

## ALAMANCE COUNTY LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Meeting in person

Friday, January 31, 2025

12:30pm

### Special Called Meeting Minutes

**Present:** Lindsay McKinney, Cheryl Sandford, Jessica Simmons, Bonnie Whitaker, Paula Hendricks

**Staff Present:** Susana Goldman, Kathy Garrison, Terri Lamm

**County Commissioner Representative:** Pam Thompson (not in attendance)

**County Attorney:** N/A

**County Staff Member:** Bruce Walker

**Absent:** Lynn Merrill, Kiah Glenn

There were approximately 50+ members of the public in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 12:35 pm by Jessica Simmons. Bonnie made a motion, Cheryl seconded.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

13 signed up to speak

3 minute per person, 30 minutes total for all comments

*We apologize for any possible misspellings of names.*

Vanessa MacArthur – She was against marking the books for LGBTQ books. Vanessa said, as a parent, she is the one to choose what her children can read.

Richard Johnson – He is against the stickers. He said he spent 30 years in the public school system. He said the library is for everyone. He does not want children bullied, hurt, targeted over what they want to read. Putting stickers on certain books would do just that.

Beth Lehman – She gave her time slot to someone else. She echoed the previous statements.

Tara Aime – She is for stickers. She wants to know what she is bringing home for her children. She has 8 children and doesn't have time to read everything prior to her children checking them out from the library.

Sarah Ann Chapman – She feels strongly that stickers are dangerous. She said there were other ways to determine what is in the book.

Rachel Hopkins – Parents already have resources guides for what their children are checking out. Labeling LGBTQ books are marking them as being wrong. Parents have the right to decide what children read. Labels reflect a specific view point that say these books are shameful or different. The library should remain a space where all families feel welcome.

Bex Soliday – This isn't going to stop anyone from being gay. Books help us understand other people. She encourages everyone in the gay community embrace the pink triangle to show how harmful it truly is.

Racheal Stimpson – She is an educator and parent of 3. She read books about gay characters and she is still straight. She wants to protect the libraries and the librarians. Her son read a book called Go Ask Alice. They read it together and had a great discussion about it. If a parent doesn't want their child to read books about LGBTQIA, then don't let them read them. ALA addressed the issue in 2015 and was against.

Debra Kaufman – She is a library supporter. Public libraries are the best thing in the community. She is concerned about the labeling and the politicization. LGBTQ patrons and friends should feel welcomed, not ostracized. She doesn't approve of war or violence. The bible is full of war and violence. Is the bible going to be labeled? Library patrons have not been consulted about this matter.

Scott Spransy – Places where this has been done throughout the country, have had the opposite effect. He said this is a dangerous and slippery slope regarding targeting a different race or different religion. All political sides and religions should be allowed to be expressed.

Jay Kemmett – The history shows this is a slippery slope. He has raised 2 young women that are thoughtful and respectful. It is not the library's job to restrict books.

Emily Conway – She agrees with most everyone here. Labeling books for LGBTQ is wrong.

Sara Walker – She is confused about what has been said. Because reading books opens your mind. She read queer books as a child. It did not make her gay. Reading all these books about various life issues and situations has built empathy in her. She said parents could Google these materials if they have a question about the materials.

Noel Vaught – She said that parents can read the inside or back cover if they want to know what the book is about. She said this was a discriminatory policy and was completely against the stickers.

Tammy Greeno – She said bullying is a real problem. When you are limiting and labeling these books, the stickers will make children hide them. Shouldn't we want our children to know other's shared lived experiences? These stickers a slippery slope.

Larry Vellani – He said he is impressed by having so many people here today. He encourages the community to get behind the library for more support.

Lydia White – She is a home-school parent. The reason some type of labeling would appeal to her is that if parents want their children to not bring home certain types of books, the stickers would help alleviate that.

Sherry Lee – She referenced the mission statement. She wondered how much this policy and proposal furthered that.

Carla Estrada – She said the stickers were an outdated viewpoint. She said don't be lazy and expect someone else to do your job as a parent.

Molly Elsom – What is the next step regarding the stickers? What is the intent of these stickers? She hopes the intent would follow the mission statement.

#### **LIBRARY COMMITTEE RESPONSES:**

Paula Hendricks – She referenced the bathroom law as a safety issue for children. She talked about parents allowing their children to go to the school of their choice. She referenced safety around transgender people. She said, as law-abiding citizens, we should adhere to a law banning books for K – 4.

Bonnie Whitaker – Bonnie spoke about graphic novels that were explicit sexually. She said she thought young children should not be exposed to certain things. She said parents don't always have time to read the books

before their children do. She said parents would appreciate knowing that a book is sexual and graphic. She said it is about helping the parent know what their child is reading. If someone has a better idea, she would appreciate hearing it. She said it was about protecting the children, across the board.

Lindsay McKinney – She said the labels are not going to be rainbow.

Cheryl Sandford– She said when it was being discussed a year ago, the intent has been lost. The intent was not to request the removal of books, or have an age requirement, or to ban books, or limit the books in the children’s section, or suppress constitutional rights. She said what the committee’s hope was that there would be a policy by the library that is available online. She said by putting additional information on books, she is affirming the guidance for parents. If parents knew there was an issue, it would allow parent’s to be aware.

Jessica Simmons – She said using a rainbow was easily identifiable. She thought it would be a PRIDE issue. It would make it easier for people to know. Then, in the last meeting, Matthew brought up that it should be broadened to parental guidance. The intent was to raise awareness of content. Jessica said the committee went out of their way to not focus on one group.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- Sticker Request & Use
  - Cheryl preferred “parental guidance suggested.” This means parents need to be aware of the content of the book. Bonnie is ok leaving it parental discretion. Lindsay likes the orange or yellow color on the stickers. Cheryl has no color preference. Stickers should be put on books that contain the following: violence, sexually explicit material, under-age drinking and drugs and/or suicide. Jessica said Google reviews are difficult to find. Some themes are varied.
- Form Review of the draft for the Parental Discretion Advised Request Form
  - Jessica asked the following questions of Susana:
    - How burdensome is this policy for staff to adhere to?
      - Susana said it is not burdensome at all for staff.
    - When a submission is received, is each request is done separately or does the library do a few at a times.
      - Susana said each submission is reviewed as it comes in.
    - If a staff meeting is called for review of a book, how far in advance will they be notified for the meeting?
      - When it is a staff meeting, a week in advance is the norm.
    - Who is on this committee?
      - Committee is made up of the Library Management Team (LMT) and Racial Equity Team (RET)
  - Bonnie asked about the procedure of putting a sticker on a book.
    - A patron would fill out the form and send to the library. It would follow the review procedures established on the form. They would vote on it. If a sticker is not decided upon and the patron is still unhappy, they can appeal.
  - Jessica asked if Susana got many requests.
    - Susana said not many.

**There was a 5-minute recess taken at 1:45pm**

**Meeting called back to order 1:50pm**

- Bonnie asked if the approved sticker could be appealed.

- Susana said that is it currently states on the draft policy, no, the decision is final.
- Cheryl asked why the public must speak to a branch manager or Director to get the form.
  - Susana said it is available online. But asking a branch manager or the Director takes the pressure off other staff having to deal with people who are upset.
- Jessica went through the form and Susana made notes on how the form should be revised.
- Bonnie asked again if there would be an appeal process.
  - Susana suggested the form be renamed the Request for Sticker/Review form.
- Susana made sure what the committee wanted on the sticker.
  - Parental Guidance Suggested is the wording. The color is going to be black or white letters with orange background. Susana said she would get some mock-ups done of the labels.
- Next meeting is February 11.

Bonnie Whitaker made a motion to adjourn.

Cheryl Sanford seconded the motion

Jessica Simmons adjourned the meeting at 2:06pm.