

Boundary County Library Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, May 18, 2023

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: Bonners Ferry Gateway Visitor's Center

6373 Bonners St, Bonners Ferry, ID

Special Meeting – Book reconsideration hearing

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call, members present: Bob Blanford, Aaron Bohachek, Lee Colson, Wendy McClintock

Members Absent: Ken Blockhan, Jr.

Agenda Item: Reconsideration of three Young Adult books by Ellen Hopkins, *Perfect*, *Crank* and *Impulse*.

Public Comment - 3 minute limit

- Tracy Iverson submitted a letter, read by Bob Blanford, talking about how young readers in similar situations identify strongly with the Ellen Hopkins characters. She said the books can help at-risk youth realize they are not alone, and have given some the courage to seek help. Iverson talked about balancing rights and freedoms and said it was inappropriate for a small group to enforce their moral judgements on the greater community.
- Janet Gause read a letter from an anonymous youth describing how reading the Ellen Hopkins books helped them through a hard time when they were suffering from many of the same issues discussed in the books. Without the books being accessible and on the shelves, the writer said, they would not have read them. Requesting books through interlibrary loan, etc. is not something they would do.
- Laura Anderson talked about the importance of access for adolescents to information about difficult emotional subjects, citing her experience as a high school counselor. She stressed the importance of a parent to monitor and determine appropriateness of reading materials for their children.
- Adrienne Norris told the board the content in the books was not in the community's best interest. She asked that they be removed or, at least moved to the adult section of the library. She told the board that these books had been removed from the BCSD library after she confronted the superintendent about them.
- Gregory Lamberty submitted the reconsideration form. This series of books promotes vice and evil behavior, he said, and was a poor choice of books to have in a community library. The series of books follows characters who fall into drug abuse (*Crank*), illicit sexual behavior (*Perfect*), and suicide (*Impulse*). Lamberty worried about these books tempting 'good kids from good families' into exploring the world described in the series and following a path that will lead to harm.
- Mary-Esther Wilson described her work with at-risk teenage girls. She said that self-harm methods such as cutting, as well as methods of suicide were learned behaviors the girls gathered from media exposure.

Discussion:

- Wendy made the point that though the books were popular when first released, that circulation had dropped off since then. Lynn said that they had only been checked out a few times in the last year but had very strong circulation when the library first purchased the titles.
- Lee read the books and said they could be described as a cautionary tale. The books described people and situations that were real, he said, and did not sugar coat them. There is a need for materials like this in our community to be able to reach at-risk youth and it is the public library's job to help meet this need.
- Bob read one of the books and said that in the story, the characters make a series of bad choices. These books describe those choices, and the consequences of these bad choices. He raised doubt that a reader, after reading about the consequences of the choices the characters make, would choose to make the same choices. Rather than tempting the reader to engage in risky behavior these books actually warn against it, he said.
- Aaron talked about how harsh and jarring the situations in the book were. He read one and agreed that these were cautionary tales but would be inappropriate for younger readers. He talked about how kids in the local community are suffering the same issues described in the book and that there was great difficulty reaching these kids. Aaron asked Lynn if there were alternatives to these titles that could tackle the same subjects but in a less graphic manner. Lynn said she would be happy to begin the process of finding suitable replacement titles.

The board discussed moving the books to the adult section of the library and concluded that the titles were considered Young Adult, which is a unique designation. The Boundary County Library generally considers age 14 and older young adults, subject to parental discretion. The library has a very small section of YA materials between the maker space and lounge area. Lynn said that this is purposefully separate from the children's library, separated first by a wall and then by a computer/learning station and the lounge area. Furthermore, the downstairs librarian desks are placed strategically so the librarians can see both the children's library and the YA shelves.

The board concluded that the need the books filled, both as desirable titles in a very sparse YA section and tackling three very important subjects for adolescents - namely drug abuse, human sexuality and suicide/emotional health made them an important addition to the library's collection. The moral danger they represented was not clearly described, nor was any evidence presented of any actual harm that came from, or individual that was affected negatively by these titles.

Due to the low circulation numbers and natural sunseting of popular titles, these books were likely going to be removed from the shelves naturally in the next review cycle anyway, Lynn said.

ACTION Item: decision on reconsideration of *Perfect*, *Impulse* and *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins

Motion to leave the books in place until suitable replacements can be found: Lee Colson

Second: Aaron Bohachek

In Favor: Bob Blanford, Wendy McClintock, Lee Colson, Aaron Bohachek

Opposed: none

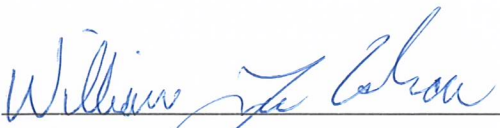
Adjournment: Special meeting

Motion adjourn : Lee Colson

Second: Bob Blanford

In Favor: Bob Blanford, Wendy McClintock, Lee Colson, Aaron Bohachek

Opposed: none

Approved:  _____

Date: 4/AUG 123

