

MINUTES

The **Rogers Library Board of Trustees** met for a regular session 711 S. Dixieland Road Friends of RPL Community Room on September 20, 2022 at 6:30 PM. The meeting was called to order by .

ROLL CALL:

Board Present: President Brice Wagner, Secretary Caroline Smith, Debbie Woehr, Judy Tobler, ~~Richard Bland~~ ^{Absent (pu)}, Stephen Hardin, Cindy Holmer

RPL Staff Present: Library Director Hannah Norris Milligan, Assistant Director Joy Poynor, Administrative Assistant Sami Espenschied, Children's Director Kristin Jones

Others Present: Sr. Staff Attorney John Pesek, Staff Attorney Bailey Crossett, Public Relations Manager Peter Masonis

PUBLIC FORUM:

Public was present in response to the New Business item, *Appeal to materials challenge decision*. Library Director Hannah Norris Milligan requested to move the New Business item up into the Public Forum timeslot in respect of everyone's time.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

1. Approve the minutes of the August 16, 2022 RPL Board of Trustees meeting.

Motion by Stephen Hardin, second by Cindy Holmer to Approve the minutes of the August 16, 2022 Board of Trustees meeting.
Voice vote: Unanimous – Yes. The resolution is adopted.

FOUNDATION BOARD:

Reported by Hannah Norris Milligan.

- The Top Chef event is still their main focus.
 - Debbie Woehr asked if it is possible to get an entire table.
 - Hannah Norris Milligan will send RPL Foundation Executive Director Brenda Majors' email address to Debbie Woehr for follow-up.
 - Brice Wagner encouraged all to look at this event and attend if possible.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY:

Reported by Hannah Norris Milligan.

- They will be having a get-together for volunteers.
- The Friendly Bookstore will be closed November 24th - 26th for the Thanksgiving holiday.
 - Still need additional volunteers for the bookstore.
 - The Bookstore has a volunteer opening for the Assistant Manager position.

FINANCIAL REPORTS:

Reported by Hannah Norris Milligan.

- Natural Gas follow-up
 - We are having HVAC issues.
 - Workers discovered that the heat was still on in the units while the air conditioning was trying to run. This likely was our Natural Gas extreme increase.
 - Our Natural Gas bill was about \$2,000 prior month to last month. Last month's bill that we received today was only \$280.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

Reported by Hannah Norris Milligan.

- Summer Reading Club (SRC) was a success.
 - Joy Poynor organized the Adult SRC which was a huge success.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Reported by Hannah Norris Milligan.

- FY 2023 Budget
 - Met with the Mayor last week for the annual (FY 2023) budget.
 - The Council-as-a-Whole meeting is on November 14, 2022.
 - Requested additional funds (CAT B) for furniture and book carts.
 - This year we will complete:
 - Tuck point (brick work) in the Teen Garden
 - Parking lot reseal and paint
 - Replace the awnings
 - Foyer's ceiling drywall repair and paint
- NWA Council Welcoming Week
 - The Museum of Native American History's presentation was live-streamed in the RPL Community Room.
- The Latinx Advisory Committee display in the foyer represents many different countries for Hispanic Heritage month.
 - Multicultural Librarian Rosa Guevara organized and gathered loaned items from the community.
 - Circulation Manager Dessie Wewers used her creativity to put the display items together. She did a wonderful job.
- The (U.S.) Constitution display is by DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution).
- This week is Constitution Week and Banned Book Week.
- Vacancy: Children's 29HR/WK Library Assistant II.
 - We had it filled, but the person we hired quit after a couple of hours. They got overwhelmed with the programming.
 - Cindy Holmer asked if programming was computer programming.
 - Hannah Norris Milligan explained that it is not, but programming as in storytime.
- Emerging Technologies Librarian Amber Aultman is progressing well in her new role.
- Mullins Library at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (UAF) contacted Hannah Norris Milligan via email regarding a piece of history that RPL has on loan to Mullins since 1968.
 - This item is 17.5" x 17", circa 1672 and has the indenture of Paul Epps on it.
 - UAF is remodeling their building at this time and needs to know what RPL wants them to do with this item during and after the renovations.
- Caroline Smith took a moment to express how impressed she was with our librarians during the book challenge process.

- Cindy Holmer asked for a status on the (public) bathroom fixtures.
 - Hannah Norris Milligan updated that she applied for another ARPA grant and is still pending their response.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Appeal to materials challenge decision.

- Hannah Norris Milligan stated that Kristin Jones will be speaking behalf of the majority decision from the committee. She is the librarian in charge of that collection.

Speaker: Children's Library Director Kristin Jones (6:21 - 17:09)

- (6:21) So, I am Kristin Jones. I am the Children's Library Director; and, I have collection development responsibility for all of the materials in the Children's Library.
- Now, our committee that was formed to review the formal challenge agreed as a majority decision to retain the book in the collection in its current location, which would be the Juvenile Nonfiction (JNF). We also have an Easy Nonfiction (ENF) section which is geared towards the younger children that come to the library. And, the JNF section would be books that are typically for the older children that use our collection.
- (7:20) There were many things we considered including: the value of the work, whether it's won awards, the reviews in professional journals, the relevance and unique contributions, and patron demand.
- (7:53) And, I would like to speak mostly to, at this point, speak mostly to our Collection Development Policy, which is stated, "For the Children and Young Adult section, the library houses an extensive, quality, diverse collection of materials to fulfill the educational, recreational, informational and cultural needs of children and young adults ages birth to 12th grade." Now, for children specifically, that would be birth through age 12.
- (8:18) And the guiding factors for our collection development are:

- award-winning books,
- positive reviews and recommendations from professional reviewing sources,
- best-selling titles,
- nonfiction titles to support science, technology, engineering, art, nature, history, geography, and school projects,
- relevance or unique contributions to the collection,
- patron demand including pending hold requests, and
- budgetary and space limitation.

- (8:50) In regards to these specific qualifications that we look at when we select materials for the Children's Library, this book does meet these qualifications. For award-winning books and positive reviews and recommendations, it has been widely positively reviewed in many professional magazines, articles, and blogs; and, it has also won several awards including the 2016 Stonewall Honor Book for Children's and Young Adult Literature. It was the winner of the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Nonfiction. It was an ALA (American Library Association) Notable Children's Book. It was included on the ALA Reading List of 2016 and a Best Book of the Year selection by Quill & Quire.

- (9:44) For relevance or unique contributions to the collection, I would like to reemphasize a few of the points that were made by various members of our committee, which their reports are included in the Board Packet. One of the things we believe makes this book exceptional is that it is inclusive of so many different kinds of children:

- children without parents,
- children with disabilities,
- children who do not consider themselves to be boys or girls, just to name a few.

- (10:20) Another aspect of this book that provides exceptional value is that it does not address sex and sexuality as things completely separate and isolated from a person's beliefs, experiences, feelings, body, and community. This book provides a whole-person approach to sexuality, sex, and puberty. There are many sections of this book that are focused on getting to know yourself in

a complete way, not just as it relates directly to sex or sexuality.

- (10:50) Another committee member stated that "This is one of the only books about sex education that I have ever encountered that straight up acknowledges that the word sex has many different meanings depending on the context. Sex is a word used to describe our bodies, like male, female, and the rest of us. Sex is something people can do to feel good in their bodies and also to feel close to another person. Grown-ups call this having sex. Sex is one way grown-ups make babies. Also called reproduction. This book takes the rare approach to exploring the first and second meanings, clearly differentiating them, and acknowledging that neither is straight-forward or simple as confirmed by science, experience, and the teaching of many religions and cultures. This book is extraordinarily nondidactic, instead of dogmatically laying out a correct answer for many complicated issues that opposes. It acknowledges that there are many answers and that it depends on the individual and their culture -- for example, social values, parental teaching. Again and again, it turns these questions back to the reader: "How do you feel?", "What do you think?", and constantly encourages the reader to talk them over with a trusted adult. This book also takes the unprecedented step of helping children understand that sex and sexuality should always be placed in the context of values: specifically, trust, respect, joy, and justice. I've never before encountered any book on the topic including books for adults which use such a healthy and ethically sound framing with concrete examples.
- (12:34) Families in the Rogers community who seek a resource on sex education that is inclusive of all abilities and gender expression will find this book extremely valuable. This book emphasizes the importance of communication between a child and trusted adult. It is sincere, inclusive, self-positive, encourages a healthy relationship with sexuality, and fosters body positivity through guided conversations. The book asserts that family beliefs and social values should always be considered when discussing the topics of sex and sexuality that there are many possible answers to the topics posed depending on the reader's values. Further, the book does not force opinions on the reader. It allows pause for them to learn about themselves with reminders that others may not feel the same as they do. And reading this title with a trusted adult over time as instructed by the author, allows for the child to explore the book at their own pace. Additionally, each chapter ends with questions that encourage the child to explore their own thoughts and feelings about what they just read. Reading slowly with an adult and being given the opportunity to explore their thoughts on each topic is very valuable as a child matures.
- (13:48) In regards to patron demand, at the time of the submission of this book challenge, *Sex is a Funny Word* had circulated seven times this year, which is a high number of checkouts for a children's book in the nonfiction section. It has now circulated eight times. This high number of circulations goes to show that there are many people within our community that want to read this book and that find it valuable. The book is also held at other libraries around Northwest Arkansas (NWA) such as the Bentonville Public Library (BPL), Fayetteville Public Library (FPL), and Springdale Public Library (SPL); and, it has circulated at those locations as well, which goes to emphasize the need not only in Rogers, but also in the general community of NWA as a whole.
- (14:36) I would also like to reemphasize the statement that is included in our Request for Reconsideration Policy, "However, the choice of reading materials is a highly individual matter and no single person may be allowed to exercise censorship or restrict access to library materials by persons outside their household, the library is not a judicial body and it is up to federal, state, and local courts to determine what constitutes obscene or subversive material with regards to library materials. The library does not knowingly collect materials deemed to be illegal and considers all other materials to be protected by the United States Constitution and the Arkansas State Constitution. Only parents or guardians have the right to guide, direct, or restrict the reading, listening, and viewing choices of their own minor children."
- (15:26) We do encourage parents to be involved in their child's reading habits. There is no single book in any library collection that will meet the needs and line up with the beliefs of every person in the community. It's important that the library provide a diverse selection of materials that meets the needs of all members of the community. Some of these books will not meet needs of other members of the community and that is okay. There will always be books that some people like and some people do not and that is okay. We need all of them in our collection because we have people that need those resources in our community. And even if the majority of people in the community do not agree with things that are spoken about in certain books, we still have many different kinds of minority groups within our community and they deserve to have representation in the library as well. They deserve to see themselves in the books that we have; and, they deserve to be able to read books that apply to their lives. It is also a good thing for people to read books that are outside of their own thoughts and values. It encourages discussion and empathy and understanding and fosters communication and building relationships within our community. I would also like to state that diversity includes:

- race,
- color,
- religion,
- sex including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity,
- national origin,
- disability,
- age, and
- genetic information including family medical history.

- (17:32) One of the things that make this particular book so unique and one of the things that make it such a valuable addition to

our collection is that it brings in so many different aspects of diversity into one book. Most books do not focus on bringing in representation of so much diversity in one place. This book emphasizes that. It emphasizes "all people have different types of bodies", "all bodies do different things". It includes race, color even though the colors in this book are silly colors that people actually are not of that color. It includes sex and gender. It includes people of different national origins. It includes disabled children, which is very rare especially in books on this kind of topic. And we believe that all of these things, along with others, both make this book fit our Collection Development Policy and fill a valuable place within our collection that no other book is able to fill on its own.

(19:07) Brice Wagner thanked Kristin Jones and stated that we (the Board) will discuss our recommendation at our next meeting. The process was reminded.

Speaker: Nicholas Graves, Citizen who made the request (19:39 - 29:07)

- (19:39) Before I address the book itself that was in my original Request for Reconsideration, I want to address some of the things Kristin just mentioned. So, especially around the attitude that seems to be going around about banning books. Reclassification is not a ban. I've noticed that even on the ALA website, it seems to say that it's banning books. Nor is asking a dangerous book to be removed from the Children's section of the library. Children are and must be treated differently than consenting adults. We don't allow, for example, children to vote or to buy cigarettes or alcohol, drive cars, get jobs, or to consent to sexual activity. To remove books that teach children to skirt the law on those things, would be common sense and responsible. Not banning the books.

- (20:37) Second, while reclassifying the books to the Adult section is perfectly fine including this book, there is a limited amount of space in the library. Our society needs to make decisions on what books get to grace the shelves of our library. Ms. Jones has mentioned some of the practices that they have for the Children's section, but I'll mention some for the Adult section. Some of the decisions that have been made. So, for example, Anthony Trollope, greatest novelist of all time, usually considered the second greatest Victorian author to Charles Dickens. Goose egg in terms of books here in the Rogers Public Library (RPL). Not a single one here. Another, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, someone who I consider to be a detestable man and the intellectual source of all today's societal (unheard side bar conversation with Christopher Racz), pretty much. He wrote at least five immensely influential books. Yet two, only two of them, in a single volume are here in the collection, the Adult collection. Decisions have to be made around things. And Rousseau brings me to another misconception. We're not trying to get rid of this book because we don't like it or because it's just not for us. Rousseau, as horrible as I think he is and his ideas are, deserves to be on the shelves. I think James Joyce. I don't really like him, but I think his books deserve to be on the shelves. I don't want Sex is a Funny Word gone because I disagree with it. The problem with the book is the content, which I'll explain in just a minute. But the content, in another sense, is inappropriate for adults. And so, it doesn't provide anything useful for adults. It's intended to be for children. It's out of place. So, if there was an episode of Paw Patrol in which they went to go visit a sex therapist, we would all think that's weirdly inappropriate for children, but also inappropriate for adults unless they were just kinda trying to get some humor out of it. Sex is a Funny Word doesn't have a humor aspect that that fictional thing has.

- (22:41) So here's my issues with the book itself: it sexualizes children and can be used as a tool for child predators. In the library's decision, they stated that there's a section of the book that "...encourages children to understand if they are ever touched by another person in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, confused, or scared..." that they should go to someone. Someone for help. It does do that, but it doesn't clarify or elaborate on what constitutes abuse. In an attempt to include every sort of possibility and not be dogmatic, it could endorse a child going to the police for having her head patted like that. Or, a pre-teen quietly consenting to statutory rape. It's not a resource for different kinds of people. It's chaos.

- (22:37) And, as to the sexualization of children, we don't need as the decision stated, "whole-person approach to sexuality, sex, and puberty for pre-pubescent children." Sexualization of children is wrong, dangerous, obscene and against every level-headed parents' wishes. So, just to recap a little bit, I think you'll have my original request given to you at some point, but here's some quotes from the book:

- o "Nipples can feel very good to touch, but if you pinch them it can hurt."
- o "Like nipples, some people's breasts are sensitive and can feel good when they're touched."
- o "Like other holes in the body, the anus is usually very sensitive, which means it can feel good to touch, but also can hurt if we're rough with it."
- o "The clitoris can be very sensitive and touching it can feel warm and tingly. Like the clitoris, the penis can be very sensitive and touching it can feel warm and tingly."

- (24:33) Additionally, the book specifically advocates masturbation to children. "If your body has a penis, you might have noticed that sometimes it's soft and bendy and sometimes it gets hard and doesn't bend. When it's hard and doesn't bend, it's that's an erection. Erections can happen when we touch ourselves to feel good. One way to think about erections is that they're just your body's way of exercising on its own."

- (24:59) "Touching isn't just something we do with other people. We also touch ourselves. We touch ourselves all the time in all kinds of places and for all kinds of reasons. Touching yourself is one way to learn about yourself, your body, and your feelings. You may have discovered that touching some parts of your body, especially the middle parts, (Mr. Graves verbally noted middle parts "is the euphemism they use for private parts.) can make you feel warm and tingly. Grown-ups call this type of touch masturbation. Masturbation is when we touch ourselves, usually our middle parts, to get that warm and tingly feeling."

- (25:35) As to being inclusive of different types of families, what type of family does promotion of sexualization of children and masturbation have in mind? Is it the hundreds of registered sex offenders in Benton County?

- (25:48) And then finally, the book promotes gender dysphoria by adopting the barbaric, radical, gender ideology. One page asks

children to draw a picture of their outside body and another picture of "what the stories inside you feel like" encouraging a disconnect between reality and one's emotional state. By teaching that, teaching them to find that disconnect between themselves and their bodies, the book promotes depression and confusion about gender and identity rather than simply encouraging children to be comfortable in their own bodies. It separates sex and gender in an unnatural way that does not conform to reality. As a solution, it can't actually be manifested in reality. So, children are tricked into these unrealistic expectations so that eventually they'll be prone to depression, suicide, and a disconnect from society. More recently, even hospitals are monstrously seeking to profit off this dreadful situation and they have taken to castration and mutilation of these children and experimenting with drugs that delay puberty.

- (26:54) This isn't even the only book in the RPL Children's section that promotes these ideas: gender dysphoria, sexualization of children, normalization of child sexual abuse are present in *The Rainbow Parade* by Emily Neilson, Trans by Lindsey Harriett, I've got a list here that I can send it to you if you need it. There's also online access through Hoopla to dozens of others including *Sex is a Funny Word* which is how I read them. I checked it out too, but sometimes it's easier online. So, and I'm sure there are others that have slipped past me, even some have been added since I made the initial Request for Reconsideration showing that this is not just being seen as a neutral position here. So, instead of working with the community to find appropriate, community-centric books for the collection, the library seems to have become activists working to undermine families in our community and promote barbaric practices.

- (28:05) If a library becomes an institution that seeks to obscure the answers to real questions and true information by flooding vulnerable areas with activist propaganda, it's no longer functioning according to the mission of any library; and, it should be shut down. Why would a community fund or frequent a library that seeks to undermine the citizens of that community? That's not inclusion. That's exclusion no matter how many buzz words you throw at it. While parents do have the ultimate responsibility for their own children, this indoctrination of children has an effect on the entirety of society. Specifically, particularly, the society that my children will inherit. (28:52) Is this what the Library Trustees want? Sexualization, predation, mutilation of children? I hope not. So, reclassify the book or toss it in the trash, but don't put it in the hands of children.

(29:07) Brice Wagner thanked Mr. Graves and declared to move on to the Public Forum part (of the meeting) where those listed get to speak five minutes or less each depending upon their needs. We will go around the room.

Speaker: Christopher Racz, Citizen (29:28 - 34:25)

- (29:28) So, I would like to point out that I checked on Amazon(.com) and this book which Nick (Nicholas Graves) read some very graphic excerpts from is listed for grades 2-5. You know, this is not appropriate level of discussion for 7-year olds. On page 22 of this book, I do not have a quote, but you can find page 22. It talks about relating sex to play. And that sex is another form of play. That's not something appropriate to teach children. It really blurs the lines. Discussions about masturbation were very explicit in the book. You know, Kristin spoke about a library's kind of function or duty towards the community or community values. Well, I can say that those values are not a part of my life or people that I know. And, I'd actually ask her to think about what she meant by "we want to reflect the values of the community". And then she also said, "But even if a majority of the community did not like the fact that this book was in the Children's section, we still think it's valuable". So, there's actually a little bit of a Catch-22 there because she wants to reflect the values of the community, but at the same time, undermine them presumably if they're in agreement with her own values as the arbiter of these books. Ya know, one thing I can definitely say that is outside of the frame of my worldview and my community values is the whole discussion about various queer identities that takes place from page 150 onward. Which is directly after the masturbation discussion on page 108. Ya know, those aren't my community values. I know there are Catholics in this community as well that those would not be in their values as well. So, I would, anyone who is in agreement with these, please stand up and show yourself. If this is your culture, I haven't been associated with it here in Rogers. Like Nick said. And he, he said it much more prepared and thought-out than I will here, but I would like to point out that the encouragement of dysphoria. You know we talk a lot about that kids have dysphoria as if it's some sort of concept that's out of the ether. This book actually asks prepubescent children who haven't developed any sort of secondary sex characteristics whatsoever, that maybe you're called a "boy", but you know you're a girl. You know that's how girls are treated and what they do. So, it really just says oh well that being a girl is just how you're treated. Ya know. And furthermore, which I wouldn't say that, ya know, I grew up and on my, children, we were 4- and 5-years old playing soccer and the best goal scorer on the team was a girl by the name of Tory. And, she was a quintessential tomboy. I shudder to think what would happen now, ya know. Come high school she wore dresses to prom like everyone else. But I shudder to think what would happen to an athletic girl like her in today's society. Ya know, here's a claim that she said, Kristin said, it doesn't make any normative claims, but it does make a normative claim to children that there are multiple genders. And here's a normative claim very explicit in the book on page 71. I will read it for you. "But having a penis isn't what makes you a boy. Having a vulva isn't what makes you a girl. The truth is much more interesting than that." That definitely is a normative claim. We have an expository statement. We have a mention that "the truth", right, then it claims that this truth is actually "more interesting". Ya know, it used to be a funny joke in Kindergarten Cop with Arnold Schwarzenegger asking the boy and the boy raised his hand, "Boys have a penis and girls have a vagina." And now, here we are actively promoting this to prepubescent children whom the book is targeted at.

(34:25) Brice Wagner thanked Mr. Racz and called Trey Weaver to speak.

Speaker: Trey Weaver, Citizen (34:30 - 35:36)

- (34:30) My problem with the book is the availability of the book. The book shows grown men with their penises and testicles

uncovered, pubic hair. It shows an erect penis inside of a vagina. I have two young daughters and I cannot imagine if they were to walk in here to the RPL and grab that book off of the shelf, if I was not standing next to them, and to open the pages and see that. I'm not comfortable with that. I don't think anybody working in a library should be comfortable with that either. I think it's strange. I think it's weird that there's little girls in the shower room with grown men with their genitals exposed. I find it strange.

- (35:22) Mr. Racz stated, "Amen."
- (35:23) Mr. Graves asked if he could just make a comment, "that's actually a different book. So, Trey and I talked about different books."
- (35:29) Mr. Weaver apologized, stating, "No, I'm sorry. I thought that was Sex..."
- (35:31) Mr. Graves interrupted and continued, "to go to my point, there are multiple, this isn't just the one."

(35:37) Brice Wagner redirected and called on the next speaker, Ms. Lesley Knieriem.

Speaker: Lesley Knieriem, Citizen (35:40 – 39:57)

• (35:40) I'm here speaking as a citizen of Rogers and as a mom whose children grew up using the RPL. As a matter of fact, when they were old enough, they both volunteered at RPL and both my kids, like their Mom, were weird kids. They didn't fit in. They got bullied a lot at school. They got beat up at school just because they weren't, you know, part of the majority. They were different; but, they loved to come to the library because the library was a safe place for them to be different. They knew that if they looked through the shelves of a public library, they'd find a book. Maybe it was not a popular book. Maybe it was a dusty book. Maybe it was on a bottom shelf. Or, maybe it wasn't even in a section that had, you know, that had their particular category on it. But that book, somewhere in there, there'd be someone like them or they weren't like them, but they'd be a word-person too. That'd be okay. And they would fit in. And, my kids, because they trusted, me and they knew I took them seriously, would come and talk to me about these books sometimes. And some of these books were awful. I mean, oh my gosh, I cannot tell you how many cartoon books of bathroom humor my son read which just grossed me out. I did not want to hear about it, but I took them seriously. And I listened to them. And I said, "okay, I can see how you think that's funny, but honestly that's just not something in this family that we talk about. Okay? So, ya know, share it with your friends who think it's funny. Don't. Don't bring it up at the dinner table." And that's, that and both my kids who are now adults and functioning members of the society. Perfectly. Well, they're still not normal they're still kinda weird, but they're good people. And they have both, unprompted, thanked me for this because they knew how safe the place I took them, and the place I promoted was a safe place for them to be weird. And, I want to compare that to what I had growing up. I was a weird kid like I said. And, I used to read the newspaper in elementary school. And, I read Erma Bombeck and Dear Abby and that sort of stuff. I didn't really care about politics; but, I remember Erma Bombeck of all places. I read this word, "masturbation". No idea what this word was, but I knew something about the way it was used I knew I couldn't take that back to my parents and ask them what it meant. So, I went to one of the big, unabridged dictionary we had in our house to look up the word. You know, the dictionary that had paragraph-long definitions of every word. That word. Two words. Just two words in the definition: "self pollution". That was the definition of masturbation. I was a kid of the (19)70s. I knew what pollution was. So, I went through high school thinking masturbation meant you went and threw yourself in a mudpuddle. Is this how we want our kids to grow up? Stupid? Ignorant? And afraid?

- (39:50) Christopher Racz: So, you want to talk to a 7-year old about sex?
- (39:54) John Pesek: It's not a time for discussion. Let's let everyone get their time.
- (39:57) Christopher Racz: Sorry. Sorry.

(39:59) Brice Wagner: Okay, Laura Rowland.

Speaker: Laura Rowland, Citizen (40:02 - 43:10)

• (40:02) Yes sir. So, I'm Laura Rowland. I'm a patron of the library. I've been in this area since 2003. I've got a degree in History and while I don't have kids, I am a Big Sister. I have five nieces and a nephew.

• (40:20) The concept of restricting books, as a historian, is super troubling. People and family should be able to gauge if a book is valuable to them. And it should not be left up to the governing body to determine what people have access to. Having proper words and descriptions for sexual things is essential for kids who are being abused to be able to vocalize their issues to caregivers or trusted adults. This isn't just your family. You could be being abused by a member of your family. Who are you going to talk to if you don't have the right words? Who are you going to tell, "Well, grandpa's touching my cookie"? If you don't have the proper words to say, people don't know what you're telling them when you're asking for help.

• (41:05) This book isn't being required as reading material. Parents have the jurisdiction whether it's appropriate for their child or need. If parents are uncomfortable with having about the birds and the bees talk, which Lord knows my mother was, this is a way to have access to materials that help guide conversations without putting, you know, morality to it. And, I actually did grow up in a very restricted, faith-based. I was raised Bahá'í, which doesn't recognize same-sex marriages, very much is in line with most biblical teachings on relationships, but I still see the value. Oh, it's a middle-eastern religion. But, I recognize that not everybody is of my same belief system. Is not of my same upbringing. Is not of my same experience as a woman who turned out to be queer later on in life. If I had the language to better know what was going on with my body when I was younger, and, "hi (to baby)..."

• (42:25) John Pesek, "Let's try not to interact with each other just keep it stoic and"

• (42:28) Laura Rowland continued...I would have had a better understanding of who I was. And lastly, this idea that, "Oh. It's available on Hoopla." That's classist to say that if it's available on Hoopla, then that's fine. This is ensuring that only children who have access to the internet and eReaders will be able to access this book. When many families, including the family of the little girl

that I mentor through Big Brothers Big Sisters, do not have access to it. So, having this book available for the people who need it, who see value for their families. It's not for the majority of people. It's for the minority of people and we need to keep it that way. Thank you.

(43:11) Brice Wagner: Okay. Thank you very much. Joe.

(43:13) Joe DeRouen: Yes.

Speaker: Joe DeRouen, Citizen (43:16 – x)

• (43:15) Hi. My name is Joe DeRouen. I've written professionally for about 3 years. I was a member of the Arkansas Arts Academy School Board for 4-years. So, I've dealt with children. I've always wanted the best for children. And I have to say, the absolute arrogance and ignorance in wanting to censor this book astounds me. Yeah, laugh Charles. I'm just flabbergasted by it. I read the book. First time I ever read it was today. So, I'll tell you guys. You're good about getting the word out there. A lot of people are reading this book. It encourages children to think, to respect. It encourages bodily autonomy. It encourages children to ask questions. And, I just don't. Again, the absolute arrogance of this is befuddling to me. I don't know how on Earth anyone can suggest this book is equivalent, like he did earlier, of encouraging criminal behavior. It's. That's all I have to say I guess. (44:24) It's sad that we have to be here and dealing with this bullshit.

(44:32) Brice Wagner: Okay. Thank you very much. Okay finally, Laura.

(44:37) Laura Rousey: I'm sorry. Did you say my name?

(44:38) Brice Wagner: Yes. I put you last to the last because you were the last one to put up your name.

(44:41) Joe DeRouen: This is bullshit here.

(44:42) (inaudible on tape)

(44:43) Joe DeRouen: He'll survive.

(44:44) John Pesek: We don't need to talk to each other right now. Just prepare your presentation for the Board members so that they can get all the information needed.

Speaker: Laura Rousey, Citizen (44:52 – 49:01)

• (44:52) I am a mom of four and we have loved coming to the Rogers Library. There is so many books that we have loved. We are a homeschooled family and so we are constantly checking out stacks and stacks of books that help us with our learning for countries, for seasons, for holidays, for all of those types of things. I have a 10-year old. We have a 10-year old daughter; and, she is an avid reader. And she can make her way around the library all by herself. I can be present in the room, but she can make her way around the library. And if she where to encounter that book on her own, I would be horrified. Not because we don't talk about things at home, we talk about everything. And it is an open home to talk about all the things: body's changing, how does this fit in our worldview, what are you feeling and thinking, and what is going on with the neighbor kids and all of the things around our dinner table, at bedtime, all throughout the day. And to have her encounter masturbation topics on her own, and I might not know about it. I might. Depending on if she's feeling kind of "whoa, this is. I don't know what to do with this." It would break my heart honestly; and I stand with Nick and I just say it's not about completely removing it. If it is valid and important for a group of people, put it where other people can get it. But don't have it accessible to my 10-year old daughter who reads and is very intelligent and would have a really hard time processing, "Mommy, what does this mean? What is going on?" And we would. We would talk about it. And we would have a really good discussion; but, that's something that I want to do in our home. And, I understand that there are lots of homes in our community that there aren't parents that are loving their children, having those discussions, and that it's not an open ability to do that. But, what if a child comes in on their own and pulls it up and is reading it and having those questions and goes to their trusted adult who really cannot be trusted and the mentality they're opening themselves up to some very difficult and challenging topics. There are days that she pretends that she's a princess; and she's 10. There are days she wants to be a teenager. I also have a 6-year old and a 4-year old and there are days that they want to be all kinds of different things. And, it would be very confusing. Confusing material. And again, we would process it in our home. But I would just ask, not that we want to restrict access to "everyone", but make it to where . I have this illustration, this thought that popped into my head. There is medication that is available to people; but, it's not just over-the-counter. Oh, I can go to the shelf and go pick it up; but, I have to go talk to a pharmacist about it. To be able to check it out. Because it's not . Maybe it's not safe to just take it all in on my own or I may need some instruction with it. And so, the same kind of thing. Like, maybe this is a book that just shouldn't be out in the open for "anyone" to pick up that maybe can't handle it or doesn't know how to process it because they are too young. Or maybe they don't have the wonderful people in their life who can help them accurately process it. So, my request, as a patron of this library, who loves so many materials in this library; but, speaks from the other side. Like if, there's a group of people who need it, well, what about representing the people that say, "This is not something 'the children' should have access to." (48:50) Kinda going back to the driver's license, cigarettes, those things that we go, "It's not time yet."

• (48:55) Brice Wagner: One minute.

• (48:56) Laura Rousey: Like, let's protect those minds and hearts.

• (48:58) Brice Wagner: You still have a minute left. I was just saying you have a minute left.

• (49:00) Laura Rousey: That's basically it. Thank you.

(49:02) Brice Wagner: I, first, want to thank all of you for bringing your different views to us. As a Board, we try to serve the community; and, we need community feedback on different things like this. So, thank you very much. And we'll proceed with our

Board meeting now. You're welcome to stay and you're welcome to leave. Either way.

ADJOURN:

Motion by Cindy Holmer, Seconded by Caroline Smith, Action: Adjourn

Voice Vote:

Absent *pu*

Yes: Richard Bland, Stephen Hardin, Cindy Holmer, Caroline Smith, Judy Tobler, Brice Wagner, Debbie Woehr

No: None

Abstain: None

Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Caroline D. Smith

Secretary

APPROVED:

Brice A. Wagner

Chairman