

WEBER COUNTY LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES

Date: March 15, 2011

Board Members
in Attendance: Marcia Harris, Chair
Holly Bauman
Karen Leonardi
Marie Irvine
Kathleen Herndon
Tom Taylor
Jan Zogmaister

Others
in Attendance: Lynnda Wangsgard, Director
Karen Burton, Associate Director
Kim Hale, Comptroller
Julia Valle, Business Office Manager
Monette Hurtado, Legal Counsel
Evelyn Bertilson, Friends of the Library
Sally Arway
Marlene Barnett
Gretchen Burch
Gary Dohrer
Nancy Fagg
Stacey Floyd
Frances Hawk
Christine Melvick
Madonne Miner
Nina Morgan
Bonnie and Bill Rembacz
SannDec Stowell

Public Presentation:

Gretchen Burch, presented concerns relating to an art exhibit hosted at the Pleasant Valley Branch, reading from a prepared statement. Presenters objected to nudity in the exhibit and alleged several pieces were displayed in violation of the following Utah laws:

Utah Code. Title 76, Chapter 10, Offenses Against Public Health, Safety, Welfare, and Morals

Section 215. Internet and online access policy required
Section 1201. Definitions
Section 1227. Indecent public displays – Definitions
Section 1228. Indecent public displays – Prohibitions – Penalty.

Ms. Burch indicated she was very offended by a letter she had received from Wangsgard, in which the phrase “family values” had been placed in quotation marks. She also objected to her children entering the black box theater for youth services programs via the gallery entrance.

Harris asked Wangsgard to respond.

Wangsgard noted that Library managers had spent considerable time reviewing issues raised during a telephone call from Ms. Burch. Managers seriously weighed the points and counterpoints made by Ms. Burch, as well as those of other patrons who offered very different perspectives on the exhibit in question. There was one point, however, on which everyone seemed to agree; that was, everyone is anxious to utilize the gallery space in a manner appropriate to a public library setting. These discussions led to the letter of explanation Wangsgard prepared for Ms. Burch.

The challenge, according to Wangsgard, is that the Pleasant Valley Branch is a public library, not a school library. There is an almost infinite variety of family value systems prevalent in our County, all of which expect, and rightfully so, that the library will reflect their particular point-of-view.

The Library has to find some middle ground.

To ensure a robust review of all exhibits hung in library galleries, a written procedure for requesting an exhibit, had been developed and was distributed to all those attending the meeting. The procedure reiterated the gallery mission statement, clarifying that the spaces are “high traffic areas for Library users of all ages.”

That said, Wangsgard pointed out, the new procedures will not ensure that no one will be offended by future exhibits, as the Library Board may not legally adopt policies that conflict with freedom of speech rights contained in the Constitution. These rights offer broad protection, allowing citizens, including children, the right to read and view many types of material.

Wangsgard reviewed applicable State and Federal laws, explaining how the Library complies with each of them. She explained that even the motion picture industry rating system recognizes, as it classifies films with regard to suitability for audiences in terms of issues such as sex, that a “G,” or general audience rating, where all ages are freely admitted, allows nudity as long as it is natural and non-sexual. The exhibit in question did contain nudity, but it was natural and non-sexual.

Wangsgard noted that the Pleasant Valley Branch had been designed to provide two entrances, one through the gallery and another which bypasses the gallery, allowing patrons to enter directly into the Library. Those who wish to avoid the gallery experience may do so by using the

library entrance. In addition, a family restroom is available in the youth services area so no one need use the facilities in the gallery area. Entrances to all public meeting rooms, including the black box theater, are also available from non-gallery spaces.

Wangsgard concluded by noting the Library staff is trained to lead children to materials that are age, ability, and interest appropriate; but in the end, it is the parent who must take responsibility for what their own children read or view when they visit a public library. She extended an invitation to Ms. Burch and others to help the Library find some middle ground on this issue.

Stacey Floyd and Christine Melvick spoke to the exhibit, reading prepared statements and reiterating the issues raised by Ms. Burch. They asked the Board to be mindful of the children who use the Library and help parents avoid exposing them to offensive images that may be harmful to their development. Nancy Fagg was the last to speak, indicating her grandparents had donated to the Library and she was also opposed to the gallery hosting objectionable works of art. Ms. Fagg indicated she is well traveled and has viewed art in many countries, but does not feel nudity is appropriate for the Library gallery.

During the discussion that followed the presentations, the Board was asked to consider placing a warning sign of sorts on the gallery entrance, letting patrons know that an exhibit contained “adult” or “possibly objectionable” content. The Board was wary of this suggestion, noting that it was a “slippery-slope” in that not everyone would object to the same types of images, and that it is not appropriate to predispose people’s attitudes toward public library materials.

Harris thanked those who expressed their opinions. In response to a call for clarification from Sally Arway, asking to how the Board planned to proceed in evaluating the issues raised, Harris explained “public presentations” are not action items on the agenda. Review of the issues presented will be placed on the April 19th agenda as an item for “review/action.” Interested individuals were invited to attend the April meeting, which will convene at 5 p.m., North Branch Library, 475 E 2600 N, North Ogden.

Minutes:

Minutes of the February 15, 2011 meeting were approved as mailed.

Director’s Report:

Hale presented the financial report and distributed bound copies of the 2011 budget.

The annual Supervisors’ Training and Budget Retreat had been scheduled for 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Tuesday, April 26th, at the Pleasant Valley Branch Library. An agenda will be distributed during the April Board meeting.

The North Branch Materials Handling System was being installed and will be available for Board review during their April walk-through of the North Branch.

Other:

Harris and Taylor asked to be excused from the April meeting as they will both be out-of-town.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m., and the Board made their inspection and walk-through of the Pleasant Valley Library.

Respectfully Submitted:


Julia Valle


Business Office Manager