

**Bartlesville Public Library**  
**Minutes of the Regular Meeting-As Amended**

On Tuesday, July 9, 2019 at 4:30 PM, the Bartlesville Library Board was called to order in the Board Room-Administrative Services, Bartlesville Public Library, 600 S. Johnstone, Bartlesville, Oklahoma pursuant to the notice filed in the Office of the City Clerk, 401 S. Johnstone, Bartlesville, Oklahoma on July 3, 2019 at 8:04 AM and posted by 5:00 PM the same day.

**MEMBERS PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:**

Rob Fries  
Brittany Hess  
Rhonda Hudson  
Richard Keim  
Dallas Lewis  
Betsy Martens  
Leigh Sutton

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Shellie McGill, Library Director  
Denise Goff, Operations Manager  
Joan Driesker, Women's Network  
Sarah Winn, Women's Network  
Diane Dixon, Women's Network  
Jerry Nickelson, Women's Network  
Retired Judge Jan Dreiling, Women's Network

**MEMBERS ABSENT AT ROLL CALL:**

Tyler Hartzell  
Dr. Bruce McGowan

Vice Chair Richard Keim called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Chairman Tyler Hartzell was out-of-town and was not able to attend this meeting. Mr. Keim welcomed the Women's Network Members. Attending were Joan Driesker, Sarah Winn, Diane Dixon, and Jerry Nickelson.

Ms. Hess made a motion to approve the May 14, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes as submitted. Seconded by Ms. Martens. Aye: Fries, Hess, Hudson, Keim, Lewis, Martens, Sutton. Nay: 0. Motion Carried.

Ms. McGill presented the Director's Report. She recently received a letter from Doug Parks, AARP Tax Assistance Coordinator. During the 2019 tax season, Volunteers prepared tax returns for 1,100 area citizens. Ms. McGill told Members she is appreciative the Tax Volunteers provide this service at the Library.

The next major project will be the meeting room kitchen upgrade. We are waiting for the final approval from the City Manager. Plans are to remove the walls in front of the kitchen area and add an island with a cook top. Our library users and circulation numbers are a little lower than this time last year. Ms. McGill believed the numbers are lower because of the flooding rains Bartlesville had during this timeframe. As of last week, 1,411 kids had registered for this year's summer reading program. A record number for the Bartlesville Library. She explained program contingency plans have been put into place due to the number of children and their parents attending the programs. We now host two programs to accommodate the large crowds. Library Staff participated in SunFest again this year promoting the Library.

Sonja Settle was recently hired to work in the Youth Services Department. She was the former librarian at Jane Phillips School and we are thrilled to have her with us. Library Staff have worked during the past few months withdrawing many items from the Library collection. These are books that have not circulated in the last four years. It was a recommendation made by Collection HQ. The Digital Conversion Center is almost ready for use. The new service was made possible by a grant from the Bartlesville Rotary Club. Patrons will be able to bring their VHS tapes, cassettes, LP records, camcorder tapes, and slides and convert them into a digital

format. The equipment will be booked just like the meeting rooms in two-hour increments per day. Use of the equipment is free.

Thanks to a grant from ConocoPhillips, the Creative Corner is almost complete. Two crafting classes have been held and were very successful. Scrapbooking Classes will begin on July 22 and will be held monthly. We expect the Creative Corner area to be open to the public very soon.

Ms. McGill has received the City Manager's approval to begin the "auto renewal" on checked out items. She plans to renew items one time before fines begin accruing. Ms. McGill will incorporate this new service into our current Circulation Policy and present it at the next meeting for approval.

Joan Driesker, on behalf of Women's Network, presented a proposal for Library Board consideration. She asked for their support to add the words "Ruth Brown Memorial" to the Library's name. The order on how to arrange the new name would be up to Library Board Members. She read the proposal that included the history of Miss Brown as the Head Librarian of the Bartlesville Public Library and her importance to libraries across the nation. (The Women's Network Proposal, in its entirety, is attached as a permanent part of these minutes.) Following the presentation, questions were asked by Members including three that were asked on behalf of the Chair. (1) What is the actual name being proposed? Ms. Driesker stated they did not have a preference as long as the words "Ruth Brown Memorial" was included in the name. (2) What financial investment is the Women's Network willing to provide for the rename costs? Ms. Driesker replied they had not thought about that. (3) Has the Women's Network polled the community to see if the proposed name change is representative or requested for the community BPL serves? Ms. Driesker said no they have not. Mr. Fries asked why the bronze bust of Ms. Brown on display in the Lobby was not enough. Ms. Driesker believed it is not noticed and we need to do more. Mr. Fries said he was not a fan of renaming buildings after people and used the current renaming of several schools in Tulsa as examples. Mr. Lewis suggested the Women's network schedule events about Miss Brown similar to the ones presented 12 years ago. Ms. Hudson suggested a sign attached to the outside of the building without legally changing the Library's name. As a Director of a non-profit organization, she stated it is a big undertaking and very expensive. Ms. Hess said Ms. McGill has worked tirelessly since her arrival to make sure the BPL brand is recognized by the community. It almost seems like a slap in her face to request a name change at this time. Ms. Driesker said that was not the intention. Ms. Martens thanked Women's Network for the Ruth Brown Scholarship now available at the University of Oklahoma. She also did agree Ruth Brown did more for libraries than anyone else. She believed that you have to have community involvement to make such a change. Mr. Fries suggested an annual event in her honor.

Mr. Keim thanked the guests for their presentation and the Library Board will consider their proposal. Members of the Women's Network left the meeting at this time.

Board Members reviewed the Collection Development and Internet and Computer Use Policies. Several wording changes were suggested in both policies, including changes to the Mission Statement and the Collection Development Objective. Both will be presented at the next meeting for final approval.

The Video Surveillance Policy was reviewed with no suggested changes or additions.

Ms. Hudson made a motion to approve the revised Interlibrary Loan Policy. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sutton. Aye: Fries, Hess, Hudson, Keim, Lewis, Martens, Sutton. Nay: 0. Motion Carried.

Ms. Hess made a motion to approve the revised DVD Players with Headphones Policy. Seconded by Mr. Lewis. Aye: Fries, Hess, Hudson, Keim, Lewis, Martens, Sutton. Nay: 0. Motion Carried.

**LIBRARY BOARD MEETING MINUTES-JULY 9, 2019**

Ms. Hudson made a motion to approve the revised Safety of Children Policy. Seconded by Ms. Martens. Aye: Fries, Hess, Hudson, Keim, Lewis, Martens, Sutton. Nay: 0. Motion Carried. Ms. Hess asked that the review date at the bottom of the policy be changed to July 2019.

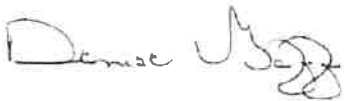
The next item of business was the election of officers for fiscal year 2020. Members discussed and agreed to re-elect the two current officers for a second term. Ms. Hess made the motion to re-elect Tyler Hartzell as Chair of the Bartlesville Library Board. Seconded by Ms. Martens. Aye: Fries, Hess, Hudson, Keim, Lewis, Martens, Sutton. Nay: 0. Motion Carried. Mr. Fries made a motion to re-elect Richard Keim as Vice-Chair. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martens. Aye: Fries, Hess, Hudson, Keim, Lewis, Martens, Sutton. Nay: 0. Motion Carried.

Under Board Member comments, Mr. Fries asked what will be the next step regarding the Women's Network proposal. Ms. McGill explained it will probably be a discussion/possible vote item listed on the September 10, 2019 agenda. It will up to the Chair to include the item on the agenda. After the Board makes a recommendation, it will be sent to the City Manager and the City Council for final approval.

No additional Public Comments were made.

Items for the September 10, 2019 meeting agenda include the review of the Annual Report to the Oklahoma Department of Libraries; the Summer Reading Program Report 2019; the approval of the revised Collection Development Policy, the Internet and Computer Use Policy, and the Circulation Policy; and discussion/possible vote on the name change proposal presented by the Women's Network.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 6:12 PM. The next meeting of the Bartlesville Library Board will be Tuesday, September 10, 2019 at 4:30 PM in the Board Room, Bartlesville Public Library.



Submitted By: Denise Goff  
Operations Manager-Bartlesville Public Library & Bartlesville Area History Museum

## PRESENTATION TO BARTLESVILLE LIBRARY BOARD

JULY 9, 2019

Thank you for this time to speak to you. I'm Joan Dreisker, representing (Bartlesville) Women's Network, asking you to support our request to add the words "RUTH BROWN MEMORIAL" to the name of the Bartlesville Public Library. In what order you choose to arrange the words is, of course, up to you. As long as the words "RUTH BROWN MEMORIAL" become part of the name on the building and elsewhere in time, Women's Network will be happy. I am here today to explain how this request became our mission.

But before I begin, you may be interested to know that of the over 200 public libraries in Oklahoma, over 40 are named for an individual.

On behalf of Women's Network, we congratulate you, Shellie, and your staff for winning the Ruth Brown Memorial Award given by the Oklahoma Library Association Social Responsibilities Roundtable this spring. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time since 1998 that a Bartlesville Public Library program has been given this award. The "Library of Things" is wonderful, and we look forward to the "Creative Corner" and the other programs to come. Ruth Brown would have loved these innovations!

At Women's Network annual meeting, May 2, 2019, we voted unanimously to pursue this long-delayed goal. This unanimous vote has been repeated at every annual meeting since 2008. I was asked to speak to you because I was chairman of the committee that met regularly in this room for more than 2 years to plan activities to bring Miss Ruth Brown back to the library. We decided to commission a bronze bust of Miss Brown, raised the funds, found the sculptor, and organized a week's worth of programs that culminated Sunday afternoon, March 11, 2007, with the unveiling of the bust of Miss Brown that now welcomes all at the entrance to the Bartlesville Public Library.

When that wonderful party was over, our committee had one goal left: to add Ruth Brown's name to the library. Years passed when my caregiving responsibilities made it impossible for me to again pursue this goal until now.

I'm delighted that you have copies of The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown, and if you have them with you, please follow along as I quote from the book.

You may or may not know much about Women's Network and how bringing Ruth Brown back to the library she served until she was fired in 1950, became our mission.

Women's Network was founded in 1981. Our purpose is to educate, empower and support women for legal, social and economic equality. Every year in March we celebrate Women's History Month by honoring a History Maker of the Year. In 1992 we honored Ruth Brown as "History Maker of the Past" and while planning that event, I first heard the Ruth Brown story. My dear friend, Harriet Guthrie, and I were talking about our heroes, and Harriet, a founding member of WN and a long-time professor at OWU, said Ruth Brown was one of her heroes. I was so intrigued by the story that Harriet and I soon decided we'd collaborate on a book about Ruth Brown. We researched for a year or so, and then one day we got a call from a woman named Louise Robbins. It seemed we were not the only ones researching Miss Brown. After meeting with Louise, Harriet and I looked at each other and pushed our files across the table to Louise. Her research and dedication exceeded ours in every way. Getting to know Louise and her research made us even more enthusiastic about honoring Ruth Brown's memory.

The review I'm about to give you of Miss Brown's career at the BPL is taken from Louise Robbin's book.

Ruth Brown was hired to be the librarian at Bartlesville's Carnegie Library in 1919 when the library was only 6 years old (today the building houses the offices of Kane, Kane, Kane and Roark on Adams).

Ruth Brown was 28, and a graduate of the University of Oklahoma. She had moved to Bartlesville with her parents after teaching at Eufaula and Nowata. To quote Robbins (p. 29), "Brown felt a calling to her chosen life's work. Although at one time she was engaged to be married, she decided that 'she was doing it just because everybody else was' and that she was not a person who should get married. Instead, the library was like a marriage to her. It was a marriage with children."

Despite her somewhat abrupt manner, it was the children she courted. She provided a stereopticon and slides for their amusement and unlike some librarians of her generation she willingly purchased series such as the "Oliver Optic" books and the "Little Colonel" books. Although she seemed "ferocious" to children at first – she whispered and insisted that they do, too – her kindness and concern gradually came through. She used story times, charts, games and contests to encourage reading among the children. One Bartian recalled, "she knew us all by name."

In 1919 when Brown began her career in Bartlesville, the Carnegie Library had reading rooms for adults and children and it contained 8,000 volumes. By 1926 that number grew to 10,000. The library was desperately in need of more space.

By 1927, the library had moved to the Civic Center (predecessor of our Community Center) that occupied this same location. A donation of \$5,000 from Frank Phillips was used to "fix up" the space allotted for the library.

By 1931, an addition to the east side of the civic center was built to accommodate the 25,000 volumes. Circulation averaged 9-11 books per capita yearly. During these difficult Depression Days, Ruth Brown, who had been elected President of the OK Library Association in 1931(p. 32), urged her colleagues to "reduce their worries about lost books" and "other red tape" and "to do whatever they could to encourage library use by the unemployed to help them learn new job skills, to fill idle hours with recreational reading or to simply be a place to keep out of the weather."

When the appropriation for all library expenses dropped to \$3700/year, Brown used her modest salary to buy new books for the library.

Throughout her years as librarian, she employed high school aged library helpers. Many went on to careers in library science. One notable example, James Henderson, became head of the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library.

Brown befriended two (2) young sisters who came to the library after school day after day and stayed until closing (p.30). Gradually they told their story. Orphans, they'd been placed in a foster home where they were abused. Brown tried to adopt both in 1937 but the welfare department was unwilling to place them with an unmarried woman. She was finally able to

adopt the younger sister but remained foster mother to the older girl, already 18.

She also showed an early and unusual commitment to racial equality, allowing African American citizens to use the library. Ending segregation in the library lead her into controversy and eventually would take her out of the library permanently.

Where did Brown's activism come from? One of the roots of her interest in civil rights was "most certainly the influence of Don Sheridan, the young charismatic minister of the First Christian Church – Don was also a member of the Bartlesville Library Board (p. 34-35). During and just after WWII, Sheridan and his wife formed a group with Fred and Betty Frey, Leo and Odie McReynolds, and George and Katrina Cade – all 3 of the men employed at Phillips Research and Development – and others including Ruth Brown, that they called the Committee on the Practice of Democracy, a/k/a COPD in an effort to improve relations among people of all races; more particularly to foster improvement of conditions arising out of discrimination based on race, creed or color."

The major problems of the African-American community in Bartlesville that the COPD hoped to address were inferior medical care, lack of employment for men, inability to get mortgages and exclusion from recreational facilities (p. 36-37).

The 20 COPD members decided to tackle health care first. They quietly bought a building that could be used as both home and office and in March 1948 brought Dr. J.B. Dixon here to serve the black community.

In addition to COPD members, volunteers from the YWCA and AAUW (American Association of University Women) helped with cleaning and painting, clerical, nurse aide and taxi assistance at the new clinic.

All through her three (3) decades as librarian, Brown provided increasing levels of service to African-American users of the library. By 1950 the library's periodicals included Ebony and Negro Digest. Plus, she was actively promoting integration both in the library and in the community.

Meanwhile the McCarthy Era was in full swing countrywide and anyone could be accused of being a Communist if he or she supported social change. Ruth Brown's devotion to a library accessible to all citizens proved

to be her undoing. Charging her with being a Communist could not have been farther from the truth but it was a sure-fire way to get her fired in McCarthy Era Bartlesville. It was a time ripe for rumors.

In the early 1950s (p. 54), the COPD was launching its February observance of Brotherhood Month by placing an ad in the Examiner-Enterprise urging those "who believe in interracial brotherhood to accept responsibility for their convictions" and refuse to use segregated facilities during the month. This ad worried some COPD members already "pretty afraid" for their jobs at Phillips. But Brown exulted and the very next day she and 2 young African-American teachers from Douglass School went downtown to Hulls Drugstore, seated themselves in one of the red leather booths near the back and waited.

Employees and customers stared and frantic telephoning by the cashier was heard. The headwaiter approached and told them "the owner says we can't serve you." When asked "why," he told them he didn't ask why "because he owns the store." The trio left and resolved to try again at another drugstore on another day.

Within days, a group of prominent citizens appeared before the Bartlesville City Commission to charge Brown with supplying subversive materials at the public library. This self-designated committee of citizens met with the Library Board to ask for a list of all acquisitions for the past year so that the committee could evaluate them. That meeting was civil.

The next meeting, March 6, 1950, was anything but civil (p. 57). More than 200 attended, most expressing dissatisfaction with the Board's alleged "white wash." The Board had examined the list of the past year's acquisitions as the citizen committee had requested and found it in keeping with their view that "a reasonable balance of library materials should be effected between conflicting views on controversial subjects." The citizen committee loudly accused Ruth Brown of exposing Bartlesville's children to subversive literature "that created in their minds doubts and mistrust of the form of government created by the U.S. Constitution."

When Robert Manuel, a Phillips engineer, questioned the citizen committee's qualifications to judge the acquisitions list, asking if committee members even had library cards, some called for his removal, shouting "Who are you? Are you a Commie?"



Manuel ran all the way home, afraid for his life, he said. He was not the only one at that meeting who feared for his life and his job. Daniel Jones, a Phillips researcher, left Bartlesville soon after, taking a teaching job in Utah. The late Phil Lorenz, whom I'm sure many of you will remember, then of the Bureau of Mines in Bartlesville, called the meeting "the worst experience of my life."

Elsewhere in town, the Board of the YWCA was under attack for allowing Douglass School Y-Teens to meet in their beautiful new building. Many citizens who'd contributed to the new building objected but YWCA nationally had a long-standing history of interracial programs, so the girls of Douglass Y-Teens continued to meet in the new building.

The Y-Teen boys were not allowed to. This battle went on for months and culminated in the beginnings of planning for what became Westside Community Center where African-American Y-Teens would meet more comfortably "with their own kind," when it was completed.

"The pressure against the library continued to mount." (p. 64) Ordered by the City Commission to examine the collection and the operation of the library and report in April, the Board worked long hours and sought information from the American Library Association regarding publications such as The Nation and New Republic that were objected to by the citizen committee.

When they presented their report to the city commission, it included portions of the Library Bill of Rights, the American Library Association's official statement opposing censorship and upholding the freedom of inquiry in a democracy. It defended The Nation and the New Republic.

The Board spoke directly to the issue of race, saying the library was open to all. The report was submitted April 25 and made a matter of public record on May 5. Three days later, George Cade, a Library Board member and member of the COPD, resigned from the Board due to being transferred by Phillips. He was the first but not the last of Brown's friends to be abruptly transferred by Phillips.

On July 10, 1950, with "sincere appreciation," the Library Board was dismissed by the City Commission and replaced with an entirely new board

comprised of members and sympathizers of the anti-Brown citizen committee (p.70).

Brown tried to rally support but could not hold back the forces working for her removal. On July 25, she was summoned to an executive session of the city commission. There she was questioned by the Mayor and other commissioners at length. (p. 71) Within an hour of the end of the meeting, she received a phone call from the city manager informing her she had been dismissed.

“If the city commission thought that firing Brown would end the controversy, they were sorely mistaken. Brown’s long service had won allegiance even from people who did not share her activism; they were stunned by her summary dismissal. Her treatment attracted defenders who had little interest in interracial activities....Brown’s reward for more than thirty (30) years of service was to be one month’s salary....” (p. 74)

Within days of her firing a group calling itself “The Friends of Miss Brown” had begun a publicity and fund raising campaign; they planned to challenge the library’s “take-over” and Brown’s dismissal through the courts. The Congress on Racial Equality, a/k/a CORE, the American Library Association, Oklahoma Library Association and the ACLU were added to the Friends’ List in the weeks to come.

The most dramatic action in the local publicity campaign was a large ad placed by The Friends of Miss Brown in the July 30 Examiner-Enterprise.

With me today are WN members, Ret. District Judge Jan Dreiling and Sarah Winn, widow of Gene Winn, who was librarian at the Bartlesville Public Library from 1953 to 1984. Jan, Sarah and Gene all participated in the 2007 activities that brought Ruth Brown back to the library. Here is my program from the March 11, 2007 unveiling of the bust of Miss Brown.

The program does not include the events held here in the library the evenings of March 5 – 9<sup>th</sup>, which included: a review of her book by Louise Robbins, the showing of a film called “Storm Center” – a Hollywood movie starring Bette Davis as Ruth Brown, based loosely on the Ruth Brown story, an overview of the lawsuit brought by Miss Brown and her friends by Judge Dreiling and reminiscences of COPD members and “The Friends of Miss Brown” who were still able to attend. The attendance at each one of the

evening events far exceeded our expectations and overflowed the library meeting room! Many too frail to attend wrote heartfelt letters, thanking us for honoring Miss Brown.

On the main floor of the library on Sunday, Gene Winn gave an address to an amazingly large crowd who had gathered for the unveiling of the bronze bust, welcoming Miss Brown back to "her library." Adding her name to the Bartlesville Public Library, Gene said, is the best way to permanently honor her memory and her courage.

Gene recalled meeting Ruth Brown once when she visited the library late in her life. Gene said he saw a woman in the children's area he did not know, so he approached and greeted her. "I'm Ruth Brown," she said. "I love this children's area you've created." It was an encounter he never forgot.

Ruth Brown lit a candle in the darkness of McCarthy-Era Bartlesville. She suffered great loss, her position, her retirement and her livelihood for standing firm for her belief that all of us, regardless of race, creed or color should be free to learn the wisdom (and the foolishness) of the ages. Ruth Brown's story is known and passed on in every library science school in the U.S. She was a hero who made Bartlesville a better place. She should be memorialized here, in her library.