

**Pamunkey Regional Library
Board of Trustees Meeting
December 7, 2022**

The Pamunkey Regional Library (PRL) Board of Trustees (BOT) met on Wednesday, December 7, 2022 at the Atlee Branch Library.

Attendees

Attending were Trustees:

Goochland County: Barbara Sensabaugh
King and Queen County: Patricia Simpkins
Hanover County: Ryan Martin, Joe O'Connor, Mike Smith, Julie May
King William County: John Edwards, Mary Shipman

Unable to attend:

Goochland County: Barb Young

Guests Attending:

Christie Schumacher
Wendy Schkeeper
Joanna Russo
Angela Sykes
Jonathan Gibson
Chad Porter
Dave Repper
Debbie Staley
Ira Staley

Library staff present included:

Tom Shepley - PRL Director
Jaime Stoops- PRL Deputy Director
Sherida Bradby- PRL Deputy Director
Kelly Pridgen- Public Services Coordinator- Youth

Board of Supervisor Members

Mr. and Mrs. Ed Moren

1. Call to Order/ Welcome

Chair Patricia Simpkins called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed all BOT members and guests who were in attendance.

2. Consideration of agenda amendments

There were no amendments to the meeting agenda.

3. Citizens' time

Christie Schumacher- Patron of the Atlee Library

Patron of the Atlee Library- voiced her disapproval of books on display for banned books week. Reiterated her proposal for the board to have a display policy proposed for the children's and the young adult sections. Stated that there needs to be a balance of subject material for displays. Stated that she felt there was a communication issues from PRL staff in response to her requests for feedback. Stated the inappropriate placement of the book All Boys Aren't Blue in the YA section- read an excerpt from the end of the book. Stated that she feels Christmas has been censored at the Atlee Library.

Wendy Schkeeper – Patron of the Atlee Library

Stated she and her two boys were in the Atlee Library children's section- overheard her boys giggling and questioned what they were reading. Expressed an issue with content in the book. She took the book to the manager and stated the manager said the book would be back on the shelf tomorrow. Kids at the Atlee Library are getting exposed to things that not everyone agrees with. The members of the board and their names are "on" these books. States she doesn't feel she can bring her foster kids here because they will be exposed to topics she finds inappropriate.

Joanna Russo- Hanover County Resident

Has teen children. States she doesn't have a Pamunkey Regional Library card because of what she has seen about the YA section at the library. Mentions that the subject headings for certain books do not reflect the content in the books. Reads from Looking for Alaska by John Green- states this book has inappropriate topics and that there should be policies on what books should be on display. States that she does not want books to be banned. Reads the types of curse words in the book and how many times they appear. Asks who/how is it decided on what is an adult book or a YA book in the library catalog.

Angela Sykes- Patron of the Atlee Library

States she actively avoids the Atlee Branch right now with her children as she finds that the Atlee Branch has become a branch to push political topics. Requests the board to implement a

policy that would state what books should be on display in order to protect the innocence of the children and citizens of PRL.

Jonathan Gibson- Hanover County Resident

Questions if there is a policy for displays for week/month celebrations that the library promotes. Questions what determines the section of the library a book is placed. Questions if PRL would consider implementing a screening process that would not allow these books to be accessible to children in order to provide protection to the community.

Chad Porter- Hanover County Resident

Founder of Hanover Patriots. States he and his organization have been fighting for parental rights. States his child comes to Atlee to be tutored and he didn't know about the content of some of the books the speakers have referenced. States he will bring the subject of book displays to the Hanover Patriots group which has 10,000+ members. States this issue is now on their radar.

Dave Repper-

States he has grandchildren in the Hanover County School System and supports what has already been said. Wants to see an age appropriate categorizing of book; states that he is not for censorship or banning of topics. Suggests the board can give good guidance to the library system of what is age appropriate. States there are too many mature topics already being pushed on children and the library shouldn't be one of those places.

Debbie Staley- Hanover County Resident

Has grandchildren in the Hanover County School System. States she is appalled at what is in the library during banned books weeks- states that reviews are innocuous that are on the PRL website and don't accurately reflect what the subject matter of the book includes. Suggests that a review of what is being ordered needs to be done. Asks why only Atlee Library is being flooded with this topic. Brings the book Me, Earl, and the Dying Girl as an example of what she deems inappropriate. Reads an excerpt from the book and requests that the board develop some type of policy for these books that are on display

Ira Staley- Hanover County Resident

States it is discouraging to read these topics/crap. Brings the book Welcome to St. Hell (My Trans Teen Misadventure- did not state this part of the title) as an example of a book that is in the adult section in Henrico but in the YA section at PRL. Reads an excerpt from the book. Questions who makes the decisions about where the books are catalogued and states that the role of the board of trustees is to put policies in place to guide the library on policies. Brings up the Virginia Board of Trustees Handbook. States that trustees are ultimately responsible for what children see at the library and asks the trustees directly if the citizens can trust them.

4. Consideration of the Consent Agenda

The items on the Consent Agenda were:

1. October 2022 Board Financial Reports
2. October 2022 Warrants
3. October 2022 Board of Trustee Minutes

MOTION: B. Sensabaugh made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by M. Smith and passed unanimously by the BOT.

5. New Business

Employee Bonuses:

Tom Shepley- Director

Hanover County will be providing bonuses to their employees this year. Due to budgetary constraints and the recent pay increase, he recommends that the board does not need to approve bonuses to the employees. No further discussion is taken and the board agrees with the recommendation of the library director.

6. Old Business

A. Request to Consider Display Policy- Staff Report

Tom Shepley- Director

Discussed with library staff for a consideration of a display policy for the libraries in the children's and young adult sections. States that it is unfortunate that the display was concerning for the speakers in attendance and highlights different topics that have appeared in our library displays. States that parents are ultimately responsible for what is appropriate for their children and that the library is there to provide resources for all community members. Since the challenge is based on the ideas of a group of people, any attempt to remove materials

would restrict those materials being accessible to the rest of the community. Discusses how the first amendment protects books, magazine, art, films, etc. and that the 1st amendment protects the right to receive information as well as speak it. What is censorship? It is the suppression of ideas of information that censors deem inappropriate. Censors want to pre-judge books for everyone. Should PRL have a policy regarding displays? Two options:

NO- current policy has worked for several years without any issue

YES- creating a list of topics that would not be appropriate to put on display would be censorship and open the library up to lawsuits from the community because it is unconstitutional.

It is, therefore, the PRL Director's and staff's recommendation to not take any further action at this time on a policy for displays.

At this time, a citizen in attendance stands up and wants to speak.

MOTION: R. Martin made a motion to let Ira Staley speak at the current time- motion dies for lack of a second. J. May suggests to table it for discussion at the end of the meeting.

Discussion by the BOT following director's display policy recommendation.

J. O'Connor asks director to explain to those in attendance about how books are ordered and cataloged for the library. T. Shepley provides a brief explanation of how books are obtained and that the library follows their collection development policy when ordering and cataloging books. Speaks of how materials are weeded and the limited space and funds the library has- therefore not all books will appear on library shelves. Books come in and most books are classified from the Library of Congress. PRL has before moved books from one collection to another and follows-up that what Henrico and what PRL do is not the same. Addresses citizen who spoke during citizen time that it is not the role of PRL to be responsible for their children while in the library.

J. May address those in attendance and thanks them for coming to speak. States the board does not want to break the law by creating a censorship problem in the library. Suggests anything that is deemed literary pornography be moved to the adult section.

R. Martin describes All Boys Aren't Blue as pornography and is not ok with it being in a section that 12 year olds can access the book and states that as a board we have parameters for where books should be in the library; J. O'Connor responds that the book is nationally known and reviewed and is not pornography.

MOTION: R. Martin made a motion to work with staff and director to establish display policies to make sure books are put in age appropriate sections or age appropriate displays. M. Smith seconded for discussion

B. Sensabaugh asks how books are classified as children, YA, and adult. J. Edwards- there should be two distinct discussions between display policies for the library and where things are classified in the library. Director T. Shepley states that books not considered pornographic because they have literary merit and are not fully pornographic in nature in accordance with the pornography law.

J. O'Connor- Brings up banned books from his childhood and states some folks didn't want people to read those books either- a banned books display will always feature controversial topics. The idea of where books should be placed is much more complicated and this board needs to discuss this topic and evaluate as a board. He will not support taking any books out of the library.

Comment from the audience: Characters in the book should reflect and determine where the book is classified.

M. Smith- States that we can't as a board member determine what is appropriate for all citizens and that PRL does not have the staff time or resources to read what's in every book. Therefore, it's up to the parent to determine what is appropriate for their child. The world has expanded a lot since their childhood and the board does not have the ability to determine what every child's needs are.

J. May asks T. Shepley how books are classified in the PRL's children and young adult sections. T. Shepley responded that the Library of Congress classifies books and that the books on the banned books display were marketed and written for the audience it is catalogued for.

MOTION: R. Martin made a motion to amend the previous motion. The new amended motion is that the board work with staff and the director to perform a comprehensive review to make sure books are placed in age appropriate sections. May seconded for discussion and vote passes unanimously.

MOTION: R. Martin made a motion to create a policy that book displays throughout the library remain age appropriate. Lack of a second- motions fails.

5 minute break

B. FY2024 Budget process update

T. Shepley states that the budget has been submitted to Hanover and is within their parameters. Met with Goochland County Administrator.

C. Montpelier building update

T. Shepley states that the request for proposals has been out for 26 hours. Job is advertised on commonwealth procurement site. There is a pre-bid meeting upcoming for any firms interested in putting in a bid.

D. West Point building update

J. Edwards shared an overview of the current plans and is still trying to find funds for the new building. The King William County Board of Supervisors is meeting on December 12th and the topic of King William partially funding the project will be discussed. The architects estimate is \$900,000-\$1,000,000. A bare bones cost would be \$600,000- The Town of West Point is willing to pay for half the cost therefore \$450-\$550 thousand of additional money is needed.

MOTION: M. Smith made a motion for the board to commit up to \$150,000 from the board reserves for the West Point Building project, J. O’Connor seconded. Motion passes.

- R. Martin: yes
- M. Smith: yes
- M. Shipman: yes
- J. Edwards: abstain
- J. O’Connor: yes
- P. Simpkins: yes
- J. May: yes
- B. Sensabaugh: yes

E. Personnel Committee Update- director’s goals

Approval of director’s goals for FY 2023 is passed/accepted by board.

7. Report of Library Director

- Time spent on book considerations
- Moving forward with Montpelier project
- Open enrollment
- Budget process
- Recruitment- not quite as many vacancies as we’ve had- making headway- labor market providing a challenge
- Audit- working on the audit process- should be coming to an end soon.

Board Discussion:

New Business for next meeting- M. Smith requests a review of governance and orientation for new board members; R. Martin suggests to board to discuss parameters for citizen time.

9. Adjournment

The January 2023 BOT meeting will be held on 2023, at the King and Queen Branch Library at 10:00 a.m.

Having completed the business of the PRL BOT, Chair Patricia Simpkins adjourned the meeting at 12:20 p.m. by acclamation of the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Pridgen
PRL Public Services Coordinator - Youth