



## PCLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

5:30 pm March 19, 2026  
Hampton Memorial Library  
304 Biltmore Road Easley, SC 29640

PRESIDING: Mr. Danny Parton, Chair- District 3 (Pickens)

Dr. Alfred Wheeler – District 1 (Clemson)	Mr. Robert Sams – District 5 (Easley)
Ms. Nancy Miller, Sec – District 2 (Six Mile/Central)	Mr. Brian Aiken – District 6 (Dacusville)
Ms. Alesa Pinkerton, V. Chair – District 4 (Liberty)	Mr. Mark Kilburn, Treasurer – At Large

(Per the Pickens County Library Board, the minutes are a synopsis of the meeting and not a verbatim discussion. To see a full viewing and recording of the meeting, visit Pickens County Library System's YouTube channel or the Pickens County Boards and Commissions Portal.)

### 1. Call Meeting to Order at 5:30 pm

#### a. Roll Call for the Record

Ms. Miller did roll call. The full board was present.

#### b. Accept Agenda as written

Mr. Parton suggested swapping items 3 and 4 to better accommodate the board and the board clerk. There was no objection. Agenda approved with amendments.

### 2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Kilburn led the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

### 3. ~~4.~~ Approval of Minutes

- a. Library Board Meeting 1/15/26
- b. Policy Committee Meeting 1/22/26
- c. Budget Committee Meeting 1/23/26
- d. Redo- Policy Committee Meeting 1/28/26
- e. Special Called Meeting 2/12/26
- f. Special Called Meeting 2/24/26
- g. Special Called Meeting 3/6/26
- h. Special Called Meeting 3/10/26

Mr. Parton asked for any corrections to the minutes. Ms. Pinkerton gave corrections for the Policy Committee Meeting 1/22/26 to the board clerk. Mr. Kilburn asked to not approve the Special Called Meeting 2/12/26 so more information can be added, and he will give the board clerk a list of time stamps to review for additions to the minutes.

Mr. Parton asked for any other corrections. No additional corrections were given. All minutes except Special Called Meeting 2/12/26 were approved with corrections.

### 4. ~~3.~~ Public Comments – Limit to (3) minutes each (Total 30 minutes)

1. Jessica Beeman – spoke in favor of the library and her right to parent her children.

2. Karin Kirby - spoke in favor of the Central-Clemson library branch and the sense of community it has created.
3. Gus Edmundson – spoke against the collection development policy and requested his comments to be included in the minutes. (comments will be attached)
4. Kate Byrd – spoke against the boards recent actions and requested her comments to be included in the minutes. (comments will be attached)
5. Mae Anderson – spoke against the collection development policy.
9. Brittany Fowler - spoke against the major policy shift and the removal of the Library Director, Stephanie Howard.
10. Crystal Chappell – spoke about libraries assisting the community with literacy and supports parents right to decide what is appropriate for their children.
11. Virginia King – spoke about the Constitution and the First Amendment and the right to pray publicly in Jesus’ name.
12. Austin Barker – spoke in favor of moving books based on community standards and volunteered to review books.
13. Wesley Wilson – spoke in favor of the collection development policy and agreed to having a volunteer committee to screen books.
14. Shelia D. Crawford – Spoke against firing the Library Director, Stephanie Howard and requested reinstatement of the Library Director, Stephanie Howard.

## **5. Library Directors Report**

### **a. Sarlin Branch Manager Report**

Beth Buchanan spoke about the large increase in visitors at the Sarlin Library branch. She mentioned how the Seed Library this year is on track to be the most successful year they’ve had and it is growing in popularity, quantity and quality and that this branch’s seed library numbers are on par with some of the largest library systems in the state. The Passport and Notary services are also growing in popularity.

### **b. Library Information – Interim Director**

Mr. Heimburger reported that this is his second day on the job and he has been reviewing the collection development policy and will give his observations in a future report. The Assistant Director reported on the HVAC project finishing up and the renovation of the expansion spaces are going out for bid. The library purchased two new vehicles to replace the old vans for the courier route and community programs. She discussed the story walk project, funded by the Pickens County Roary Club and the Friends of the Library, will be installed by the end of June at the Pickens Doodle Trail. She reported the plans for programing this summer supporting the Pickens County 250 Committee and DAR. She spoke about the programs resuming and special programs coming up and preparations for the Summer Reading Program.

### **c. Financial Report**

The Assistant Director reported that the library is slightly behind where we should be on our spending. Certain accounts are spent at the end of the fiscal year to allow for unexpected repairs that come up, like the furniture account and the computer replacement account. She is waiting to hear back from county about the credit that is in the computer replacement account. Mr. Kilburn asked for clarification on state funding paying for the two new vehicles. The Assistant Director will investigate that.

### **d. Foundation Report**

The Assistant Director reported that 11 T-shirts have been sold and there are 24 T-shirts left. Dr. Wheeler asked about a plan to spend the Foundations \$79,000. Ms. Pinkerton stated that they do have a plan and they are currently working on raising more money.

## **6. Old Business**

### **a. Amend Collection Policy to move only new material and use Reconsideration Policy for all other material– Discuss & possible motion**

Dr. Wheeler made a motion to amend the collection policy criteria for children's juvenile and teen sections it will apply to new acquisitions and existing materials will be evaluated according to these criteria following the reconsideration requests. Mr. Sams seconded the motion. Mr. Kilburn suggested that they let the Interim Director have a chance to come up with an alternative implementation process before changes are made to the collection policy. Mr. Sams and Dr. Wheeler voted in favor of motion. Mr. Kilburn, Mr. Parton, Ms. Pinkerton, Ms. Miller and Mr. Aiken voted against the motion. Motion failed.

**b. Continuation of Collection Policy – Discuss & possible motion**

Ms. Pinkerton made a motion to continue the collection policy. Mr. Aiken seconded the motion. Mr. Kilburn expressed that we are going to continue the policy implementation with new guidance from the Interim Director. Mr. Kilburn, Mr. Parton, Ms. Pinkerton, Ms. Miller and Mr. Aiken voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Sams and Dr. Wheeler voted against the motion. Motion carried.

**c. Certification form for State – Discuss & possible motion to sign**

Mr. Sams made a motion to sign the certification form for State Aid. Dr. Wheeler seconded the motion. Ms. Pinkerton asked about the progress of the collection policy implementation. The Assistant Director stated that the 10 books on Rex Rice's list from last summer have been moved and staff have gone through over 800 books in the children's section. Mr. Kilburn suggested that they let the Interim Director have a chance to come up with an alternative implementation process and that they should not sign the certification form for State Aid. Mr. Sams explained that signing the certification form for State Aid is urgent because it needs to be spent before June 30<sup>th</sup> and some of the money has already been present in anticipation of this signing. Dr. Wheeler stated that there are no prurient materials in the library and there is no reason not to sign the certification form for State Aid. Mr. Aiken stated he is leery about saying that the library is in compliance yet. The Interim Director stated that in his observations over the last two days, he trusts the staff and on just the possibility that a few books have slipped through the cracks, he would not hesitate to sign the certification form for State Aid. He is not making a recommendation but just stating his own observation. Mr. Parton stated that he would like more books to be moved before we sign the certification form for State Aid. Mr. Sams, Dr. Wheeler, Ms. Miller and Mr. Aiken voted in favor of motion. Mr. Kilburn, Mr. Parton, and Ms. Pinkerton voted against the motion. Motion carried.

**7. New Business**

**a. Discuss & possible motion of the minutes/changes and video of meetings**

Mr. Kilburn would like to see the board go back to a summary type of minutes since we have video recording. Ms. Pinkerton asked if we could record all the meetings. The Assistant Director stated that you can just keep in mind that we pay for the service by the hour. She also mentioned that the Board Clerk would like to go back to summarized minutes. Mr. Sams made a motion to have all board meetings, special called meetings, and committee meetings video recorded. Dr. Wheeler seconded the motion. Unanimously approved. Ms. Miller made a motion to have summarized minutes. Mr. Kilburn seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

**b. Discuss & possible motion - Change meeting time back 6:00pm**

Mr. Parton mentioned that the reason for the time change was to help the Interim Director with his travel time. Dr. Wheeler surveyed the audience and they prefer 6:00 pm. Ms. Pinkerton asked if the change would negatively affect the board clerk leaving at 6:30 pm. The Assistant Director stated that the board clerk, with the help of Ms. Millers notes, would do the minutes from the video. Dr. Wheeler made a motion to change the meeting time to 6:00 pm. Mr. Sams seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

**8. Executive Session**

**S.C. Code of Laws, Section 30-4-70 (A) allows closed meetings in limited instances if the presiding officer states the specific purpose of the executive session, including a description of the matter to be discussed while maintaining privacy of the identity of individuals or entities involved, and the decision to adjourn into executive session is voted on publicly.**

**a. Legal-Section 30-4-70(A)(2)**

- **Discussion of attorney correspondence from Grove Ozment and legal advice regarding potential claims; discussion of potential retention of legal counsel.**

Mr. Aiken made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session. Mr. Kilburn seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

**9. ACTION ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS (as needed)**

**While the SC Freedom of Information Act allows for certain matters to be discussed outside the presence of the public, any votes on such matters can only take place once the Board has returned to public session.**

Mr. Parton stated that there is no action needed after Executive Session, it was just discussion.

**10. Meeting Adjourn**

Mr. Aiken made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Kilburn seconded the motion. Unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Next Meetings: Regular Meeting: 6:00pm, May 21, 2026, at Hampton Memorial Library

Kate Byrd Pickens County, South Carolina March 19, 2026

**Submitted to:** Pickens County Library Board of Trustees **Re:** Public Comment — Regular Board Meeting, March 19, 2026  
**Submitted for inclusion in the official minutes**

Good afternoon. My name is Kate Byrd. I am a resident of Pickens County, South Carolina. This statement is submitted for the public record to document ongoing governance failures by this board.

Good governance is transparent, deliberate, legally sound, and accountable to the public it serves. It is not reactive. It does not create the crises it then scrambles to manage.

By that standard, the actions of this board do not qualify. They do not even come close.

Since January 1st, this board has held ten meetings — six of them special-called, with just one opportunity for public input. Major collection and reconsideration policy changes were rushed through, ignoring nationally recognized professional standards and the federally recognized rights of patrons, going far beyond the stated aim of complying with a state budget proviso. The board ignored repeated warnings that these changes would disrupt services. When they did and programming was suspended, the public responded swiftly and severely.

In response, this board fired a highly respected Library Director — an Intellectual Freedom award winner and a native of this county — hired an interim director with no ties to Pickens County, physically present only two days a week, passing over a qualified assistant director who knows this community and its needs.

The chaos does not stop there. We see selective enforcement and sloppy, shifting agendas. We see a board inserting itself into operations it does not control. We see repeated FOIA concerns, from executive sessions held to discuss legal matters that didn't fall under FOIA law to last-minute agenda changes. And tonight, you are considering amending a collection policy passed just last month.

One has to wonder whether the board members responsible for this chaos have ever opened the *Reference Manual for South Carolina Public Library Trustees*. The boundaries of board authority are not ambiguous. They are written down.

The people of Pickens County deserve thoughtful, principled leadership. What this board has delivered is legally suspect, operationally erratic, and dismissive of professional expertise and public input.

Good governance is steady, lawful, and accountable.

What we are witnessing is the opposite.

It is erratic. It is unnecessary. And it is embarrassing.

Thank you.

## Gus Edmundson Public Comments

Tonight, the Board is attempting to finalize a policy that is as dangerous as it is onerous. Item 6.a on your agenda seeks to split our collection policy between 'current' and 'new' material. This is a distinction without a difference. Whether a book is old or new, this policy still seeks to move materials from their proper, professionally-vetted places into a '18-to-25 YA category that does not exist in library science. Chairman Parton recently admitted in a news interview that he believes this can be implemented because the librarians 'know what books have been challenged.' That is a stunning admission of a subjective standard. It confirms this isn't an objective system; it is a system designed to target specific titles based on the grievances of a vocal few. This policy remains too vague for anyone to follow consistently, and that ambiguity is exactly what makes it a 'Vagueness Trap' for our staff. The Board is being fed lies that Proviso 27.1 allows for the cherry-picking of passages to justify moving books. This is a legal delusion. I direct the Board to **S.C. Code 16-15-305**, which defines 'prurient interest.' The law is explicit: any determination of prurience **MUST** be made by judging '**the work taken as a whole**.' Subsection (D)—which mentions judging with reference to children—does **NOT** waive this requirement. Whether the audience is a child or an adult, the **Miller Test** is the constitutional floor. You cannot legally claim a book is prurient by looking at a 'snippet.' If you sign the State Certification tonight while maintaining a policy that ignores the 'taken as a whole' mandate, you are misrepresenting this county's compliance to the State Library. You are certifying a lie." "On March 10th, this Board voted to deny an employee grievance. That decision moved this conflict out of the library and into the legal system which will cost us taxpayers. By ignoring professional Master of library sciences standards in favor of a subjective relocation plan, you are creating a documented history of government overreach. We are seeing the legal fallout of these exact 'moving vs. banning' arguments in Greenville County right now. Federal courts do not view 'relocation' as a safe harbor for content-based discrimination. Every hour you spend defending a policy that ignores the state's own criminal code is potential money taken from the taxpayers to pay for a defense you will likely lose when we get hit with a lawsuit. Subjectivity is not a policy; it is a liability. We have seen this local debate devolve into personal attacks, baseless accusations of 'grooming,' and pedophilia and claims that those of us defending the law need 'mental help.' This vitriol is the greatest proof of why a subjective policy is a failure. When 'offense' is the only metric, it empowers the loudest and most aggressive voices to dictate what the rest of the county can read. We cannot let targeted baseless bullying replace the South Carolina Code. If this Board refuses to implement an objective, legally sound policy that adheres to the '**taken as a whole**' standard of S.C. Code 16-15-305, then you have failed your mandate as library board. My call to action to the the residents of Pickens County and County Council is this: If the Board will not return to objective professional standards and follow the law instead of playing puppet for a recognized extremist political group, the Council must move for a **Resolution of No Confidence**. We deserve a Board that follows the South Carolina Code, not one that ignores it to satisfy a local group with a dangerous and subjective policy. Young Adult is not 25. Subjectivity is not safety. Follow the law. Serve your community. Thank you.