



PCLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

6:00 PM May 21, 2026
Hampton Memorial Library
304 Biltmore Road Easley, SC 29640

PRESIDING: Ms. Alesa Pinkerton, V. Chair – District 4 (Liberty)

Dr. Alfred Wheeler – District 1 (Clemson)
Ms. Nancy Miller, Sec – District 2 (Six Mile/Central)
Mr. Danny Parton, Chair- District 3 (Pickens)

Mr. Robert Sams – District 5 (Easley)
Mr. Brian Aiken – District 6 (Dacusville)
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

a. Roll Call for the Record

Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm. Mr. Parton was not in attendance. The rest of the board was in attendance.

b. Accept Agenda as written

Ms. Pinkerton made a motion to accept the agenda as written. Mr. Sams seconded. Unanimous approval.

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Sams led the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Manager Report – Margaret Holder, Youth Services

Get ready to ROAR into Summer Reading! Join us for an exciting Unearth a Story Kick-Off! May 29th 10-1pm.
Hampton Memorial Library – Easley

Featuring Ed's Dinosaurs Live—featuring lifelike animatronic dinosaurs, interactive shows, a fossil display, and even baby dinosaurs you can see and pet! Meet mascots including Sky, the Pickens eastern screech owl, Beasley, the Easley City Canine, Greenville Drive's Reedy Rip'It, and the Chick-fil-A Cow, and grab a bite from **The Nomadik Few & Upstate Chick-fil-A Food Truck**.

Village Library – Pickens

Enjoy outdoor fun like lawn games, balloon animals, and even a fire truck to help everyone cool off! Enjoy delicious bites from **One Armed Smoker** and sweet treats from **Kona Ice** of Pickens while you explore hands-on dino activities.

Sarlin Library – Liberty

Play outside with lawn games, bubbles, and music, then head inside for hands-on dino activities like crafts, building stations, and even adopting your own dinosaur. Cool off with a treat from **Pelican's SnoBalls** while you explore and play!

Central-Clemson Library -Central

Enjoy games, activities, and fun for all ages! Cool off with a sweet treat from the **Gettin' Chilly Ice Cream Truck** while you celebrate the start of a summer of reading and adventure!

During Summer Reading we will continue to have Preschool Storytime at all locations.

Storywalks: What the Dinosaur's Did Last Night: A Very Messy Adventure by Refe Tuma and Susan Tuma

Summary: A Very Messy Adventure is a children's picture book by Refe and Susan Tuma that uses photographs to show plastic dinosaurs causing humorous household messes overnight, from raiding the fridge to getting into parents' belongings, all while the family sleeps. The book is part of the popular "What the Dinosaurs Did" series, which originated from the authors' "Dinovember" tradition of staging dinosaur antics for their kids. It's known for its chaotic, funny scenes and is aimed at preschool to early elementary-aged children.

SC250 programs:

Carolina Day event June 27th [partnership DAR]:

Learn more about South Carolina's role in the American Revolution through kid-friendly crafts and activities.

Reenactors will be on hand to tell the story of the Battle of Fort Sullivan and the importance of the palmetto tree in our freedom.

Sponsored by Fort Prince George Chapter, NSDAR, Pickens County 250 and PCLS.

Locations:

Central-Clemson 9-11

Pickens 11-1

Sarlin 12-1:30

Easley 2:30-4:30

July 24 @ 10:30 American Girl Summer Program!

We'll be watching the American Girl movie featuring Felicity Merriman, the spirited colonial girl who loves adventure and standing up for what she believes in.

While the movie plays, enjoy fresh popcorn and create a fun, hands-on craft inspired by Felicity's time period.

Craft along with the story and bring a little piece of history home with you!

Dial A Story

Karen Petit, author and member of DAR is going to read her book, Celebrate America! The People Declare Independence for Dial A Story (864) 868-2727.

May 4th, Staff Day

Staff had the option of block printing SC 250 on a new item that they brought

What's Your Story? Family Oral History Project Kickoff, Sunday, June 07, 2026, Time 2:30PM - 4:30PM

Join us for a drop-in kickoff to our Family Oral History Project! Make a craft and interview your friends and family members to preserve a piece of family history.

Throughout the month of June, kids are invited to interview their friends and family members using our Archivist in a Backpack Kits and take home a piece of family history. Interview slots will be open on Tuesdays from 5:00pm-6:00pm and Thursdays from 10:00am-11:00am. Call 864-850-7077 to reserve your space!

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

1. Meredith Burr

She is submitting her comment for the official record. Stated that the role of a public library board is to protect and defend intellectual freedom. (statements will be attached)

2. Kate Byrd

She is submitting her comment for the official record. This policy was rushed without considering how it would be implemented. Why has the book DRAMA been moved to the adult section? (statements will be attached)

3. Agustin Edmundson

He is submitting his comment for the official record. The First Amendment includes the right to gain information. This collection policy is a dragnet against a specific demographic. Stephanie Howard was forced to pause all youth and teen programming. (statements will be attached)

4. Johnnelle Raines

Thanked Mr. Heimburger for facilitating the movement of books. Asks for updating of the online reconsideration list and for the online records to show how many times a book has been checked out. Also, for clarification as to the online book policy for children.

5. Virginia King

Some of the books that are in question may be good for parents to use to educate their children, however, books with nudity need to be put in a section that parents can decide when they want their children to read these books. She thanks the board for their work. (statements will be attached)

6. Reba Kruse

DRAMA has been moved to the adult section without reconsideration. Who ordered the relocation of DRAMA and under what specific provision of the policy was it moved? The quiet reclassification was done outside written policy.

7. Lou Kaye

Represents students against book banning. Survey showed that library patrons are incredibly satisfied with the library and 95% of patrons are not confused about the term Young Adult. Calls on the board to reverse course and make decisions with the ideals of intellectual freedom in mind.

8. Andi Hendricks

The convictions and beliefs of the board members are their worst enemies. The only losers on the board's agenda are the actual library patrons. She believes that the board members that have violated board policy or undermined the board should resign.

9. Jesse Henley

Thanked the staff and the interim director for having the courage and the wisdom to make decisions that will make libraries safe for children to explore. Stated that this is not about banning books or limiting adult access to ideas, it is about recognizing that children and adults are not the same.

5. Approval of Minutes

a. Policy Committee 1/28/26

Mr. Kilburn moved to accept the minutes. Mr. Sams seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

b. Special Called Meeting 2/12/26

Mr. Aikens moved to accept the minutes. Mr. Kilburn seconded the motion. Dr. Wheeler asked for a correction to add back into the minutes his statement, "the librarians wouldn't put it in the collection." Mr. Kilburn mentioned that the changes he requested twice have not yet been made. He feels that this particular meeting was not done the same way as the other meetings. Ms. Pinkerton stressed that if a board member asks for a specific change, it should be made. Ms. Pinkerton called for a vote on the minutes be accepted as written. Unanimous vote against the minutes. Motion fails.

c. Library Board Meeting 3/19/26

Ms. Pinkerton moved to accept the minutes. Mr. Kilburn seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

6. Library Director Report

a. Library Information

The library has received two grants of \$2000 each. One from the Dollar General Foundation for purchasing large print juvenile fiction. The other one is a federal Library Services and Technology Act grant to cover the cost of Brightstar Theater troop to perform during this year's summer reading club.

Parenting section has been established in Easley, shelving units are on order; then will be moving to the other libraries to do the same. There have been 14 requests in 2026 for reconsideration; the online chart for reconsideration has been updated. Dr. Wheeler asked Mr. Heimbürger if, aside from the reconsideration request, he has received lists from the public and the board of books to be moved to the adult section. Mr. Heimbürger said yes and that all the books are considered individually according to the collection policy. Dr. Wheeler asked Mr. Heimbürger if he found any materials in the collection of prurient interest, according to the legal definition, or any material taken as a whole, that lacks serious literary, artistic merit or scientific value in our libraries. Mr. Heimbürger said yes. Dr. Wheeler suggested having a rolling list of books that have been moved and the reasons why they were moved and the ones that have been identified as prurient, because that is a serious allegation for a book. Dr. Wheeler asked about the county giving more details about the budget.

b. Financial Report

Mr. Heimbürger reported that spending is on target with the fiscal year. The goal is to have all the money in each category spent by June 20. They are beginning with the review of the 2027 budget to be prepared when the county requests it. Mr. Kilburn asked if the state money has been received and spent. Mr. Heimbürger replied that it had been. The state allotment will be higher for the next budget year. Ms. Pinkerton asked if it would be possible to receive budget information ahead of time, so we have time to study it before the meetings.

c. Foundation Report

Mr. Heimbürger said that 1 Foundation donor leaf and 2 Foundation T-shirts have been sold. The Foundation bought a credit card terminal to accept donations anywhere.

d. Quarterly Statistical Report

Mr. Heimbürger stated that the larger decrease in numbers on some events is possibly because of the collection management mandate staff was given several months ago. There is a great increase in electronic resources. Mr. Kilburn asked the chairman if he could make comments regarding the library information report. He stated it is inappropriate to make comments about whether patrons are giving the library lists of books to be moved under the radar. We are trying with a new director to implement the new collection policy, so books will have to be moved dependent on the content. Mr. Kilburn also expressed that it is no longer necessary to have discussions about “books taken as a whole” or what the definition of prurient interest is. The board is not trying to do anything that is underhanded, we are concerned with ensuring that age-appropriate books are placed in sections of the libraries designated for minors.

Mr. Kilburn explained that he had conversations with Ralph, the finance director, about the budget process in hopes of understanding how it works, so next time the board will be in a better position to handle the budget process.

Ms. Pinkerton asked for clarification about whether the lists that are coming from patrons, if the books are reviewed or if they are just being moved. Mr. Heimbürger stated that staff are reviewing each book based on the collection policy before deciding on placement.

Dr. Wheeler asked about the book DRAMA, why it was moved to the adult section and how it violates the collection policy. Mr. Heimbürger said that he would look into it and get back to board, and if he finds that it does not violate the policy then he will move it back to the teens section. Dr. Wheeler also asked Mr. Heimbürger to find out who moved the book to begin with.

7. Old Business

a. Discuss the process for receiving minutes before the meeting

Ms. Pinkerton suggested that board members could receive the minutes 5 days before meeting in draft form. This would allow 3 days to review and recommend changes so the minutes will be updated before the meeting to save time during meetings. Dr. Wheeler suggested that any changes made should be highlighted, so it will make finding the changes easier for other board members. Ms. Pinkerton suggested linking the video of the meetings to the website. Dr. Wheeler made the motion to accept this new schedule for receiving and amending the minutes, Mr. Sams seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

8. New Business

a. Selection of Library Director Search Committee

Ms. Pinkerton reported that Mr. Parton chose Mr. Sams, Mr. Kilburn, and Ms. Pinkerton to be the Library Director Search Committee. This committee will pare down the list of resumes and bring the top 5 – 10 candidates forward to the board to make the final decision. Ms. Miller made the motion to accept this committee. Mr. Aiken seconded the motion. Mr. Sams asked for Mr. Heimburger to be involved in the selection process for his advice. Unanimous approval.

b. Discuss and Possible Motion - Volunteer Policy

Ms. Pinkerton explained that it is a county regulation now for volunteers to be 18 years of age or older due to county liability. Mr. Aiken made the motion to change the age on the volunteer policy to say, “The Library cannot accept volunteers under the age of 18.” Mr. Kilburn seconded the motion. There was discussion that groups volunteering is part of another group such as the Boy Scouts or ROJTC, can still volunteer as long as that program or group provides their own liability insurance. Unanimous approval.

9. Meeting Adjourn

Mr. Sams made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Aiken seconded the motion. Unanimous approval. Meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm

Next Meeting: Regular meeting, July 16, 2026, 6:00 pm at Hampton Memorial Library

Hi, my name is Meredith Burr and I am a resident of Pickens County. I am also a parent and frequent patron of the library. I am submitting this statement for the public record.

The board's decision to fire our experienced, award-winning library director Stephanie Howard was deeply wrong and represents a governance failure. According to the SC library trustees manual, the role of a public library in a democratic society is to ensure free and open access to information and materials for all. (p. 48) Former Director Howard did exactly her duty in protecting intellectual freedom, but this board is failing in their duty. According to the trustees manual, it is in fact "the duty of the Library Board of Trustees to protect and defend intellectual freedom." (p. 48)

This board has failed in this duty by:

- Firing our intellectual freedom-award winning director for doing her job.
- Removing the American Library Association's Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read Statement from collection policies (which the trustee manual recommends always be included)
- And creating a set of collection development policies that aim to censor materials.

These actions not only embarrass Pickens County, but also open our county up to legal risk.

The new collection development policies violate the role of the library. From the trustee manual:

"The Library is a selector, not a censor. A selector believes in the individual's right to examine and evaluate materials and make personal choices about them; a censor believes in evaluating and choosing materials for others according to the censor's own values."

The new collection development policies represent censorship. They include rules for evaluating and choosing materials for others according to the values of board members.

The argument that all the books still exist in the library is not sufficient. Books need to be accessible. Re-classifying books intended for one age group to another part of the library makes them harder for people to access. Now books that I would like to find for my kids may just not be there when I browse the shelves, and I won't know what's

missing. The same will be true for so many kids and teens – books that were written for them and would be fine with their parents just won't be found where they look.

The ALA freedom to read statement includes that “In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read...But no group has the right ... to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other[s]” (p. 87)

A library fulfills its duty to intellectual freedom by providing a wide range of books and materials and leaving reading decisions up to individuals. Parents have a responsibility to guide their children's reading, but parents (and this board) should not be making decisions for other parents' children. Doing so is government overreach and censorship.

Judy Blume, my favorite author when I was young, wrote:

“I believe that censorship grows out of fear, and because fear is contagious, some parents are easily swayed. Book banning [or book restricting] satisfies their need to feel in control of their children's lives. This fear is often disguised as moral outrage. They want to believe that if their children don't read about it, their children won't know about it. And if they don't know about it, it won't happen.”

But books can be the best tools for understanding complex issues. Limiting kids and teens access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging issues. Limiting access can in fact be harmful.

Please do your duty as library board trustees to protect intellectual freedom. Put back the freedom to read and library bill of rights, stop censoring our books, and let all of us, individuals and parents, decide what to read. Our community will be better for it. Thank you.

Public Comment — Pickens County Library Board — Kate Byrd — May 21, 2026

Good evening. My name is Kate Byrd. I am a resident of Pickens County, and this statement is submitted for the public record.

I speak tonight to the board and to the community in this room and those watching online. In March my public comments were about good governance. The people who use this library and the taxpayers of Pickens County deserve it. They are not getting it.

This board rushed a collection policy into place with no implementation plan, no guidance for staff, and no clear process for how decisions would be made or communicated to the public. That is not governance. That is improvisation — and the community is paying the price.

Which brings me to *Drama* — not the drama so evident in this board's conflicts and administrative chaos. I'm talking about the book *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier.

In March 2024, there was a reconsideration request to have *Drama* moved to another section. Three members still on this board voted to move it to the then Young Adult section. The vote failed and the book remained in the juvenile section. Yet recently, *Drama*, a book suitable for ages 10 to 14, has been quietly moved to the adult section — with no public notice, no explanation, and no update to the library's online reconsideration list. It may be just one of a number of books shifted the same way. The public has no way to know.

The public deserves to know which books are being moved, by what standard, and at whose request. Pickens County School District publishes the name of the person filing a reconsideration petition. That transparency would show this community that this is not an organic process driven by concerned parents. It is a coordinated campaign driven by a small group imposing their views on everyone else.

That coordinated campaign led to the firing of library director Stephanie Howard, who repeatedly asked how to implement this very policy as it was being rushed through. Instead of an answer, she got a termination notice. Many in this community believe the board's treatment of her carries consequences they have not yet reckoned with.

The recklessness extends beyond the collection. Three members voted against signing the form for state funding. That is not stewardship. That is recklessness in service of a personal ideology.

Nothing I have seen since January has changed my assessment of this board — and I know I am not alone. The people of Pickens County are watching. And we are keeping the record of this board's failures.

"Good evening, members of the board.

My name is Gus Edmundson, and I am a resident of Easley. I am here tonight to address the **systematic overreach**, procedural violations, and **fundamental misunderstandings of law** that define this board majority's current platform.

Every single fact, statistic, and email I am citing tonight is **not a rumor**—it is documented truth obtained through a formal **Freedom of Information Act** request. The public records have **unmasked** exactly how this operation was built.

First, I must correct the legally vacant talking points spun by previous public commenters in these chambers. The claim that the First Amendment only protects *speaking* and not *reading* is **both ignorant and uneducated**. The United States Supreme Court has made it clear for decades, notably in *Lamont v. Postmaster General* and *Board of Education v. Pico*, that the right to freedom of speech explicitly includes the right to **receive** information and ideas.

Furthermore, to the commenters claiming the First Amendment applies fundamentally differently to minors in this context: **the constitutional law rejects your position**. Public libraries are not public schools. In a public library, minors possess recognized First Amendment rights to access voluntary literature, and a governing board cannot strip that access away simply because an outside political group finds the ideas objectionable. Censorship does not become constitutional just because you target the **reader** instead of the writer, and the **right to read** is an inseparable component of the freedom of speech.

Second, let us **dismantle** the claim that this board is conducting a broad, neutral audit for age-appropriateness. The FOIA data **completely fails** that narrative. The public records show a continuous outside campaign dating back to late 2024, which this current voting majority has fully embraced. When analyzing the unique book titles targeted across the individual reconsideration forms, the library's master log, and the specific 21-book hit list emailed directly to members of this board by outside political group leader Johnnelle Raines, **fifty-eight point six percent** of the entire conflict footprint **exclusively targets** LGBTQ+ individuals, characters, or histories. When looking strictly at the physical paperwork generated by this outside network, that concentration spikes to **eighty-one point eight percent**. The FOIA trail proves this is not an objective administrative review; it is a **highly focused ideological dragnet** against a specific demographic.

Third, I ask this board to **look around this room** and look at the public record since this policy was announced. The **overwhelming, dominant turnout** of Pickens County residents has been explicitly **against** this overreach and **in favor** of free access to literature. The community has spoken **clearly**. You need to **abandon** this outsourced political agenda tonight, implement an **objective** collection policy that follows professional and publisher data, and **trust** your library director and professional staff to do their job.

Because if you choose to maintain this disregard for our laws and our community instead, your actions carry **direct administrative violations**. According to the library system's own internal master ledger, for titles such as *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and *Last Night at the Telegraph Club*, professional staff **forensically recorded** that this board majority held **invalid votes**, failed to pass legal motions, and **manually forced** books to the adult section **without a formal review process**.

And let the record be crystal clear on what happened next: our former Library Director, **Stephanie Howard**—whom this board subsequently **fired**—was the one who stepped in to move those books **back to Young Adult** to preserve standard, legal county protocol. You won't publicly say why you terminated her, but the FOIA timeline reveals the truth. Her firing came right after she was forced to **pause all youth and teen programming across the county** just to divert the insane manpower required to execute your ludicrous cataloging demands. Because you refused to trust the automated system data, and refused to trust our professional librarians to do their jobs, you paralyzed public library operations for our children. You did not fire her for poor performance; you terminated a professional who had just **notably won an award for protecting the freedom of literature**, purely because she dared to manage the direct fallout of your ideological overreach.

This is documented, undeniable proof of a **complete disregard for procedures**. Under **Rule 7.2, Section C** of the Pickens County Council Organizational Rules, these exact actions constitute **full legal grounds for 'Removal for Cause.'** County Council has the **unilateral authority** to remove appointed members by a **simple majority vote**.

Let me be entirely unambiguous about what happens next: **this evidentiary packet WILL be handed directly to the County Council, backed by extreme community pressure to vacate all three of your seats.** Tonight is **not** an opportunity for us to debate you. Tonight is merely **your final chance** to correct your mistake before the Council forces you out. This is your one remaining window to salvage any shred of credibility back with the public."

Virginia King's Statement

Library Board May 21, 2026

First, I would like to apologize for going over my time at the last board meeting. When I heard the heckling from the audience I tuned out all noises. Therefore I did not hear the timer to realize my time was up. I promise to do better today.

I have been reading several of the books in the children's section of the library. Some of them are very good for parents to use to teach sex education to their children as the parents' deem age appropriate.

Two of the books I really appreciated are *Where Did I Come From* by Peter Mayle and *Where Willy Went* by Nicholas Allan.

Where Willy Went is a wonderful book to help parents talk to their children about sex. It can be used as a guide to answer questions children may have. Because of the nudity it should be relocated to the adult section under your new category of parenting. Parents can use discretion as to the degree the child is ready to understand the material. It's best to answer the child's question without giving all the information at one time.

2nd book

Where Did I Come From is over the top showing body parts and explaining the foreplay and act of sexual intercourse. It can be used as a guide to answer questions children may have. It should be relocated to the adult section: parenting, teaching sex education and shown to juveniles as preparation for puberty by their parents to the degree the child is ready to understand the material. Again, it's best to answer the child's question without giving all the information at one time.

Thank you for creating the new parenting section. This will be a great resource for parents to use for reference material as they teach their children.

Thank you too for all you are doing to make our library morally sound for our great community.