

# P H C S A

## Palm Harbor Community Services Agency, Inc.

Special Board Meeting Minutes  
5:30PM Sept 7, 2023  
Meeting Location: East Lake Library

### 1. Opening by Phil Phillips, Chair

- Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM
- Pledge of Allegiance to US Flag was completed
- Meeting was noticed.

### 2. Roll Call

#### Board Members Present:

- Bill Mazurek    Sandy Faulkner    Scott Papes    Phil Phillips  
 Ron Schultz    Jenny Goad    Phillip Wagner    Dan Wendol  
 Quorum attended

Excused Absence:

Notes:

#### Directors Present:

- Gene Coppola – PHL    Lois Eanel – ELL    Erica Lynford – PH    Mark Sanders - ELR

#### Others Present:

- David Eggers    Nancy McKibbon    Andy Salzman    Deborah Griswold

See attached sign-in for guests

Notes:

### 3. Introductions and Announcements:

+ This is a special meeting called to discuss specific items regarding the handling of the recent situation involving the PRIDE month display at the Palm Harbor Library and resignation of former Library Director Gene Coppola

+This is not the usual business meeting; therefore entity reports and the usual agenda topics will not be addressed tonight

+Barbara Mellen submitted a comment to be read (attached); she was able to attend so read it aloud at the meeting

**Chairman Phil Phillips turned the running of the meeting over the Vice Chair Sandy Faulkner**

### 4. Agency Items

- a. Special Meeting topic per August 16 meeting minutes
  - i. Determine if there was a violation of the bylaws by the Chairman of the Board during the Palm Harbor Library PRIDE display situation
  - ii. Review interaction between PHCSA Board members and entity Directors, including communication and decision making as well as the role of the Chairman in conducting business on behalf of the Board

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iii. Review of the Bylaws as they relate to these specific issues

**+Item (i): Discussion ensued regarding this item with most members of Board sharing opinions:**

-Andy Salzer stated regarding the occurrences and felt asking about and passing along information to the Director was not interfering with the activities of director. Andy was present for much of the interaction with Director Copplola

-Sections of the Bylaws and PHCSA charter were referred to in assisting Board in trying to determine relevance to points stated above

-An slightly elevated interaction occurred between Andy and board member Bill Mazurek which was quickly quelled, and Bill stated he had no more questions at that time.

-Chairman Phillips the restated his timeline to Board of the points of contact with Director Coppola as was submitted to the Board prior in writing as well; specifically stated that Director Coppola was never told what to do in managing PHLibrary

-Andy affirmed that statement as he was also present the meeting in question

-Andy further stated that Director Coppola originally reached out to him to ask about the PRIDE display situation after Comm Latvala had apparently made comments and postings

-Board asked if this type of communication is an issue what as a Board should we do in the future

-Dan Wendol stated he felt that Chairman Phillips had made 3 specific bylaw violations:

1> Phillips in the past had told Lois Eanel of the East Lake Library: who had an emergency issue and needed to fix a roof leak ASAP=cost \$10,000; to split the bill into 2 parts to get it done without prior Board approval as the expenditure amount would then be under the \$5000 approval required

2> Regarding an issue between PHRec and HR where a letter was written to the Board but was not on the agenda for discussion; allegedly Chairman Phillips stated at the end of the meeting that he would handle it

3> The interactions with Director Coppola regarding the PRIDE display, Dan Wendol felt was a violation of interfering in the Directors day-to-day activities

-Discussed actual ordinance and bylaws in regard to powers given to PHCSA vs COUNTY retained and where the line is

-Sandy Faulkner stated all discussions with Directors should be at Public PHCSA meetings

-Extensive discussion progressed regarding the handling of information and contact with the Directors as it relates to the PHCSA Board members

-Phil Wagner stated that we need to stick to the specific agenda items for this meeting and that Dan Wendol's items 1 & 2 should be separated out for a different time.

**MOTION:** Dan Wendol motioned that Chairman Phillips violated the Bylaws regarding his interaction with Director Coppola regarding the PRIDE display

**SECOND:** Bill Mazurek

**RESULT : DID NOT PASS:** Wendol & Mazurek = YES; ALL OTHERS = NO

**MOTION:** Dan Wendol motioned that PHCSA Board draft a letter to Tampa Bay Times requesting retraction and corrections to their article regarding this issue and notify community about such

**SECOND:** Phil Phillips

**RESULT: APPROVED** (Dan volunteered to draft letter for Board approval)

Jenny Goad requested permission to speak to Directors and get their opinion regarding to what extent and when they would like to see the PHCSA Board being involved.

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**MOTION:** Scott Papes motioned that Jenny Goad with Ron Walker (PHCSA Liaison) can discuss with Directors to get their input and wishes for PHCSA interactions

**SECOND:** Bill Mazurek

**RESULT: APPROVED**

PHCSA Retreat Date set: Oct 28, 2023 @ TBD from 9:00AM to 1:00PM

Priority items for Retreat include further discussion regarding PHCSA interaction with Entities

Dan Wendol asked about the proper procedure to get items added to the PHCSA agenda; all items should be sent to Deb Griswold and she will make sure they are added to agenda

**12. Adjournment @ 8:05 PM**

***MOTION:*** *Scott Papes motioned to adjourn*

***SECOND:*** *Jenny Goad*

***RESULT:*** *Carried*

# PHCSA BOARD MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

Date: Sept 07 2023

PRINT NAME	Representing: i.e: Library, CSA, Gen Public etc.
Kim Greenberg	Comm. Eggers
NICOLE FARRELL	ELCL
Cathy WOS	PHL
Barbara Mellen	community member
Jennifer McMenaghan	community member
Sandra Phillip	Community Member
LINDY SAATHOFF	PALM HARBOR PARKS & REC
Lois Eannel	ELCL
JAMES CUOMO	ELCL ADVISORY BOARD
JANE M <sup>c</sup> GARVEY	community member
Kathleen Hanley	PHL Adv. Council

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## Please read during public comments section

1 message

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**Barbara Wilson** <barbara.wilson720@gmail.com>

Sun, Aug 27, 2023 at 9:31 PM

To: Deborah Griswold <deborahgriswold@phcsa.net>, Phil Phillips <philphillips@phcsa.net>, Iris Bickett <irisbickett@phcsa.net>, sandyfaulkner@phcsa.net, scottpapes@phcsa.net, danwendol@phcsa.net, billmazurek@phcsa.net  
Cc: Cathy Wos <cathyw@phlib.org>

Hello

Sending this to all in case the PHCSA HR is still out.

Please read this during the public comments section of this Monday's (August 28) special PHSCA meeting. I'm unable to be there in person

Hello, I am Barbara Mellen of Palm Harbor, a patron of the Palm Harbor library, with my 8 year old son. I want to start by saying how much we continue to appreciate the library and myself and my partner have recently become friends of the library. We continue to vote for Palm Harbor to be best library in Creative Loafing's poll! We love how the staff ensures, everyone is included both with books as well as displays.

With regards to today's special meeting, all my comments are based on publicly available information or information I have received in the meetings I've been able to attend. I urge you to remove the current chair. It is clear he is violating bylaws, specifically Article 4, #14. This states that "No board member shall interfere with the daily operations of the 4 entities of PHCSA. The board as a whole may bring to attention an area of daily operations in which the Board deems is not fit or proper." The board chair's multiple conversations with Mr. Coppola, an attorney, and no one else specifically violate these bylaws. If there were concerns, all of this should've been brought to the board as a whole first. Please remove him in the best interest of all four entities of PHCSA.

That being said, PHCSA should amend their bylaws to be able to call emergency meetings on zoom or other virtual option to avoid not supporting their directors in the future. We are in the 21st-century, and we have virtual options available. These should be taken advantage of. Our libraries provide a many virtual options as long as one has a library card. The board should follow suit.

Finally, I want to continue to speak in support of pride displays in every section of the Palm Harbor Library. There are many patrons of the library who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community who are children and will be in the children's section. These children deserve to see themselves represented in the library's displays just as much as any other child does.

Please see our library staff and know what they're doing to make sure everyone feels welcomed and seen.

Thank you. Barbara

Fw: PHCSA - please print for me

From: phil philphillipsconstruction.com <phil@philphillipsconstruction.com>

Sent: Wed, Aug 16, 2023 at 4:52 pm

To: Sandi Phillips

Cc: phil philphillipsconstruction.com

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>  
>  
> PHCSA Board,  
>  
> All have received a copy of the exit interview by Gene Coppola, our Palm Harbor Library Director.  
>  
> I would like to thank our HR department for what I believe to be a very thorough exit interview, and in my opinion one that was done professionally and with no bias whatsoever. There are many comments and ideas within this interview that we will need to address as a board at our next planning retreat.  
>  
> However, right now there are several things that need to be stated due to the specific nature of the allegations that have been brought forth.  
>  
> I am honestly shocked and bewildered, and very disappointed by some of the statements that have been made.  
>  
> And since these statements have been made and directed towards me personally, and also as chairman of the Palm Harbor Community Services Agency board, I am going to take a moment to clarify them.  
>  
> My statements are not just my opinion of what happened. They were witnessed by our PHCSA attorney, as well as other individuals that were privy to the conversations and meetings that were had. Nothing has been done behind closed doors or in secret.  
>  
> First in response to questions that were outlined by Dan Wendel, "did the board support you during recent events" - Contrary to the comments that were made, I personally made a visit to the library after being made aware of the initial confrontation that Gene had with Commissioner Latvala.  
> I called Gene to make sure he was in the library and then went there, not as chairman of PHCSA, however, that is the title that comes with me everywhere I go within the four entities. I met with Gene in his office, and I explained that I was there as a patron of the library and what I thought was considered to be a friend of Gene. We discussed the comments made at the budget meeting and the improper manner they were presented I believe that everyone's opinion is this was not fair to Gene. I told Gene that I personally had my own opinion that my faith and my upbringing had instilled in me that was not in favor of the Pride Displays, however, this was not something that I was there to speak about to sway things in any manner.  
>  
> Gene and I walked out into the children's section of the library and viewed the pride display and we continued our discussion that we both hoped that things would settle down and we would make it through the month of June with no other issues. Basically weather the storm. This was the comment we both made.  
>

> I assured him that I respected him, and I personally supported him, and all that he did for the library. I told him that he was the consummate librarian. Actually told him that he was in my opinion the librarian's librarian.

>

> That was all that was discussed

>

> I also called Gene after I found out he had put in his retirement notice. I told him that I hated for the timing to be like it was. That no matter the reason it would always be considered to be the pressure of the recent controversy. Gene assured me that it had nothing to do with that and that it's a decision that was long in the making and the timing just seemed to be right. There were some other comments made as well that were more on the personal side but nothing to do with the issues with the pride month display.

>

> The phone call on Wednesday, June 21 was made to Gene along with PHCSA attorney, Andy Salzman. I had spoken with Mr. Salzman extensively throughout this process and had discussed the ongoing issues with the county commission and the pressure that was being put on Gene. The phone call was made to discuss or to find out if there were any additional problems or pressure being put on Gene. We openly discussed Commissioner Latvala's comments and his personal Facebook post that were calling for Gene's removal. We also discussed further comments that have been made by other commissioners, regarding the issues with the children's department display only. We did discuss the implications of removal of the display and also that there were three displays within the Palm Harbor Library one in the children's department and one in the teens department and one in the adult department.

>

> I was very clear with Gene that there had been NO PHCSA meeting nor any decisions that had been made, and that my phone call with our attorney was not to direct him in any manner. It was an open discussion regarding the matters at hand. It was very clear that retaining or removal of the display would be a decision that Gene would have to make on his own. There was no threat to Gene's job either through suspension or termination.

>

> Gene informed us at that time that the Tampa times had called to interview him and they were actually at the library at that moment, waiting on him. We briefly discussed that the Tampa times interview was probably not one of the best ideas however, they were there and Gene needed to go meet with them. I believe that part of the comments made with the reporter was that there was no decision made by the Palm Harbor Community Services Agency, and it was being taken under advisement.

>

> The removal of the display in the children's department was done at Gene's discretion.

>

> I have not now, nor have I ever overstepped the boundaries of the position I have been put in by the Palm Harbor Community Services Agency Board. I have been very careful and have sought direction from our attorney on all matters, and I have followed them.

>

> I do not appreciate the personal attacks that have been made on me nor the comments made regarding my character. I take things extremely personal, perhaps too much.

>

> Our bylaws may not be extremely specific regarding board member behavior however, we have rules of decorum and participation, as well as rules of conduct. Part of which states, that all individuals who attend any board meeting shall maintain an appropriate

decorum, and shall be courteous and polite, the use of insulting, vulgar, profane or inappropriate language, will not be tolerated.

>

> Some of you may not be aware of something that happened prior to the last board meeting. However, I feel that it needs to be addressed. Bill Mazurek attacked me verbally prior to the meeting which was witnessed by Ron Walker and a number of the public that were attending the meeting as well as some of our directors. The attack was not only on me, but was also directed to Ron as well. Bill was very loud and vocal that he was seeking my removal as chairman, and would not stop until Ron Walker was fired as well. I will not go into detail regarding all the things Bill said but he was out of line and his comments were very unprofessional and slanderous towards me and were unfounded.

>

> I will not allow this to continue.

>

> I know there is a general feeling that the PHCSA board did not support Gene enough however, I don't think that is entirely true.

>

> I do not see in any documentation where the Director of the library sought his own advisory boards support or advice during this issue. I do not even see in the most recent minutes from their advisory board meeting any discussion of the events that took place.

>

> While I respect the passion of which people support their directors, I do not respect or support the bullying that has taken place, and from what I understand is continuing.

>

> This must stop immediately.

>

> We can work together as a board and resolve any of these issues.

>

> I have always been of the opinion that our directors first line of defense and support is that of their advisory boards. That is who is in touch with the daily operations, policies, and issues that are taking place within the entity itself.

>

> The Palm Harbor Community Services Agency board is by design, a group of individuals that have different backgrounds and different interests. We are tasked with the overseeing of the business and the financials of each of the entities. We exist, and we serve at the pleasure of the Pinellas county board of county commissioners. If the board of county commissioners deem that we are not providing the direction and wise management. They can disband our agency and take it back over themselves.

>

> I do not feel that this is of any concern at this time. However, we need to resolve the discontent that is eating at us.

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> Please let us work together and stop the bickering from within. There is no reason.

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> Respectfully submitted,

> Phil Phillips

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# Library Advisor Council

8/12/2023

Palm Harbor Library  
2330 Nebraska Ave,  
Palm Harbor, FL 34683

## Letter of Concern

Dear Ms. Deborah Griswold:

The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention on going deficiencies in the conduct of PHCSA employee, Mr. Ron Walker (Entity Liaison). Per the Entity Liaison Position Summary, Mr. Walker is required to communicate all PHCSA Board information and guidance as well as prepare and present a summary report of issues and opportunities. His primary duties will be to facilitate and improve communication between PHCSA Board Members, Directors, legal counsel, entity leaders, community members and the Pinellas Board of County Commissioners.

Twice during our Library Advisory Council meetings (7/19/2023 and 8/9/2023), Mr. Walker was asked to provide a summary report outlining his involvement and interactions with regards to the Palm Harbor Library "Pride Month Display" removal. The Library Advisory Council requested full disclosure of his Palm Harbor Library interactions detailing verbatim commentary and total transparency of his interactions as outlined in Mr. Walker's PHCSA Board Meeting submittal.

Mr. Walker disclosed to the PHCSA Board on 7/16/2023, that he had several interactions with Commissioner Chris Latvala, Sen. Latvala, Chairman Phillips, as follows.

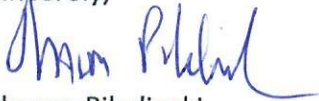
- May 23: Meeting w/ Directors & Latvala
- 6/22/23: Sen. Latvala Phone Call
- 6/22/23: Comm. Latvala Phone Call
- 6/22/23: Met w/ HR Director
- 6/23/23: Chairman Phillips Phone Call
- 6/26/23: Comm. Latvala Text Conversation

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The Library Advisory Board is concerned with Mr. Warker's refusal to disclose details when representing the Palm Harbor Library.

As a result, we are formally requesting a full investigation of Mr. Walker's failure to communicate and to fulfill his responsibilities as a Liaison to the Palm Harbor Library Advisory Board. His insubordination and refusal to provide open and transparent business communication is very troubling and needs to be addressed.

Sincerely,



Sharon Pikulinski

**Library Advisory Board Chair**



MEETING NOTES/THINGS TO DO

ATTENDANCE — PHCSA Mtg.  
8/16/23

Colleen Davis

MATT MAICHUK

Barbara Mellen

Kim Greenleaf

Jane McGarvey

Susan Schuler | ELCL

Nick Farrell, ELCL

Victor Myerscough

Denise Myerscough

MaryAnn Sanchez

Sandi Phillips

TRISH HARRISON

CINDY SAATHOFF

Steven Lynford

REX HASLAM

Julie Haslam

Tyler Bonneau

Public Comment

Barbara Mellen

Mary Ann Sanchez

- Palm Harbor - wrote the email presented last month.
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