



**Board of Trustees Safety Workshop  
25 October 2023 Minutes**

**Trustees Attending:** Stephanie Thompson, Lauren Emert, Andy Simon, Susan Williams, Greg Brakebill, Tim Moore, Logan Hill, Shawn Graham

**Staff Attending:** Manny Leite - BCPL Director, Summer Dale, Chelsea Mathenia, Cynthia Spitler, Polly Taylor, Beth Hall, Savannah McCarter, Carolyn Trendera, Judith Belew, Brennan LeQuire

**Visitors:** Mariah Franklin - The Daily Times

**Call to Order:** Stephanie Thompson called the Blount County Public Library Board to order on 25 October 2023 at 5:30 pm.

**Public Comment**

- There were no actionable items and thus there was no public comment. However, there was ample public input throughout the workshop.

**Report of Board of Trustees Chair by Stephanie Thompson:**

- Stephanie Thompson welcomed everyone to the workshop.
- She briefly described the unfortunate incident that occurred in the Women's Public Restroom last week. The female that was attacked did not sustain any major injuries, except some lacerations from fighting the assailant off. Stephanie described her as courageous and strong.
- She also expressed her frustration that this happened at all let alone in our Library.
- An email was received from the female's mother stating that her daughter is proud of herself. Stephanie too is proud of her.
- Stephanie stated that she is proud of the BCPL staff who responded immediately, got her to safety and waited for the police to arrive. Maryville PD responded immediately and charged the assailant with assault.
- Stephanie mentioned that there were probably other females in this room who have experienced similar experiences. She is sorry that any female has to ever have similar experiences.
- We will not accept this behavior. Our Director and staff will not accept this behavior. Our government will not accept this behavior. It is a societal problem and we will do our best to prevent this from occurring again.
- The assailant was new to the library. He had set up a workstation with an ipad and laptop and looked like an average citizen. We have so many visitors to the library each day. Hundreds come in at all times to participate in the amazing programs such as Mini-Con, Genealogy, Friends

Books Sales...etc. What other organization in our community stays open 7 days a week, 365 days a year minus a few holiday closures?

- We do realize based on this recent incident, as the Board and staff, we need to evaluate the safety practices, our staff response and training as well as anything else that can be identified to ensure the safety of our patrons and staff. Some short term safety suggestions have already been implemented. We are working with the law enforcement, local government, community members, staff, organizations, architects, and security specialists to ensure BCPL is doing everything we can.
- We hope that the citizens of our community understand and are tolerant of us if we need to implement safety and security measures such as signing in, the possibility of identification with a Driver's License, registration...etc.
- We really appreciate your support and hope you can help provide positive feedback. Stephanie appreciates the support of Manny and staff, local and county government, commissioners, city and county officials, the grounds and maintenance crew and especially the recent stepped up support of Maryville and Alcoa police presence.
- Shawn Graham, Board member and Assistant Public Defender spoke regarding the current charges against Mr. Wilson which includes an attempted sexual battery charge. Judge Robert Headrick is overseeing this case. Mr. Wilson has been charged with an attempted rape and per Tennessee law if convicted the punishment carries between 3 to 6 years. Currently his bond is set so high that it is unlikely that he will get out on probation. One of the charges against Mr. Wilson is a felony in this County. There is some indication that there may be some mental illness issues that are at work here. When a person is charged with a felony there is more accessibility to have a mental health diagnosis and for the person charged to get county or state funded treatment. The sticking point is that hopefully there is something positive that comes out of this in the long run and focuses our attention on mental health issues in our society.
  - Shawn will continue to get updates from the District Attorney to share at the Board of Trustees meetings with the Board and Public.
  - Shawn also believes that the Attorney General will be making sure that their work along with the Sheriff's Department as well as Maryville and Alcoa Police departments will take this instance into consideration regarding where do we go from here and how do we keep our folks as safe as we can.
  - Shawn stressed that no place is safe. There was an incident similar to this one in the Justice Center. We are not immune to this, the question is how do we handle it moving forward.
- Stephanie expressed that there will not be a Safety Committee selection today as there are no actionable Agenda items since this is a work session.
- How can we ensure the safety of our patrons and staff? We can't control the plan for every situation, but we can certainly try.
- Stephanie requested that we identify some problems so that we can begin to work on solutions.
- Beth Hall wrote down the presented problems which were then posted around the meeting room. Stephanie encouraged Board members, staff and the public to get up and write solutions to those problems.

- From 6pm-6:16pm the Board allowed actionable written public input. These problems and their suggested solutions were as follows (**pictures on pages 7 and 8**):

### **1. Staff Training and Communication**

- “Walk through of building and grounds by staff/board/law enforcement to find areas of concern which may be present and unknown to us”
- “More frequent with all staff”
- “Incident reposting to department heads daily”
- “Incident report papers”
- “What happened to SARA’s messenger?”
- “Suggestion box-anonymous”
- “Scheduled meetings/reviews”
- “Assertiveness training (dealing with problem people-don't avoid/ignore”
- “Radios in each department to quickly communicate a problem”
- “Public declared on “safety first””
- “Regular Safety training (twice per year minimum)”
- “Definite line of authority to notify in case of an incident”
- “Training on how to handle persons with mental illness”
- “Internal alert system for staff help”
- “Awareness of no trespass role and who is on it”
- “Director and Trustee automatic notification with “severe” priority incident”

### **2. WiFi Tables**

- “Change the wifi password frequently”
- “Turn off wifi at night”
- “Wifi off when closed”
- “Wifi monitor with security”
- “One frequent patron interacts with people at Skyfi tables and considers them unpaid security”
- “Better camera coverage”
- “Remove Wifi tables”

### **3. Communication to Public About Safety**

- “Have safety rules/tips in monthly Daily Times Insert”
- “Educate public about situational awareness, eg. check under stall when entering restroom for other occupants”
- “Prioritize the solutions-keep public informed of progress”
- “Messaging that 1) doesn’t alarm patrons 2) continues to promote the Library as a welcoming place for all”
- “State steps we are taking”
- “Security staff at all times-monitoring cameras”
- “Present proactive measures that have taken place”

#### **4. Addressing Unhoused Population**

- “Attempt to direct them to the resources that can help them”
- “Insure the unhoused population is NOT denied access to the library”
- “As for the homeless “the least of these” treat them as we were commanded, as if they were Him. Help them have a home”
- “Avoid assumptions on who they are”
- “Multi-certified resource officer on staff: EMT, Police, Fire”
- “Post signage as “reminders” that cameras are in use”
- “Have the homeless caused any problems in day-to-day library operation?”
- “Be aware of guests-This is a Library”
- “No loitering”
- “Solution: 1) Update/write Public Access Policy 2)Train staff to ID and approach suspicious people 3) Ask to leave, tell to leave verbal trespass and call police”
- “No homeless resources at the Library!”
- “Staff escort to APTS”
- “Unhoused are part of the public. Please avoid assumptions”
- “Board/Admin has a reputation as being socially Liberal. Stop supporting causes outside of Library Mission”

#### **5. Maintain Overgrowth of Vegetation**

- “Clear vegetation from camera views”

#### **6. Check Outside Lighting**

- “Lights on timers in employee parking lot need adjustments as seasons change and it gets dark earlier”
- “Better lighting and more on Greenbelt”
- “Leave with a buddy (already in place but reminder)”
- “Make sure this is correctly keyed to come on at sunset, especially at change of seasons”
- “Motion sensing lights and automated alarms on close proximity (like Ring camera)”
- “Lighting should be downward, full cutoff to prevent glare (light in eyes)”

#### **7. Children’s Area Access (back door)**

- “Put a barrier to Children’s area (storefront/security)”
- “Wall between children’s and the rest of the library”
- “Children’s area should have a door entryway”
- “Locking egress doors and lock children’s door at sundown”
- “Back doors should be locked or monitored”

#### **8. Isolation of Bathrooms**

- “Cameras on all bathroom entries! Monitor”
- “Better camera view of area”

- “Panic button”
- “Coded doors to bathrooms”
- “Please consider how retrieving a key would impact families with young/potty training children who are learning about their body signals”
- “Need buttons to press for help alarm”
- “Single stall restrooms-would require major renovations”
- “Camera view of bathroom entrances-who enters and exits”
- “Locks with key from front desk or code”
- “Single user unisex restrooms in the meantime, put lock on restrooms; key at circulation desk; allow one user at a time”
- “Mirrors so those exiting bathrooms can see if others are in any hidden areas; some to show movement at bathrooms to others”

#### **9. Basement**

- “Controlled access to out of sight/rear doors-exit device hardware on doors for leaving-but requires code or key fob to re-enter.”
- “Alarm the doors that lead outside”
- “Security sweep nightly”
- “Locking egress doors”
- “Pull station in remote areas; authorized people only signs”
- “Employee Only areas; locked to the public”

#### **10. Main Door to Administration Hallway**

- “ID in order to use facility”
- “Buzz in”
- “Multiple places signs that say there is surveillance”
- “Addition of secure door into administration area from public area”
- “Please make this require a badge. Also keep door locked from YS to Admin.”

#### **11. Other:**

- **Blindspots/Staff isolation**
  - “People sign in or use a check-in system using library cards”
  - “Police Presence when staff leave”
  - “More staffing equals more eyes for security purposes!”
  - “Maintain camera lenses; some are dirty and make it difficult to see events”
  - “What is cost of any off-duty officer to be present when the library is open? Can it be worked into the next budget?”
- **Elevator**
  - “Key card access only”
  - “Has attendant during Public access times”
- **“Children staffing at night”**
- **“Teen/Kelly Room Isolation”**

- **“Suggestion: Prioritize (or group) issues and communicate this prioritization to the public in a positive way”**
- Stephanie expressed her gratitude for the participation and stated that once compiled these problems and solutions will be discussed at the next Board of Trustees meeting on November 21, 2023 at 5:30pm.
- We may be appointing a Safety Committee.
- We will be also posting these presented problems for staff to include their input and identify solutions.
- Susan Williams thanked Stephanie for this workshop.
- In closing Shawn Graham discussed that one of the processes being implemented is that it will be easier to now “No Trespass” troublemakers from the Library premises. It is still up to law enforcement to question and take the library’s suggestion into consideration. In the state of Tennessee we have No Trespass laws and Disorderly Conduct laws but we do not have Loitering laws. We have municipal loitering ordinances but not laws. This may be something to revisit as it is not just the library seeing an uptake in loitering but many public places.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.

Important Dates

Other Library Meetings

Blount County Commission Meeting – 16 November 2023, 7:00 pm – BC Courthouse

Blount County Friends of the Library – 28 November 2023, 4:00 pm – BCPL

Foundation for the Blount County Public Library – 17 November 2023, 8:00 am – BCPL

Maryville City Council - 7 November, 7:00 pm – Maryville Municipal Bldg

Alcoa Board of Commissioners - 14 November 2023, 7:00 pm – Alcoa Municipal Bldg

Next Library Board Meeting – 21 November 2023, 5:30 pm, Sharon Lawson Room

The next Library Board Meeting will be held on 21 November 2023, at 5:30 pm, in the Sharon Lawson Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Summer Dale



Main Door  
To Admin  
Hallway

*Handwritten notes on sticky paper:*

- Blue sticky note: [Illegible]
- Yellow sticky note: [Illegible]
- Yellow sticky note: [Illegible]
- Yellow sticky note: [Illegible]
- Green sticky note: [Illegible]
- Yellow sticky note: [Illegible]

Other:

- Elevator
  - Solutions already in Place - Key card access only.
  - Has attendant during Public access times.
- Blindspots/Staff isolation
  - Solutions: [Illegible]
- Police presences when staff leaves.
  - [Illegible]

*Additional handwritten notes on sticky paper:*

- Yellow sticky note: [Illegible]
- Yellow sticky note: [Illegible]