

Washington Parish Library
Ad-Hoc Public Meeting
Library Board of Control
Bogalusa Branch
304 Avenue F, Bogalusa, Louisiana 70427
Thursday, February 5, 2026 @ 5:30 p.m.

- I. Call to order by Mr. Nathan Pierce at 5:32pm.
- II. Roll Call by the Assistant Director, Ms. Aerial Mathews
Board Members Present: Ms. Kewanda August, Mr. Derek Dantin, Ms. Emma Ross, Ms. Penny Moses, Mr. Nathan Pierce, Mr. Perry Talley, and President Ryan Seal.
- III. Invocation by Mr. Derek Dantin.
- IV. Pledge of Allegiance led by Ms. Penny Moses.
- V. Approval of Minutes from Thursday, January 15, 2026 meeting.
A motion was made by Ms. Penny Moses to approve the minutes from the previous meeting on Thursday, January 15, 2026 at the Bogalusa Branch; seconded by Mrs. Ross.

Mr. Nathan Pierce: Yes

Ms. Kewanda August: Yes

Ms.Emma Ross: Yes

Mr. Derek Dantin: Yes

Mr. Perry Talley: Yes

Ms. Penny Moses: Yes

President Seal: Yes

VACANT

Motion passed.

- VI. Old Business
- VII. New Business
 - A. Motion to Enter Executive Session
To consider a motion to enter Executive Session pursuant to La. R. S. 42:17 A(1) for discussion of the character and professional competence of the Library Director, Sonnet Ireland.

A motion was made by Mr. Perry Talley to enter executive session; seconded by Ms. August.
Upon a call for public comment on the motion, Mrs. Ireland invoked her right under La. R.S. 42:17(A)(1) to have the discussion held in open session. As a result, the Board did not enter Executive Session.
- VIII . Discuss and Take Appropriate Action Regarding Employment of Sonnet Ireland.

Mr. Ryan Seal, President of Washington Parish, presented information to the Board regarding concerns related to the professional conduct of the Library Director. The presentation included video recordings, social media posts, written transcripts, and references to applicable parish and library personnel policies. Mr. Seal stated that the matter was brought forward following consultation with other parish administration.

Board members asked questions and engaged in discussion regarding the materials presented, including expectations of professional conduct, application of personnel policies, off-duty conduct, freedom of speech, and potential impacts on the Washington Parish Library System. Several Board members expressed differing perspectives regarding accountability, proportionality of discipline, and whether disciplinary action short of termination should be considered.

Mrs. Ireland was given the opportunity to address the Board. She acknowledged the incident, stated that her actions reflected a lapse in judgment, expressed regret for the situation and its impact, and provided context regarding prior interactions with the individual involved. Mrs. Ireland stated that she did not intend to embarrass the Washington Parish Library or the parish and affirmed her willingness to take responsibility and consider the matter going forward.

A. Public Comment

During the public comment portion of the meeting, several residents expressed their thoughts regarding the recent incident involving the library director. The overall sentiment was supportive of the director, highlighting her positive impact on the library and the community. Residents emphasized that while mistakes were made, they should be viewed as learning opportunities rather than reasons for severe punishment. Many noted the director's dedication, professionalism, and contributions to revitalizing library programs, improving community engagement, and mentoring staff. Speakers were:

- Carol Duke: Emphasized compassion and learning from mistakes, highlighting the director's positive impact on the parish community.
- Debbie McLeod: Shared that initial concerns from other employees were influenced by broader statewide actions against library directors, and expressed concern over outside interference in local library governance.
- Ivy Morris: Asked for clarification on the board's process regarding recommendations for termination, raising questions about transparency and accountability.
- Christy Pierce: Noted personal positive experiences with the library's programming improvements under the director and stressed that this misstep should not overshadow these achievements.

- Rosa Mullises: Advocated for following disciplinary procedures rather than termination, emphasizing structured guidance to correct behavior.
- Jasmine Kent: Highlighted the library's increased engagement with the community in recent years and stressed that the director's contributions far outweigh a single incident.
- Anthony Jones: Suggested that termination is too extreme for a first offense, noting that lesser disciplinary measures are available and commonly used in government roles.
- Tracy Seals: Praised the director's mentorship, encouragement, and positive influence.
- Abigail Kemp (representing Friends of the Library): Highlighted the Friends' financial support and volunteer contributions, underscoring the director's credibility, professionalism, and the library's overall improvement under her leadership.
- Mrs. Alva: Encouraged the board to make a fair decision, trusting their judgment and experience to reach a positive resolution.

Special Note: Due to the ZOOM format of the meeting, online attendees also left messages. Text has been copied verbatim:

- Brooke Eugin: My name is brooke eugin & i was a resident of washington parish for 30 years. i worked for washington parish library for about 3 years. up until i was employed there i was unsure of what i wanted to do in life. working for Sonnet was the best thing that could've happened to me. she is passionate and fights for not only our library, but all libraries which is what should be done. because ALL people deserve the type of library she runs. i had so many people tell me when i ran the franklinton branch that the atmosphere had changed and they loved it. and that is because of Sonnet! it is because of her i will be pursuing a degree in library science. terminating her would be the downfall of the library. I miss you Sonnet & miss working with you!

Following public comment, the Board moved to address disciplinary action for the library director. Several options were discussed, including rescinding a recent pay adjustment, a suspension, or placing the director on probation. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Pierce to impose a one-week suspension without pay and a one-year probationary period, during which the director's conduct would be monitored at regular board meetings; seconded by Ms. Moses. The motion passed with a majority vote, with one board member opposing.

Ms. Kewanda August: Yes	Mr. Nathan Pierce: Yes	Ms.Emma Ross: Yes
Mr. Derek Dantin: Yes		Mr. Perry Talley: No
Ms. Penny Moses: Yes		President Seal: Yes
		<i>VACANT</i>

Motion passed.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned with a unanimous all-in-favor vote.

Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.