



Ms. Megan Delehanty
Coslick
Mr. Daniel Hall
Mr. James Lemay
Ms. Eileen MacDougall
Mr. Jeffrey Nussbaum
Mr. Donald Pearson

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Board of Library Trustees

Board of Library Trustees Meeting Thursday, September 22, 2022, 7 pm

Present: Daniel Hall, Megan Coslick, James Lemay, Eileen MacDougall, Jeffrey Nussbaum, Donald Pearson, Library Director Christina Stewart, Administrative Assistant Gloria Corcoran

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Approval of Minutes

Don Pearson made a motion to approve the minutes of June 21, 2022, seconded by Eileen MacDougall, vote unanimous.

Financial and Statistical Report

Eileen MacDougall made a motion to accept the Financial and Statistical Reports from August, seconded by Jeff Nussbaum, vote unanimous.

Library Director's Report

Mrs. Stewart introduced Assistant Library Director Danielle Masterson, Teen Services Librarian Sara Rottger, and Youth Services Librarian Nicole Chevalier who were present in the audience. Mrs. Stewart reviewed her written report. She noted some highlights of the summer programs including the Boston Bruins organization visit and the annual summer bash. Registration numbers for participation in the summer reading program are up over last year but still lagging a little behind pre COVID registration numbers.

The Town received two proposals in response to the RFP for the interior redesign. Oudens Ello Architects was selected. Town Manager Jeff Hull informed Mrs. Stewart that there has been a delay due to questions from the architect regarding contract language. Town Counsel is reviewing the matter.

The Friends of the Library's 25th anniversary was acknowledged with a variety of promotional events including cookies at the Summer Bash, an interview on WCTV, and a feature article in the Town Crier. Cookies will be given out on Saturday September 24th at the Book Store Next Door and the library.

Bob Shea, children's book illustrator painted the mural in the Children's Room which features several characters from his books. Cook's Painting primed the wall at no charge.

Marketing Librarian Ellen Boyle has submitted her resignation effective September 30. Ellen has taken a job at Merrimack College where she will be utilizing her marketing skills. Ellen has been a terrific Marketing Librarian and exemplary employee.

Eric Berube and Jean Diorio who were part-time library associates were promoted to full-time library assistants. Christine Johnson was hired as a part-time library associate. Sara Rottger

was awarded the Science and Technology Travel Award, which gives her up to \$850 for membership in the organization and participation in the Annual Meeting in October in Pittsburgh.

Old Business

After discussion with Police Chief Joe Desmond, Town Manager Jeff Hull has decided that security cameras should not be placed around the pond at Rotary Park.

New Business

Chairman Dan Hall reported that he received an appeal from Jeffrey Cohen regarding Library Director Christina Stewart's response to his Request for Reconsideration for the book *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe.

Mrs. Stewart gave an overview of Collection Development Policy. She noted the policy prescribes how materials are selected for the collection, addresses the principles of intellectual freedom upon which material selection is based and includes a reconsideration process for those wishing to address objections or complaints. Mrs. Stewart read Mr. Cohen's objections as written on the Request for Reconsideration form that was submitted on August 25, 2022. She noted what steps were taken and read the following response that was sent to Mr. Cohen on September 1, 2022.

Dear Mr. Cohen:

I am writing in response to your Request for Reconsideration for the book *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. Assistant Library Director Danielle Masterson, Teen Services Librarian Sara Rottger and I reviewed your request and reevaluated the selection criteria that was used to purchase this title for the Teen Collection.

Our analysis confirmed that *Gender Queer* received positive reviews in the professional journals utilized regularly by the Teen Services Librarian. The following are excerpts from these reviews:

School Library Journal

- Great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual as well as for those who know someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand.

Booklist

- Vulnerable and honest, *Gender Queer* grapples with issues of identity and sexuality in ways that highlight how messy and painful but ultimately vindicating the process of understanding and valuing yourself can be.

Gender Queer also received literary recognition and was included on the 2020 "Great Graphic Novels for Teens" a list of recommended graphic novels and illustrated nonfiction for those ages 12-18, prepared annually by the Young Adult Library Services division of the American Library Association.

A book's popularity and overall interest is another factor considered in book selection. In addition to Wilmington, 21 libraries in the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium own this book. *Gender Queer* is also available to download as an ebook on Comics Plus, Hoopla and Overdrive, reflecting a widespread interest in this book.

Please note the following philosophy in the Collection Development Policy that also guides librarians in materials selection:

The Board of Trustees endorses the Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read Statement and the Freedom to View Statement of the American Library Association and subsequent documents defining the principles of intellectual freedom. Thus, the library does not promote particular beliefs or views. Rather, it provides a resource for the various opinions, which apply to important, complex, and controversial questions, including unpopular positions. Language, situations, or subjects, which may be offensive to some patrons, do not disqualify material that, in its entirety, is judged to be of value. Materials are not marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of contents, no materials are marked to restrict their use by ages.

While we are aware that *Gender Queer* deals with a complex and sensitive topic, and that the book has sparked controversy, the library has an obligation to meet the needs and interests of the entire community, including teens who would like to read *Gender Queer*. Given this, and that *Gender Queer* meets the library's Collection Development selection criteria, I have determined that *Gender Queer* will remain in the teen collection.

Please note that this decision can be appealed in writing to the Board of Library Trustees following the procedure in the Request for Reconsideration.

Sincerely yours,

Christina A. Stewart
Library Director

Trustees Comments

Jeff Nussbaum: Although parts of the book made him uncomfortable, he thought the book was valuable; he was impressed by the way the author handled the information.

Eileen MacDougall: She did not read the book because she believed that censorship efforts in removing any books from libraries should not be tolerated.

Don Pearson: Thought the author's story was moving, especially in how the author received support from her parents and friends.

Megan Coslick: Believes it is important for a public library to make books available that connect to everyone including those who feel that they do not "fit in" during high school.

Jim Lemay: Although he did not read the book, he feels it serves an important purpose and should stay on the shelf.

Dan Hall: Felt that the author did a good job describing a difficult situation. As a teacher, he believes teens need to discover these books on their own.

Public Comments

Chairman Dan Hall asked if anyone in the audience had a comment or question regarding the Request for Reconsideration. There were no responses.

Trustee Chair Dan Hall asked for a motion to support the decision of the Library Director to retain the book, *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe, in the Teen Collection as it meets the criteria as outlined in the Collection Development Policy. Don Pearson made the motion with Jeff Nussbaum seconding. Vote unanimous.

Jeff Nussbaum acknowledged Mrs. Stewart for the professional manner in how the Request for Reconsideration was handled. Mrs. Stewart in turn acknowledged Sara Rottger and Danielle Masterson for their part in handling this matter.

Chairman Dan Hall thanked the individuals who attended the meeting.

A motion was made by Eileen MacDougall to adjourn at 7:45, seconded by Megan Coslick.

The next meeting is October 18 at 7 pm.

Submitted by,

Gloria Corcoran

Gloria Corcoran

Documents used at the meeting:

August Financial Report

August Statistics

Library Director's Report

Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors from the Library Bill of Rights