

**Jasper County Library
Board of Trustees
Meeting minutes
7/15/2025**

Present

Trustees:

Julie Mikols, Chair
Glenice Watts, Vice-Chair
Sandi Vito, Secretary
Daniel Gemmell
Samuel Lawton

Staff:

Abigail Barna-Ashley, Deputy Director
Kelsey Boom, Regional Staff
Darlene Thomas-Burroughs, Hardeeville Branch Manager
Marcia Cleland, Pratt Branch Manager

Guests:

Eileen Cole, President, Friends of Pratt Library
Carolyn Crosby, President, Friends of Hardeeville Library
Beth Miller, Vice-President, Friends of Hardeeville Library

Chair called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
April minutes were approved.

I. NEW BUSINESS

Outreach and Community Survey Report, Presented by Kelsey Boom

The community survey response rate was improved by 190%. The majority of patrons report being very satisfied or satisfied. Fifty-three percent report they use the library for physical materials and another 30% report using digital resources. More than 45% use the library at least once a month, and another 42% use the library at least once every 3-6 months. Patrons top areas for improvement are more children's programs, additions to the collections, expansion of digital reading materials.

More than 100 people at each of the Hardeeville and Pratt libraries participated in summer reading.

The AHJ social media outreach has reached nearly 10,000 people on Facebook and 273 people on Instagram.

Budget and Finance Presentation, Presented by Julie Mikols, President Jasper Trustees
Jasper County and AHJ library revenue and expenses are within Trustee approved budgets, and the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025 ended with a net positive for all of AHJ Regional Library system. Jasper County is up to date on its quarterly payments to the AHJ library system.

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For FY26, it appears that Jasper County will maintain a flat appropriation. During the Regional Finance Committee's budgeting process and at the AHJ Regional Trustees meeting on July 8th, the decision was made to prioritize staff compensation by allocating available funds toward raises and ensuring staff were paid for their full day – in reality a 7.5 hour day or 37.5 hour week. The Jasper County budget fully expends current year state and county allocations, while maintaining a small reserve from prior year revenues such as fees and fines.

Memorandum of Understanding with City of Hardeeville & Jasper County Operations

A new MOU is due in one year away. City would like to start the conversation and negotiations now, with an agreement in place at least 6 months before the current agreement expires. No major changes are expected.

II. OLD BUSINESS

Pratt Memorial Renovation – Renovations are projected to be completed on time in December of 2025. Library shelving will be ordered this week. In the coming 2-3 weeks the remaining furniture fabric and color choices will be made with the help of Carolina Furnishings. Site visits are being offered to staff, Trustees, and the Pratt Friends leaders.

Strategic Plan

A sub-committee to rewrite the mission statement will be convened.

The USCB Center for Strategic Planning is helping Allendale Hampton Jasper regional library system develop their Strategic Plan for 2026-2027. This project will include research and analysis as input into the plan. A full day retreat with a focused AHJ planning team will be facilitated by the USCB Center and will include people with a variety of perspectives.

Bookmobile

The Bookmobile is currently undergoing repairs.

- 1) *In Process*: Vehicle air conditioning repair to remove stress on the running generator and RV air conditioners while driving the bookmobile to stops. Generator maintenance and fluid flush, and a vehicle oil change.
- 2) *To Be Scheduled*: Reseal roof, front cowl and lights to prevent leaking. Interior floor covering replacement or deep clean and regulate, need quote and will proceed with most durable and best priced options. Removal of wrap, repaint, rewrap, need quote and will proceed with most durable and best priced options. Wrap should be replaced every 3-5 years to prevent baking on and cracking of current issue.

The AHJ van is in use to maintain remote services are while the Book Mobile is being repaired. The van is making the deliveries of reserved books to the recurring stops.

Hilton Head Lake and Sun City stops to be explored in the future after repairs are complete.

III. Reports

Pratt Branch Report, *Presented by Marcia Cleland, Hardeeville Branch Manager*

More than 103 patrons signed up for Summer Reading programs. Events that coincided with summer reading included Diaper Give Away, Sidewalk Chalk Art, The Story Ship, and Fossil Dig.

Other Library programs included Kids' Gardening, Senior Chair Exercises, and Tea Tasting. The community room hosted Desrye of Hope, the South Carolina Departments of Aging and Resilience, as well as three additional groups.

An opening for a part-time employee will be posted due to a current staff retirement.

Utilization

Patron Visits	1,646
New Cards Issued	48
Computer usage	316
Reference questions	480

Hardeeville Library Report, *Presented by Darlene Thomas-Burroughs, Hardeeville Branch Manager*

The Hardeeville Library hosted many events, including HarLi Tots, Bilingual Storytime and Summer Reading, Spoken Word, Movie Matinee, Taste of Tea, Senior Movie Day, STEM Explorers, and Game On. On the third Thursday of each month, the Diaper Bank is open, providing free diapers to parents in the community. This service is made possible through a partnership between the One Hundred Children's Foundation and Over the Moon.

Community room events included Volunteers In Tax Assistance, Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia, City of Hardeeville meetings, Lighthouse Mentoring, Jasper County School District Parent Meeting, Jasper County Neighbors United. The computer lab hosted exams, client assistance, other community activities. Notably, Bluffton Self-Help uses the Computer Lab on Monday afternoons and Wednesday mornings during the summer months.

Utilization Report

Description		April	May	June	Total
Directives					
Questions		23	70	38	131
Computer Use		279	190	365	834
New Cards Issued		45	38	57	140
Patrons		777	807	931	2,515
Reference					
Questions		277	356	413	1,046
Programs/Events					
Bilingual Storytime		4			4
HarLi Tots		4	8		12
Spoken Word	-	7			7

Jasper Cty Lib Board		16			16
Taste of Tea			25		25
STEM Explorers			4		4
Summer Reading				204	204
		31	37	204	272

Regional Director's Report, presented by Abigail Barna-Ashley, Regional Deputy Director

Libby Launch Update – Early Success and Next Steps

Libby officially launched for AHJ Regional Library on June 26th and has now been active for **19 days** (as of July 14th). Libby supports reading on Kindle and other eReaders. Patrons have expressed strong and enthusiastic support:

- **173 active users** have already checked out a total of **366 items**.
- For comparison, our previous platform, Cloud Library, had only 139 active users over a span of more than three years.

Hold Demand Highlights:

- Currently, there are **254 items on hold**, including:
 - **87 audiobooks**
 - **167 eBooks**

In response, staff will begin **curating and purchasing titles within our collection** to help reduce hold times and make sure our community has access to the titles they want most.

Phone System at Hardeeville – Jasper County IT has replaced the original phones in Hardeeville Library. They are VoIP, which does mean that if the internet goes out there will be no phones.

Grants

Summer Reading Program – Approved, \$2,000 for each County and used for the summer program.

Plant the Seed – Submitted \$5,000 each County was approved.

T-Mobile Community Grant – To be written and submitted, \$50,000 for public technology access in Jasper County. Due 9/30/2025.

Technology Plan

Will accompany the strategic plan. Technology purchases and deployment will be based on this plan. Grant requests will be based on the development of this plan and the priorities articulated in the plan. This is State Library requirement, which AHJ has not provided since 2021.

Public Policy Updates

Library Card Applications – Children Access to a Library Card

Similar to previous years, the AHJ Regional Library system will have to certify to the State Library that their library does not offer books or materials that appeal to the prurient

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interest of children under the age of seventeen in children's youth, or teen book sections of the libraries and are only made available with explicit parental consent.

To meet the changes in the FY25 legislative year requirement of Proviso 27.1 the State Library revised the Collection Development Funding Certification form – it certifies that we have a Collection Development policy, a Request for Reconsideration Form, and a policy that clearly identifies the age at which a child can obtain a library card without parental consent. Based on State Library recommendations, on July 8th, 2025, the Board of AHJ Regional Library voted to require express parental permission via signature for any child 5-17 to receive a library card.

Employee Handbook

The AHJ Regional Board approved an updated Employee Handbook. The Director will provide a copy of the Employee Handbook upon request.

Deputy Director's Report, *Presented by Abigail Barna-Ashley*

Bookmobile services were offered at a variety of community events in addition to regular stops, including Children's Day at the Watermelon Festival and Hardeeville on Main. Total patron visits were **648 at 97 stops** in April through June.

SC Plants the Seed initiative was launched with grant funding of \$5,000 in June, hosting seven events to date. The program connects early literacy with nutrition education and access to healthy food for families. Health educators and local produce vendors attend the events, and the library gives away age-appropriate books on healthy eating.

Friends of Pratt Library Report, *presented by Eileen Cole*

The Pratt Friends group held reading outreach at schools and other community spaces during the summer. They are planning for the Gopher Hill event and will have a display and float and will be accompanied by the Book Mobile. There will be a quilt available for auction again this year.

The group also is organizing book clubs.

Friends of the Hardeeville Library Report, *presented by Carolyn Crosby*

The Hardeeville Friends has 62 members: Lifetime – 8; Household – 1; Annual – 53. The Friends website went live and is listed on the City of Hardeeville non-profit page.

The Friends presented a check presented to the Hardeeville library for \$1,250 for a poster printer (\$750) and upgrading computers for public use (\$500). More than \$3,000 was raised in FY 2024/25 to support the library through book sales and other activities.

Meeting Adjourned at 6 p.m.

Next Meeting AHJ Regional Meeting is Tuesday, October 14th at 5 p.m.

Next Jasper County Library Board Meeting is Tuesday, October 21 at 5 p.m.

Submitted by Sandi Vito, Secretary

Approved: _____

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