



WESTMONT PUBLIC LIBRARY

428 N Cass Ave, Westmont, IL 60559

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westmontlibrary.org

Providing the community with the keys to lifelong learning.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

September 19, 2023

1) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Board President Jason Fichtel on Tuesday, September 19, 2023 at the Westmont Public Library.

2) Roll Call

Present: Secretary Heather Booth, Vice President Elaine Carmichael, Trustee Melissa Donoghue, Trustee Beth Krotiak, Treasurer Kerry O'Connor, Trustee Joanne O'Malley, and President Jason Fichtel

Absent: None

Staff present: Director Julia Coen, Assistant Director Colleen Seisser, and Administrative Assistant Michelle Mahlan

3) Pledge of Allegiance

4) Approval of Consent Agenda

a. Minutes of the regular board meeting August 15, 2023

b. Communications log August 2023

c. Director's report September 2023

Motion: Booth moved to approve the Consent Agenda, Krotiak seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: All in favor

Motion passed

5) Open Forum:

a. Public:

Laura Coyle - I am a library member and have been a Westmont resident for the last 15 years. My husband and his family have also been members of this community for generations. We are active community members and feel strongly about Westmont as a hidden gem of the Western Suburbs which I'm sure most of you do as well. First of all I want to say thank you for stepping up to lead in this capacity for our public library. You are doing tremendous work during a really challenging time. I also want to say that in doing my research, I had a chance to read about the tremendously talented library staff and I am super-impressed with the professional librarians we have on staff and the other staff members. I just feel just so grateful that they are willing to share their skills and leadership with our public library. I am here tonight because I understand that there has been an appeal to the Library Board for certain books to be moved to a different section of the library. It appears that this appeal was made so that content deemed offensive by some will not be readily accessible in the age-appropriate section where the books are today but rather in the adult section. I want to be clear that in my opinion this is a request for censorship and exclusion. It is an attempt to make it difficult for families and teens to find content that represents people of diverse views, backgrounds, and lifestyles. And it treats such views, backgrounds, and lifestyles as shameful. Something to be hidden away. I personally would be extremely disappointed if the library were to make a decision to treat these materials and the community members

that may seek them out in such a way. That said, I shared with you my opinion and I know that you have heard many different opinions. In your role as Board Members, it is never easy to determine the right decision and what decision will best represent your constituency - the community members of Westmont at-large. I'm not here just to share my opinion, but request that you make this decision only after you understand the viewpoints of the community as a whole. From experience, I used to be on the school board, I can say that you will not understand the community as a whole just from the people who come and speak at your meetings. Many people will not take the time to come forward and speak. You need to reach out to the community and ask for their opinions. I also want to say that people voted for you, which I did for many of you, they did so for you to represent the community. They voted for you because of what they believe you stand for and will uphold. And, they are trusting you to do your best to represent all of Westmont. It's not easy and I feel for each and every one of you. But I would encourage you to dig deeply to truly understand what the whole of Westmont would want you to do in a situation like this for every member of our community.

Nola Armento - I have been a realtor for forty-eight years. I am still active and I have several agents who have their license with me. They want to know what to tell their clients when they ask about the libraries and the schools and what's going on. I like to learn first-hand. I live in Downers Grove and one of my agents lives in Westmont. We see things on TV and we hear things. I just wonder to myself if there is a certain section, I just heard the last person talk. Are they in the adult section and they are going to be moved back into the children's section. I'm not really clear on this, so that is the reason I came here so I could learn more and I can tell my clients, my agents, and other realtors. There are 20,000 realtors in our MLS. We like to hear what's going on by seeing for ourselves.

Lauren Perrino - I am a resident of Westmont and you have heard me complain before that there are not enough conservative books here. I was very grateful that that was addressed and some of my books were actually ordered and paid for and now we own some conservative books. Keep up the good work. But as far as the other issue- Some of these racy books in the children's section, by racy I mean some of these books show kind of graphic novel form, sex between like an adult and a minor. Some of them explain explicitly gay sex and things like that. I just don't think this is appropriate for children. I don't think we should be experimenting with children. Pritzker has some new mandates so we can't say remove them from the library, but we are just asking that they not be in the children's section. But, I gathered a lot of signatures a couple months back. There was well over 100, maybe 110 signatures, and this is a rhetorical question so I'm just going to put it out there, "How many signatures do I need to have these sexually explicit books moved from the children's section to the adult?" Because I will do it. You have my address, write me a little note or you have my email, just tell me how many signatures you'll need before you can re-consider this move. Again I just don't think we should be experimenting with children. These books are very explicit and I have nothing against, you know, gay people or things that are outside the box. Just leave our kids out of it. And I think a lot of adults don't know these books are there. So, a kid can unknowingly trip over it. We are just asking that they be moved to the adult section and maybe adults should take them out for their kid, for their children. It's not a huge request. We're not saying let's burn a book, let's toss it out the window, let's you know. It's just really strange that we use words like inclusion because we want to protect our children. Some of these things are border-line pornography and someone under 18 should not be dealing with this and certainly not in a public place. If mom and dad want to buy them these books, have at it, that's none of my business. But this is the public place that we all share and we all contribute to financially and otherwise. I will garner a lot more signatures, I will but you know this is not my opinion alone. I have an open mind and I just think that children should remain as innocent as they can be and just watching schools and libraries want to indoctrinate instead of educate. That's just my opinion. I would just like this topic opened again because I just don't think that this decision here to leave the books in the children's section is reflective of the whole community. So I will collect those signatures, and let me know in the future how many I'll need so we can just talk about this again. Just so you know, everyone thinks this is a great idea. Kids need to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic and all sorts of things, and I just think it's crazy that we are even having this discussion. I don't think a lot of parents understand that these books border on pornography. It isn't that they just have a gay lifestyle or that they have two moms. We've crossed and moved on.

Jenny Marren - I just have a couple quick comments. I feel reading is one of the most important skills a person can have. It's a great tool for learning, growth, and communication. Whether someone is reading for personal, leisure, or

educational purposes, I feel that the library should be a place that materials are open and inclusive to everyone. As a patron, I should have the right to choose what materials are right for me and my family. I appreciate and support the work of the librarians and the Library Board here. Thank you for following the ALA guidance and keeping intellectual freedom.

Diane Bellows - I didn't come prepared to talk but I hear the word censorship. I don't know these words are used and they are kind of like labels and make us feel like we're wrong in trying to prevent harm to our children. I just can't imagine checking these pornographic books out and reading them to my grandchildren. I think that would destroy their innocence and they would look at me like there was something wrong with me that I would advocate such material be exposed to them. So I think I would be curious, who takes these books out and reads them to their children? And, why would you want their 6-7-8-9-10, I don't know how old some of these kids are that might be taking these books out. Who's reading to them or how they access it. I can't imagine reading this information to my grandchildren. I think that most parents would actually look at the content that they would be horrified and see the look on their kid's faces when they look at this stuff. That has to be heartbreaking to see the innocence that is being ripped out of them. I just ask all of you to have empathy and be conscientious of the innocence. It's our requirement to pass on a sense of dignity and protocol that would be proper conduct, not pornographic material about how to have sex in the nature they are using in the content. Please examine your hearts and think about your children or grandchildren or nieces or nephews, the children you are supposed to be protecting. Think about their faces and what you've done to destroy their sense of wonder and love for the world. I mean, I can just think of when I was young and first started learning the things that were so disturbing that were happening when I had the news on. My Mom and Dad were watching the news, and it left an imprint on me forever and in a sense destroyed my sense of faith in a way. I don't want to be that person that destroys my grandchildren's sense of faith and love for one another by advocating this material.

Stephanie Johnson - I actually have two small children myself. This is great space. You have great programs and your offerings of books. I love everything you guys do. Censorship is dangerous. Acting like people of different races, backgrounds, and sexuality don't exist is fraud. And removing the availability to those materials is erasing the importance. Just because you get rid of a book in a public place doesn't mean that those people stop existing. So, I'm deeply concerned that anyone who would want to push the issue. Just because the book is gone doesn't mean those people don't exist, it means that the representation of those people doesn't exist.

Gina Parrilli - I think just like Lauren said, I know that we originally got 100 signatures for those books, and then we got additional six signatures that signed those forms, so it would be great to find out how many books. And just like everyone says, it's nothing to do with erasing people or children. I think we all know by now someone who is gay or has a child who is gay. It has nothing to do with gay children. But it does have to do with the books and what they say. So, *Flamer* - "We are each busting a load in this bottle. If you don't cum, you have to drink it." I mean, I don't know. Who would read that book? Here is another one *This is Me Earl and the Dying Girl* - "Yeah Earl, I'm gonna eat her. Hey yeah, do you even know how to eat it? Oh, not really." Really, this is what you want to teach your kids? I mean like, no one is erasing your children because they're gay. This is porn and it's graphic and it doesn't need to be there for a thirteen-year-old. I mean I think we are better as a community but this is absolutely just porn. I mean, I know you guys still have you know the whole list, I mean you have plenty of books in the LGTBQ that are not pornographic for the children. I know you do great things, but I did not notice last Sunday, September 17 was constitution day and I didn't notice anything about constitution day. Can we just get off of sexualizing children in the library? Sean Casten had a banning book meeting a few weeks ago at the Darien library and he came out and called this porn. Even at the hearing, our congress hearing, with our Secretary of State, when Senator Kennedy was talking about these books, he found them disturbing. I mean, we know that this has nothing to do with children. This is a political move, and I know you got the grant from our Governor Bill 2789 not to ban books. I'm not asking you to ban them, we're just asking them to put them in the adult section so all children don't have to see them. And if anyone wants to check them out, they can check them out. But, I don't think every child of this community needs to read this trash.

Matt Boex - I feel like the library staff, we voted for these people. They have tough decisions to make. I highly doubt that they are stupid. And this is a tough decision and they have decided to go one way with it and I'm ok with it. It's just my opinion and if I wasn't ok with it, I would probably raise my voice but I would also realize that that is their decision

and if I want to change that decision, I will be voting for someone else next time. With that said though it is concerning to me a little bit about what I view as at a certain level it is restricting free speech with moving something into a different section. But, really when it comes to this and my kid or how I feel for any kid is that these are learning moments, teachable moments. If your child sees that book and you know about it you could say hey listen here's why I don't want you to read this book. It's a teachable moment. When you start restricting these things, you take all of this away and your child misses out on those opportunities and I think our children are, I wouldn't call them adults a lot earlier than we want them to be, but they have an adult mindset way earlier than all of us think they do. So they are not babies when they come in here. If my child came in, I probably wouldn't let them read the book. But I would tell him why and he would be ok. So anyway, that's my opinion.

Ana Boex - I agree with what my husband said. Basically we do have a child who is a tween. He is in junior high. We encourage these things in a way that the information should be available. The books should be available. I don't think they are in the little kid's section. My understanding is that they are in the teen section and that's a stage, you know, it's a transition stage, right. Human beings are moving away from children into adult. It's a time of discovery, it's a time of seeking answers to questions. What I really wanted to say, we do love the library, we love the books you have. But when we come here with a kid, if a kid wants to approach any one book, as parents we feel as parents it is our responsibility to be very much on top of what they are reading. Actually, I feel like we have a lot more control of what they are reading than what they are accessing on-line. And I would propose that my kid probably knows a lot of these things that were mentioned in some of those books, not because he came across them in the library but because he did a quick search on-line to find out what was the meaning of different words that perhaps he hasn't been exposed to. So, I commend you on your work, I appreciate all you do. I think it's like "don't ask, don't tell", if you don't want to read the book don't read it.

Leah Conover - I am a Westmont resident and super-regular library user. I use it darn near weekly with the study rooms downstairs and I am also a parent of two children who love to come upstairs and frankly I can't get them away from the new play area to look at the actual books. It's very challenging. So, I want to thank all of you Trustees for serving this library community. I have a unique understanding of the position you are in. Your role is not to be an expert at library operations, it is to employ the experts and act as a layer of accountability to public funds. Library boards exist to ensure public libraries represent the communities they serve in an inclusive, sustainable way. You are volunteers and I know how negative and nasty feedback can get so thank you, all of you, for serving. I am here tonight because the vast majority of the people that you serve in this town of 20,000 people lie in the zone of indifference. They agree and support the library through the use of tax dollars and honestly as long as the vote is not rocking, they are not going to start it rocking. The remainder care and care passionately enough to have their voices heard. They may step up to the call of public service or volunteerism as you and I have, or they may work to see the change in other ways. The library serves almost all of those 20,000 residents in this building and outside through outreach to schools and other organizations. I do understand there was a petition delivered to this board to move books because banning them is illegal in this state. I have not seen or read this petition nor do I know how many people signed it, and I didn't know until tonight. I saw it in Board Meeting notes and I also don't question the people that did sign it. We all need our convictions. Freedom is my particular conviction and that means I have a choice on what I want to read, where I want to live, and how I want to live that life. As a mother, I am free to raise my children as I see fit. I can see every book my kid checks out. I'm pretty sure there is a way to block books if I wanted to for the books I don't want them to read. But that blocking is my choice as their parent. My neighbors, my friends, and frankly strangers do not get to say what I expose my children to or what I choose not to because they're my kids. I honestly don't even have the ultimate say in what my kids are exposed to because they're humans. And they are little humans and they are growing into adults. They can choose to sneak around. They can find ways around things and if they want to look at a book, they are going to look at the book. Putting the book in a different section isn't going to stop that, but it will certainly make it much more appealing to many which is often why banned books see a sales boost. So, for perspective, if 200 people signed this petition, this represents 1% of the entire population of Westmont. Unless this petition was signed, in my personal opinion, by 10,001 at least then it does not represent the majority of the diverse population that you serve. A population that includes people of all shapes, sizes, genders, sexual preference, backgrounds, religion, nation, and so

on. When you consider these appeals, please continue to consider the entire community and not just the loudest voices within it.

- b. Board:** Donoghue hoped that everyone had a nice summer. Booth noted that this is Homecoming Week for the high school. There is a parade on Thursday and the game on Friday so if anyone had a chance to get out and support our students, that would be great. Booth stated that in her role as a substitute librarian she is encouraging people to attend the ESL discussion groups at the Westmont Public Library which is a wonderful resource. O'Connor wanted to extend his sympathy and support to all the librarians who have found themselves under threat of physical violence in the last couple of months, be it through bomb threats or otherwise. Carmichael mentioned the Chamber open house is 5-6:30 tomorrow night at the fitness center. Seisser noted that the Library would be there.

c. Director: None

- d. Staff:** Seisser noted that patrons can register to pick-up the eclipse viewers on October 7, one per household. Staff in-service date is this Friday, September 22. Monarch Festival is at Ty Warner Park this Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The Library is also participating in the Trick or Treat Trail at the Westmont Wicked West Fest on Saturday, October 21 from 11-1. Last year we saw over 850 kids, so it's a great opportunity if Board members want to assist. We will be handing out bookmarks and stickers.

6) Additions and Deletions

Motion: Carmichael moved to include Additions and Deletions with Bills and Salaries, O'Malley seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: All in favor

Motion passed

7) Treasurer's Report

Motion: O'Connor moved to file the Treasurer's Report for audit, Booth seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: All in favor

Motion passed

8) Bills and Salaries

Motion: Booth moved to approve Bills and Salaries Report, Donoghue seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote:

Ayes: Booth, Carmichael, Donoghue, Krotiak, O'Connor, O'Malley, and Fichtel -7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Motion passed

9) Unfinished Business

10) New Business:

- a. Board to consider a motion to approve the intergovernmental agreement with the Village of Westmont regarding land dedication and license to use dedicated property.**

Motion: Booth moved to approve the intergovernmental agreement with the Village of Westmont regarding land dedication and license to use dedicated property, Krotiak seconded.

Discussion: Steve May, Village Manager, provided background on the issue. The Village plans to expand municipal parking in the area but there is no imminent plan for Lincoln Street to be extended through. O'Connor asked about the property the Village already owns. Donoghue asked about maintenance of the land as part of the agreement. Booth

asked about the Grant Street lots. Carmichael asked about the impact to the DuPage Health Department and about water retention. Krotiak asked if having the dedication now is going to preclude anything that is done with lots 3 & 4. May answered the questions and stated that he intends to address subdivision updates and the right-of-way consolidations at the Village Planning & Zoning Commission meeting in October.

Ayes: Booth, Carmichael, Donoghue, O'Connor, O'Malley, and Fichtel - 6

Nays: Krotiak - 1

Absent: 0

Motion passed

b. Board to consider a motion to approve resolution 2023-02 "Resolution Providing an Administrative Update to the Intergovernmental Agreement with The Library Insurance Management and Risk Control Combination ("LIMRICC")

Motion: O'Connor moved to approve resolution 2023-02 "Resolution Providing an Administrative Update to the Intergovernmental Agreement with The Library Insurance Management and Risk Control Combination ("LIMRICC"), O'Malley seconded.

Discussion: Coen noted that there are two programs that LIMRiCC offers and we only participate in the unemployment insurance program. The last time the IGA was brought before the board with any updates was in 2015.

Ayes: Booth, Carmichael, Donoghue, Krotiak, O'Connor, O'Malley, and Fichtel - 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Motion passed

c. Board to consider a motion to approve resolution 2023-03 "Resolution Providing a Substantive Update to the Intergovernmental Agreement with The Library Insurance Management and Risk Control Combination ("LIMRICC")

Motion: Carmichael moved to table this consideration until a later date, Booth seconded.

Discussion:

Ayes: Booth, Carmichael, Donoghue, Krotiak, O'Connor, O'Malley, and Fichtel - 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Motion is tabled

d. Board to consider a motion to approve Rules for Electronic Attendance at Board Meetings

Motion: Booth moved to approve Rules for Electronic Attendance at Board Meetings, Carmichael seconded.

Discussion: Booth noted that this was discussed at the Policy Meeting. Coen mentioned that the Open Meetings Act was updated to include unexpected child care obligations as an acceptable reason to attend a Board Meeting electronically.

Ayes: Booth, Carmichael, Donoghue, Krotiak, O'Connor, O'Malley, and Fichtel - 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Motion passed

e. Board to consider a motion to approve Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA) Leave Policy.

Motion: Booth moved to approve Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA) Leave Policy, Carmichael seconded.

Discussion: Booth noted that this was discussed in the Policy Meeting. Coen noted that the updates to the law are now reflected in the policy.

Ayes: Booth, Carmichael, Donoghue, Krotiak, O'Connor, O'Malley, and Fichtel - 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Motion passed

f. Board to consider a motion to approve Employee Blood and Organ Donation Leave Act Policy.

Motion: Booth moved to approve Employee Blood and Organ Donation Leave Act Policy, Krotiak seconded.

Discussion: Booth mentioned that we discussed it in the Policy Committee meeting. This policy now includes Organ Donation. The changes to the law are now reflected in the policy.

Ayes: Booth, Carmichael, Donoghue, Krotiak, O'Connor, O'Malley, and Fichtel - 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Motion passed

g. Board to consider a motion to approve Family Bereavement Leave Act Policy.

Motion: Booth moved to approve Family Bereavement Leave Act Policy, Donoghue seconded.

Discussion: Booth noted that the policy reflects changes to law due extending leave in the tragic circumstance of losing a child to violence or suicide.

Ayes: Booth, Carmichael, Donoghue, Krotiak, O'Connor, O'Malley, and Fichtel - 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Motion passed

h. Board to consider a motion to approve the transfer of FY23 surplus funds to the special reserves fund for an amount of \$65,660.

Motion: Donoghue moved to approve the transfer of FY23 surplus funds to the special reserves fund for an amount of \$65,660, O'Malley seconded.

Discussion: Coen noted that this transfer occurs after the auditors prepare their preliminary report that includes the fund balance sheet. This is the end of year transfer you make so that the auditors can complete their audit. Donoghue asked if the funds stay in special reserves. Coen clarified that the funds in special reserves can only be used for Capital Outlay projects and any dollars spent would need to be approved by the Board.

Ayes: Booth, Carmichael, Donoghue, Krotiak, O'Connor, O'Malley, and Fichtel - 7

Nays: 0

Absent: 0

Motion passed

11) Adjournment

Motion: Carmichael moved to adjourn at 8:03 p.m., O'Malley seconded.

All in favor

Motion passed

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Booth

Westmont Public Library Board of Trustees, Secretary