committee to hire a new attorney, and whether the legal issues the committee revealed might have been suitable for disclosure with the approval of the entire Board of Trustees. He shared Mrs. Berry’s concerns about not being informed of the legal matters pending.

Chairman Jones said that they are looking at is to make sure that all Board members are represented. Also, if there are matters that have been discussed as having already been alluded to, all Trustees will be brought up to speed on them.

Chairman Jones that since Attorney Teeuwissen cannot continue the JHLS representation, he and Mr. C.R. Jones formed the committee to locate a new attorney to assure that JHLS is represented appropriately. He will ask Attorney Fraser to address the Board if there is anything to be considered or signed.

In discussion of the motion, and in response to Mrs. Garner’s concerns, Chairman Jones noted that the committee would need to meeting with Attorney Fraser what his fees would be for representing JHLS. Mr. Nations expressed doubts about Attorney Fraser’s being more of a personal injury attorney, among other things. Dr. Harrison interjected that she liked and approved of Attorney Teeuwissen professionally, and she believes his recommendation of Attorney Fraser speaks sufficiently of his ability and qualifications to represent JHLS.

_Dr. Harrison moved, second by Mr. C.R. Jones, to move forward with the engagement of Attorney Fraser for the legal representation of the JHLS Board. Mr. Nations and Mrs. Berry abstained from voting, there was no opposition, and the motion carried._

Chairman Jones concluded his report by announcing that appointment letters had been sent out to the Board of Supervisors, the City Council, and the Mayor of
the City of Jackson for Trustees to fill the five current vacancies. Also, the Mayor of Jackson, the President of the Board of Supervisors, and the President of the City Council, had been sent copies of the audit.

Chairman Jones suggested that a job description for the next Executive Director should be sent to the Board within the next several days. Also, in terms of job descriptions, a committee to review them all will be chaired by Mrs. Garner who will work Human Resources staff.

Finally, Chairman Jones announced that he had received a couple of requests for information to be sent out, including the recent audit, but believed it would be appropriate to have JHLS’ Attorney Fraser to vet that information before releasing it.

Mrs. Berry commented that the information requested is public information, and Mrs. Garner suggested it is unnecessary to get a legal opinion as to the legality of releasing it.

Chairman Jones reiterated his uncertainty about the status of the information and required an attorney’s opinion.

OLD BUSINESS: A. Status of RFP for new accounting firm for the audit of FY2021.

Dr. Harrison moved, second by Mrs. Garner, that JHLS accept the bid of Rann, Brown & Russ for the audit of the JHLS account for FY2021. Mr. Nations abstained from voting (as he was out of the room during the discussion of the RFP), there was no opposition, and the motion carried.

B. Election of Officers.

Chairman Jones will appoint a Nominating Committee who will meet before the next regular meeting of the Board and prepare a slate of officer candidates to propose to the Board, at which point, officers for FY2021 will be elected.

NEW BUSINESS: A. E-Rate Bid letter from Rodabough Education Group for E-Rate Category 1 WAN and Internet Access products and services to begin July 1, 2021.

Shannon Presley, IT Administrator explained the benefits to JHLS of posting a bid through the Rodabough Group.

Mr. Ricky Nations moved, second by Mrs. Sue Berry, to approve posting an E-Rate funding bid, as presented in the letter from the Rodabough Education Group and discussed by Ms. Presley. With neither opposition nor abstentions, the motion carried.
B. After discussion of the final budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21 as presented by Mr. Carter,

Dr. Harrison moved, second by Mrs. Berry, to accept the final budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21 as presented and proposed. Mr. Nations abstained from voting, there was no outright opposition, and the motion carried.

C. Mr. Carter brought forward a request to prepare a letter to the bank to have Brenette Nichols added as a signatory to the JHLS account. She had not been able to be a signatory during a recent medical leave, but is back now and requires Board authority.

Mrs. Garner moved, second by Mrs. Imelda Brown, to approve having a letter to JHLS’ bank requesting that Mrs. Nichols be added as a signatory to the JHLS account. There being no opposition nor abstentions, the motion carried.

Chairman Jones stated that the next meeting date is scheduled for Tuesday, January 26, 2021, at 4:00 p.m., at Eudora Welty Library.

Mrs. Berry moved, second by Dr. Harrison, that the meeting be adjourned. With neither opposition nor abstentions, the motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 6.19 p.m.