

ALAMANCE COUNTY LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Meeting in person

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

12:30pm

Minutes

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

Present virtually: Lynn Merrill

Staff Present: Susana Goldman, Kathy Garrison, Terri Lamm

County Commissioner Representative: Pam Thompson

County Commissioner: Steve Carter – as part of the public

County Attorney: Rik Stevens

County Staff Member: Bruce Walker

Absent:

The meeting was called to order at 12:29 pm by Jessica Simmons. Jessica asked each of the Library Committee to state their name and where they were from. There was enough for a quorum at today's meeting.

There were 25 members of the public in attendance.

Jessica made a motion to amend the order of agenda. Bonnie seconded the motion. Order of agenda was voted on. None opposed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- November 11, 2024 – Jessica said there was a typo that needed to be corrected. She also asked to add the conversation about the possibility of a special meeting being called. Bonnie made a motion to approve with the correction. Cheryl seconded the motion. All in favor.
- January 31, 2025 - Special called meeting - Cheryl Sandford said she wanted to correct the verbiage on something in the January 31, Special Called Meeting minutes. She asked that certain wording be stricken from the minutes. Cheryl made a motion to approve with the correction. Lindsay seconded. All in favor.

REPORT OF DIRECTOR:se

- Staff & programs for January are very busy. Many people are participating, even with the weather problems. Attendance was high, considering the weather.
- Winter reading started January 12 – February. This is a winter reading bingo.
- It is budget season. Working to be ready to present budget to county. We will be removing electronic resources from the catalog. One will be available via Hoopla instead of as a separate resource. Another will be removed because it had extremely low patron use so the return on investment was too low.
 - Creative Bug will be discontinued through the vendor. Hoopla will allow the full catalog for Creative Bug. Hoopla also has Craftsby. This will allow more crafts.
 - Chilton will be discontinued due to low usage. The cost per use person is around \$69 per person. The first 6 months of Chilton implementation was great. The usage has dropped considerably and is not cost effective.
- We will be adding a resource. It is called Beanstack. It is an app that allows much easier participation for SRP, winter reading, etc. The app we use now is not user-friendly. There will be no

budget increase. The Friends' group agreed to pay for the subscription through June. This will allow the new app to be available throughout the whole SRP. There will be a soft roll out prior to SRP.

- There are a few more back-end projects we are working on.
- Jessica mentioned the Strategic Planning Committee and 100 Years of Libraries.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- 2nd draft of form Parental Guidance Suggestion Sticker Request and/or Review -
 - Jessica Simmons
 - Jessica addressed some of the concerns expressed during the public comments both at the previous meeting and those received electronically. She cited research and data on this topic in her response:
 - consulted a child psychologist on this matter
 - the American Library Association's stance on Intellectual freedom
 - the Oxford Languages' definition of censorship
 - the exact wording of the First Amendment
 - research done in the United Kingdom from 2022 (Ybarra, et al) that was published in the Journal of Adolescent Medicine regarding exposure to violent media
 - a 2017 study on Sexual Media and Childhood Well-being and Health published in the American Academy of Pediatrics (Collins, et al)
 - articles dealing with substance use and addiction, sexual intercourse in US adolescents and regarding the negative effects of sexual content on children and adolescents
 - Jessica wanted to clarify the purpose of this committee, which is "To recommend programs, policies and regulations for the operation of the library and to advise the Board of Commissioners on library matters." She mentioned the Library Committee Bylaws and discussed existing label systems in movies, television, video games, etc.
 - The minutes do reflect many months of discussion between the library committee. Jessica said some of the library committee had found some books this week that were questionable in the library. She expressed her opinion regarding this issue. Jessica said she failed to see a problem on identifying books for stickers. She said this is a reasonable solution. Jessica then talked about the sticker issue. She said this discussion and the stickers were not meant to be offensive or controversial. She talked about the history of how the stickers moved from LGBTQ to Parental Guidance Suggested. Jessica said she didn't know where the pink triangle came from, so she can't speak to that. She said the minutes reflect ongoing discussions from multiple different board members over many months. She said the Library Committee wants to provide the citizens an option to mitigate complaints without resorting to requests to remove or censor materials. She said she has friends on both sides of the political aisle and none of them are in favor of censorship. Jessica said the committee itself is selected on a 2-year rotational basis.
 - Bonnie Whitaker
 - Bonnie said the Library Committee received a lot of responses. The whole issue has evolved. Susana sent all the emails received and the library committee read all of them. The public has been both for and against the stickers. Bonnie said this was not an

attempt to censor. She said it is not the Library Committee's job to censor. They are here to help parents by giving them a heads-up. Bonnie said everyone raises their children differently. She suggested parents could sit down and read a book with their child. Or, as a parent, you could choose not to allow your children to read the book. It is an attempt to assist the parents in making good decisions for their children. Many parents are busy and may not have the time to censor what their children have picked up at the library. Bonnie said it was not an attempt to take the books out of the library or restrict what is coming into the library.

- Cheryl Sandford
 - Cheryl said she will reiterate what she said at the last meeting. Last year, the committee went over the policy. Parents are responsible for monitoring what their children read. Not attempting to censor or ban books. They are not removing books, nor moving books to another area. They are not requiring an age requirement. Library Committee is not asking to limit the books in the children's area. They want to empower the parents with information and affirm their role in the media choices of their children.
- Lindsay McKinney
 - Lindsay said she brought the books in that were displayed at the Library Committee table. She talked about the books that she brought in. The book she called into question showed a naked man aroused, naked pictures of babies, people masturbating, people shown having sex. Another is showing a young girl making out with another girl. Another book shows a girl casting a spell on a person who had molested her. She said one of the books talked about gender identities. She said if anyone wanted to look at them, she tabbed the pages that she found questionable.
- Paula Hendricks
 - Paula talked about a Biblical verse. It was Matthew 18:6: *"But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."* Paula said that the majority rules. She said we don't have Playboy in the library. But asked why there seem to be more controversial books written for children.
- Pam Thompson
 - Pam said she didn't have a comment. She is just here to listen to everyone.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Vanessa MacArthur – Burlington
 - She asked why the committee was making comments regarding LGBTQ and sexual violence. She said no one had a problem with the sexual books. Vanessa said she did not like think it was right to link LGBTQ and sexual violence together. She said at the called meeting; the public was told they could not engage with the committee. However, the committee members engaged with the public, which she said was not right.
- Sherry Lea – Graham
 - She said she appreciated the committee taking on this issue. She read a letter stating the committee is making a mistake by labeling the books. Sherry said at the Jan 31, that people that might want to read these books. She stated there was already an official library policy in place. The existing statement of concern policy was board approved in 2022. She talked about this policy. She asked the committee to discontinue use of these stickers.
- Debra Kaufman – Mebane

- She is a working mother and grandmother. She has always been concerned about what her children have read. Most of the people had read the previous minutes. She saw this coincides with over the 18 months that LGBTQ and black books have been censored. She recommended these stickers, if they are to be used, should be put inside the book. She said children may be drawn to the sticker if it is outside the book.
- Colleen Walsh – Graham
 - She was not at the meeting in January. She thought it was about LGBTQ stickers. She said she thought the committee had picked the worst of the worst of the books to try and shock people. She said parents don't always have the best intentions for their children. She asked the committee to consider the safety of the children to be able to read what they want to read to think about and explore. She said the library is a safe place for children to explore.
- Elena Alvarado – Mebane
 - She wasn't at the last meeting. She thanked everyone for the research. She said that movies had ratings. However, there are no books that had ratings.
- Rachael Stimpson – Elon
 - She spoke at the January 31 meeting. Rachael said she appreciates the agenda being moved around. She said some of the articles Jessica cited are not specifically about books. Some were about movies and social media and video games. She said one of the books displayed here is about puberty. She recommends the committee think about a task force made up of citizens of Alamance County. She talked about how to determine when the stickers should be applied or if they should be applied. She said the timing on the public having access to meeting minutes should be different. She wants more transparency in the minutes. She thinks people in our community need to hear more about library concerns.
- Randy Riddle – Mebane
 - Wants to clear up some misconceptions about ratings on movies, CDs, etc. He noted a distinction with the ratings. Movie ratings came along in the 1960's. There were censorship putting warnings on films. The MPA self-rates these movies. It is not a government-appointed body. 1980's controversies in music – the music industry put these warning in place. No government body regulating. Television ratings – government said you had to put ratings on these things. The industry itself rates television programs. If you are going to be putting stickers on books, this would represent the first time in 50 years that any local government has placed any kind of ratings or warnings on materials. Difference in censorship and ratings.
- Lauren Guilmett – Saxapahaw
 - She appreciates the examples of books. She is concerned about that last book. People should have access to the information they need but not be worried about the negative connotations surrounding issues.

Jessica made a motion to close the public comment time. Bonnie seconded. All voted to close.

FURTHER COMMENTS FROM LIBRARY COMMITTEE:

- Jessica Simmons
 - She said that though the library committee originally discussed this as LGBTQ subject matter, that was set aside and became a parental guidance suggested focus.

- Jessica discussed that the committee minutes are approved at the next meeting. All approved minutes have been on the website since the beginning. She encourages all the public to attend these meetings. She maintains that it is not an attempt to censor. She thinks parents should be given a heads-up.
- Bonnie Whitaker
 - Bonnie reiterated they are not a government body. They are volunteers from within Alamance County. They would not be personally deciding which books get the stickers. A member of the public would need to fill out the form for a sticker. The committee only would get involved if there were an appeal. She addressed the sticker on the inside. She said it would be a quick identification for the book to make it visible for the parent.
- Cheryl Sandford
 - Cheryl thanked Bonnie for clarifying the process with the form.
- Lindsay McKinney
 - Lindsay talked about a specific book regarding puberty. She said she doesn't want her 3-year-old seeing a man with an erection in the book. She will introduce those things when her children are old enough. The book in question is colorful and pretty.
- Paula Hendricks
 - Paula said it was interesting that the Bible was banned in some public schools. She said in the Bible, there are causes and effects. She then said children are now taught evolution like it is a religion.
- Jessica Simmons
 - Jessica said there was no research on books. She said violence is violence, sex is sex, etc., whether it is a book, movie or video game. She asked for a motion on which sticker they choose.
- Jessica asked the Committee to take a moment to look at the form for corrections. When a member of the public fills out the policy and submits it to the library, the book in question will be discussed by the Director, Library Management Team and Racial Equity Team.
- Jessica made a motion to approve the policy and sticker. Cheryl seconded. All in favor.

5 minutes recess in the meeting at 1:39pm.

Meeting back to order at 1:43pm

- Sticker options – they settled on a sticker design.

NEW BUSINESS

- Public Comment Policy
 - Jessica suggested the committee change the policy. She disagrees that people must state their full address.
 - Rik Stevens said there was no requirement that anyone be a citizen of Alamance County to attend or speak at these meetings.
 - Jessica verified that as many people could speak that wanted to. However, the total time could not be more than 30 minutes.
 - Motion to adopt a Public Comment and Public Hearing Policy based on the County Commissioners.
 - Pam asked that if there is a large public attendance, would we be able to extend the public comment time. Rik Stevens said that would be fine done on an as-needed basis. Susana asked if there was a limit to the number of like-views.

- Rik said if the Library Committee wants to take more time to review the policy, they could do that.
- Susana asked if there could be a draft reviewed in the May meeting. That way all corrections could be made.
- Jessica made a motion to table the public policy until the May meeting. Lyndsay seconded. All in favor.

Jessica a motion to adjourn.

Pam thanked everyone for coming. She said she appreciated everyone being so concerned about their children. She said it is important to get involved.

Bonnie seconded the motion to adjourn.

Next meeting: May 13, 2025 at 12:30pm.

Jessica adjourned the meeting at 1:54pm.