

## Millard J. Oakley Public Library Board Minutes

3/17/2026

### Attendees:

**Board Members:** Jerry Schetterer, Deb Newkirk, Helen Carter, Thelma Danner

**County Commissioners:** Phillip Talley, Cindy Robbins (left at 5:00), Gail McCowan (left at 5:00)

**Friends of the Library:** Deb Newkirk

**Library Staff:** Judith Cutright, Director, Angie Boone, Children's librarian

**Public:** Bruce Godfrey, Lori Morris

Jerry stated that Brenda had a meeting in Washington, DC and would not be at the meeting.

Matt would also not be able to attend due to an employee locking themselves out of the regional office.

Deb made the motion to accept the January and special meeting minutes. Jerry seconded. Helen, Deb, and Jerry all voted to accept. Thelma stated that she did not have a copy of the minutes. These were provided for her by Judith.

Brenda's attendance was questioned, but it was stated that her absences were excused. By-laws state that a board member would be dismissed if they missed four consecutive unexcused absences.

Thelma was given time to read the minutes. All approved.

### Board Discussion:

At the special meeting Jamie Cox and Michelle Maddox were sent to the county commission to approve. Jerry asked for an explanation from the attending commissioners why they were not approved. Gail stated that she thought two other applicants were just as qualified, if not more. She stated that one of the other applicants was a military veteran. She was concerned that other applicants were not given due consideration. She also questioned the age of the two submitted, as well as their longevity in Overton County. She felt that there were no discussions after interviewing Bruce Godfrey and Lori Morris. Gail also stated that the board has become very contentious over the last few meetings.

Jerry stated that the two the board presented were also qualified and used the library. Gail stated that she felt that both were qualified but that she felt the other two were more qualified. Jerry stated that the board was looking for board members that were passionate about the library and active in the community. Jerry also stated that he did not want to disparage candidates that were not selected. Jerry stated that he received letters from the two that were put forward to thank the board for considering them for the position.

Bruce stated he would like to make a comment. Jerry stated that there is a public comment period at the end of the meeting.

Thelma stated that she wanted to file a complaint with the commissioners that Jerry threatened her at the last meeting. Commissioners told her to speak with a lawyer. Thelma stated that she had someone looking into it for her. She claimed that Jerry broke policy and was very disrespectful to her. Thelma also

stated that all these problems began when the library had to hire a new director. Gail stated that she felt that the board had made their decision before the interviews. Helen stated that she had not seen the applications before the interviews. Deb also stated that she had not seen the applications before the interviews. Thelma stated that she had spoken to two former members, Elmo Garrett and Jimmy Thompson, who are eligible to come back and that they are willing. She suggested that the next openings should be filled by these former members.

Jerry mentioned that 50% of Overton County is under 50 years of age. He feels that the board needs to have younger board members to get a more diverse board. Jerry reiterated that he felt that the two chosen were the most qualified. Gail spoke up and stated that the two other applicants were more qualified. Overton County has been her home for generations, and she does not want to three individuals to run things. She wants a board that will work together. Jerry stated that so did he and the rest of the board. Deb stated that Brenda was the only one that had looked at the applications before the meeting because she would be unable to attend and was unsure if she could vote in absentee. The next county commission meeting is April 13. Jerry asked if he could speak at the meeting. Phillip Talley stated that he could be asked to put on the agenda.

Thelma stated that she had asked to be put on the board agenda. She did not want to discuss what it was that she wanted to put on the agenda because it was against the Sunshine Law. Jerry stated that he needed a topic to put on the agenda.

Thelma made the motion to put Bruce Godfrey and Lori Morris on the board. There were no seconds.

Deb made the motion to resubmit Jamie Cox and Michelle Maddox to the County Commission. Helen seconded. Jerry, Helen and Deb voted yes. Thelma voted no,

Jerry stated that he would like board members to be more respectful of other board members, as well as to stay seated during meetings.

Deb presented information on the children's programs. She stated that there has been an increase in children's attendance at programs. In 2023 there were 2198 children in attendance in programs. In 2024, there were 2148 children in attendance. Programs include story time, indoor bird watching, eye spy box, pen pal program, story walk, as well as other programs that are welcoming to children as well as adults.

Angie spoke up and told the board that she was the children's librarian, and that she has seen a definite increase in attendance. When she took over story time, there were 10-15 children at each program. She now has 40-50 children every week. Thelma asked how many libraries Angie worked with. Angie stated that she is employed by Millard Oakley and does not work at any other libraries. Deb stated that she knows that Angie spends a lot of her personal time researching children's programs as well as training. She stated that Angie does a fantastic job. Jerry seconded that sentiment.

Jerry stated that Thelma wanted to discuss the application process. Thelma stated that she does not believe there should be an application. Thelma feels that board members should pick other board members. She stated that prior boards always picked their own members and that young people should not be on their board because they don't have time and the board members should be "older and wiser". Deb stated that she feels we should reach out to new people with new ideas. Thelma thinks that

new ideas are not always good. Jerry stated that every Overton County resident has the right to have the opportunity to have input. Angie stated that, while she respects tradition, change is inevitable.

Jerry stated that the application process allows people in the community apply and that we need to involve the community and evolve with the community.

Thelma reiterated that she thinks we need to get rid of applications and that is what is causing issues with the board. She stated again that the application in her mind will not work.

Deb believes that she believes the application itself covers all that needs to be covered. Helen believes that we do not need to do interviews. Jerry asked that everyone put forward a study on how to do the process better. Deb made the motion. Jerry seconded. Jerry, Deb, and Helen voted yes, Thelma voted no.

Jerry stated that he noticed that we do not have a board member policy. A policy was put together conjoining by-laws and various other policies. Jerry asked for a motion to accept the policy. Deb made the motion, Helen seconded. Jerry, Deb, and Helen voted yes. Thelma felt that there was no need to have a separate policy. She opposed the vote.

Judith reported that Tracy is working on replacing the globes in the lights. There are several that are loose. Tracy also has contacted someone concerning putting a ramp in the back parking lot to make it a straight shot from the parking lot to the door. Phillip Talley stated that a bid has been submitted and it is hoped that this work will be done soon. In the meantime, solar lights have been installed to assist in visibility.

Friends of the Library: Deb stated that the Friends book sale will be next weekend. All books will be \$1.00 per book or \$2.00 per bag of books for the entire sale.

Regional Library Report: Matt was unable to stay, but did leave his flyer. Judith stated that all trustees are state certified.

Directors report: Financials were not provided from the County. Judith brought up the possibility of putting together a book on veterans and their tattoos. A library has done a similar project in California online and has received several awards for their project. Judith stated that she felt this is a very important part of our history. She would like to have the veterans tell as much of their history as they would be willing to share. Deb and Jerry felt like this is a very worthwhile project. Helen was concerned about the historical society, but if they would be willing to work with us it would be a good project to pursue.

Public comment: Bruce Godfrey feels that the board needs to open up to public comment during the discussion. Phillip Talley stated that the county commission puts the public comment at the end of the meeting due to time constraints. Bruce stated that there are no subjective qualifications on the application. He stated that there was no question concerning residency on the question. Deb pointed out that there is a question about residency on the board. Bruce stated that all are qualified because they are all residents of the qualified. He feels that the board chose on suitability rather than qualifications. He stated that since the commissioners sent back the applications, the board should reconsider all applicants. The commissioners tabled the applicants. Bruce also stated that he spoke to Jerry after the meeting thanking him for the opportunity. Jerry reiterated that he was looking for the

most suitable candidates. Bruce stated that the board failed miserably by not submitting different names. He stated that there will be repercussions for the board decision.

Bruce feels that public comment should be allowed to comment during meeting to avoid missteps.

Lori Morris spoke saying that she was more knowledgeable of policy than many board members. Lori also stated that she expected to get a letter stating she was not appointed. She did not know how to contact Jerry or other board members. Lori also stated that she felt that Helen had looked at the application beforehand and was defensive as of Helen's questions. Lori stated that she knows Thelma, goes to church with her, knows her whole family, and feels that the application process was a back door way to appoint members. She has been active for seven years since she moved her. She stated that there are two individuals that are interested in serving on the board and does not feel that the board conducts themselves in a professional matter.

Thelma stated that if two different members are not sent to the commissioners that the nominations will be thrown out. Thelma made a motion that Bruce and Lori be put up before the commissioners. Jerry stated that it has already been voted on.

Deb made the motion to adjourn. Helen seconded. All approved.

Next meeting will be May 19, 2026 @ 4:30.

Respectfully submitted

Deb Newkirk