CALS Board of Directors Meeting

June 25, 2026, 12pm
Hybrid Meeting: Main Library & Zoom Video Call

Board Members in attendance were Karama Neal, Luke Underwood, Esperanza Massana-Crane Alexis Sims, Dustin McDaniel, David Finkbeiner, Ryan Davis, Ginann Swindle, Jennifer Jamison, and Audrey Evans. Madhav Shroff, Denise Ennett, and Joyce Elliot were absent.

Staff in attendance were Nate Coulter, Ray Terry, Nathan Smith, Katherine Blake, Tameka Lee, Pam Estes, Joyce Wesley, Jennifer Cordell, Glenn Whaley, Brandin Gibbons, Kate Matthews, Eliza Borné, Leslie Blanchard, Ellen Samples, Heather Zbinden, Amanda Orgel, Colin Thompson, Hannah Saulters, Jessica McDaniel, Heather Pressgrove, Averille O'Neal Jr., Nina Childers, Star Carr, and Priscilla Barnes.

Others: Daniel McFadin and Joe Flaherty of the Arkansas Democrat Gazette.

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes

Neal called the meeting to order and reminded the Board of the two sets of meeting minutes to approve. Evans made a motion to approve the May 28, 2026, meeting minutes. Sims seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Evans made a motion to approve the June 11, 2026, meeting minutes. Swindle seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

2. Approval of the May Financial Report

Underwood reported the expenditure is running right on budget, year to date. Ad valorum taxes are up about two percent. Total assets amount to $125,116,652. Reserves are almost $7,000,000.

Sims asked about the Foundation repaying CALS for the Act 372 litigation and where that stands. Underwood stated that he would discuss this with Spencer and report back to Sims.

Information Items

1. Director's Report

Coulter mentioned a few items from his Director's Report:

- Coulter mentioned Steve Straessle's Arkansas Democrat Gazette column, where Straessle promoted the upcoming Bourbon & Books event on July 23, 2026. The featured book for the event is *From Spavinaw to DC: A Conservative's Journey Through Faith, Farm Life, and the Fight for America*, by former Senator Tim Hutchinson.
- Coulter thanked Lee, McDaniel, Thompson, Asfordeh, and the communications department for promoting the USCT sculpture unveiling at the Legacies and Lunch program on June 3, 2026.
- Coulter recommended that the Board members look at the union organization paragraph in the Director's Report. Coulter asked Barnes to describe the salary study. The study will compare CALS with similar libraries in the region. Job descriptions throughout the system will be revised and regraded. Ideally, the study will be completed in time for budget planning for 2027.
- Orgel gave an update on Summer @ CALS. Overall, the numbers are higher, year to date, than this time last year. Orgel added that the performers are doing a fantastic job and that she is receiving valuable feedback from the community.
- Coulter added to Sims' earlier question, by stating that he believed about $53,000 was available for litigation expenses.
- Sims asked about CALS Academy, and how the Arkansas Civic Action Network was chosen as a partner for this program. Coulter described it as "serendipitous" by running-into a Clinton School graduate who now works for the group. Coulter added that ARCAN already has the civics curriculum

in place and has implemented it in different school districts. CALS would provide meeting spaces, as a host. Coulter expressed concerns to Gail Choate, the Executive Director of ARCAN, about this being a non-partisan curriculum. Choate answered yes, the curriculum is non-partisan. Sims acknowledged that this was her concern as well and stated that the ARCAN co-founder has made online posts in support of the No Kings protests, which would give the impression that the group leans one-way politically. Sims reiterated that the group being partisan was a concern for her, and that the curriculum should not lean one way politically. She suggested that CALS staff be diligent in reviewing the curriculum, to ensure that it is unbiased and apolitical.

2. Presentation: Pneumatic Tube from Fones Building

- Blake shared her recent thrift store find, which was a pneumatic tube from the Fones Building. The inside of the tube contained photos and documents. Blake explained how pneumatic tubes would have worked in the building. Sims asked if the owner of the thrift store knew anything about the tube. Blake answered that the owner had bought the tube at auction. Sims asked if the material could be digitized. Blake answered that yes, that is planned. Blake added that she is open to having the tube and documents displayed at the Main library.

3. Move to Adjourn

Sims welcomed the Maumelle intern to the Board meeting. Barnes added that some interns may attend the July meeting and introduced the intern working with administration. Neal reminded the Board of the upcoming Executive Director Search committee meeting, as well as the July 23, 2026, Board meeting. Neal asked for a motion to adjourn. Finkbeiner made the motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Evans and passed unanimously. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:20 pm.

6/25/26