

# The Item

WEEKEND



Partly Sunny 72 • 41 FORECAST, 2A

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## Library Board questions privatization, elects officers



COURTESY PHOTO

The Library Board met to elect new President and Vice President of Board and introduce the representative from LS&S.

• Library status makes Canadian headlines

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DEE HOWARD MULLINS  
THE ITEM

The Huntsville Library Board met Thursday, Feb. 2, for the first time since June 2022, in the Staggs Conference Room of the library to discuss recent changes in library management.

The City of Huntsville turned over management of the Huntsville Public Library to Library Systems and Services Jan. 30, 2022, after ongoing controversy when all book displays were removed, including some that certain groups deemed offensive.

Board members said they were pre-

viously unaware of the discussion and action to change management, and furthermore haven't had new members appointed to constitute a quorum for a meeting.

In attendance were four board members Douglas Wright, Tom Waddill, Amanda Smithson, Dianne Myers, Librarian Rachel McPhail, Library Services Specialist Josh Sabo, President of the Walker County Genealogical Society Deta Rogillio, Mayor Brauninger, Mayor Pro Tem Russell Humphreys, City Manager Aron Kulhavy, Director of Parks

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## LIBRARY

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and Leisure Penny Joiner and Huntsville Representative for Library Systems and Services Sue Considine.

The agenda called for the election of board officers. After several minutes of discussion and clarification, Waddill was elected President and Smithson Vice President.

Board members Waddill and Myers voiced concern to the Mayor and City Manager, questioning why the library was placed under the guardianship of LS&S.

"We did it for several reasons, as with all services the city offers, we look at ways to make them better and provide the best possible services to citizens in the most cost effective and efficient manner, we explored and put together a contract for consideration to provide additional assistance to the library through hiring LS&S, who is able to bring some additional resources to the library, that we did not have in house and there are some cost savings to the city for it, we believe we will improve our services in a more cost effective manner," Kulhavy said.

According to the City of Huntsville, the library and all its assets remain the property of the City, from the building, the books, digital material, the furniture, local archives and technology. The library policies and direction will be controlled locally in accordance with policies and



COURTESY PHOTO

Pictured left to right are: Deta Rogilio, President Walker County Genealogical Society, Sue Considine, VP of Operations and Huntsville's Representative for Library Systems and Services.

procedures adopted by the City.

LS&S will manage back office operations including finance and human resources management, complete collection management and library marketing and patron engagement/management.

LS&S representative Sue Considine spoke about changes to the library.

"Rather than look through a change lens may be possibilities and opportunities, and I see working with Rachel and her staff. I think there are lots of opportunities to think about how we are using the staff time to make sure we are bringing as much as we can to the community, in the form of programs and services; there are opportunities to look at groups that are underserved and see if we can partner with them, and build on the wonderful

things that are happening everyday here at the library... building, evolve and grow," Considine said. "At the end of the day it is a public library and what we want to do is provide more, as much as we can in the form of programs services, support and opportunities."

Considine said she will be in weekly conversation with McPhail and continue to work with her virtually. And here physically as much as she can or at least once a quarter. Considine supervises other libraries around the county.

Board member Myers questioned her current board status. She said McPhail told her several months ago that she was no longer on the board. McPhail verified that Myers' board position is active.

The Library Board of the City of Huntsville

was created in 1966. Each member of the board must have been a resident of the City of Huntsville for at least one year prior to appointment. Members serve a three-year term and may serve a maximum of two terms.

The minutes from the last board meeting on June 7, 2022 were reviewed and approved. McPhail discussed the need to evaluate the current fine policy. Consideration would be given to patrons who are indigent or without a job. These individuals would be given a Guest Pass. An update policy will be present to board at a later date.

The next scheduled quarterly board meeting is 4 p.m. Tuesday, May 23, in the Stages Conference Room, Huntsville Public Library, 1219 13th Street.

## Huntsville's Library status makes Canadian headlines

From Staff Reports

The headlines read "This Texas city is privatizing its library after a dispute over LGBTQ2S+ books," wrote Maddy Mahoney a journalist and writer based in Toronto, Canada. The article states this is the latest wave of politicians taking aim at the availability of books containing queer and trans content. The article was written in December and stated the opposing recall petition had amassed over 800 signatures.

Mahoney also points out that in the American Library Association report, the president Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada says banning books "denies young people resources that can help them deal with the challenges that confront them.

"The unprecedented number of challenges we're seeing already this year reflects coordinated, national efforts to silence marginalized or historically underrepresented voices," she says. "Efforts to censor entire categories of books reflecting certain voices and views shows that the moral panic isn't about kids: it's about politics."

Following the vote by the Huntsville City Council to privatize the public library, a group of citizen who disagree with the city's action formed, Huntsville Texas Public First. The membership currently at 124, is a cross section of residents who initiated a recall petition drive.

"The city charter only allows for council members to be recalled, six months after taking office" said Chairman of group Nick Ransford. "Therefore our first round of recalls are for Mayor Andy Brauning, Mayor Pro Tem Russell Humphrey-Ward 2 and Councilmember Jon Strong Ward 4. I spoke to the Secretary of State office and they advised that paper petitions should be used versus an online one."

"It is not just the library but long term changes for our city. The council refuses to listen to its citizen and later changed the Rules of Procedures, to reduced the time citizens have to speak before council. Who has the time to run down three city council members to persuade them to put something on the agenda. Bad policies."

The group hopes to have 1300 signatures by March 1, to ensure all the signatures are qualified.