

On Saturday, January 7, Leslie Henderson and I drove across the state to meet with members of the Flagler County Branch.

I think we counted 22 branch members who came to meet with us on a cold Saturday morning, on a non-branch meeting day, in a bank community room. That number included at least 5 or 6 board members who are behind this move. The President, who has a husband in Hospice, did not attend.

It became evident that the board is behind this move to drop AAUW affiliation and branch members seem to be going along. They had surveyed branch members with a letter saying a new group was forming and asking which they chose to belong to, and reported that 85 members chose the new group and only about 15 would stay with AAUW. We did not ask which attendees were going and which were staying with AAUW.

Three or four of the board members were extremely rude in their comments and questions. I think they were reacting at least partly to our having insisted on writing to every member of the branch. They expected to just drop out and re-form without any interference. I think we managed to straighten out a couple of the misunderstandings that they held and to impart some information about AAUW. The board members continued to insist they were only interested in local affairs and were uninterested in being a part of a national organization.

A letter had been sent to the President explaining that their \$37,000 endowment had not been given away, but was still producing income toward grants, but the President had not shared that information with the branch. I did hear someone say that it would be explained in their next newsletter.

Those who were there seemed to universally hate the new membership requirement, but at least two people asked if they were the only branch taking this action (they are).

In addition to being a 454 mile round trip, this was not a pleasant visit because of a few rude board members. I do think we accomplished something. There were a few people who were not happy with the group organizing the withdrawal and a couple of people said so. There are a few members who will keep the branch going at least for now and we offered to help in any way we can. I think our being there reinforced their desire to maintain the branch. I've received two emails thanking us for coming, and one of them apologized for the rude members.

I'll let you know if there are further developments.

Carol Newnam, President  
Florida AAUW