

**Pamunkey Regional Library**  
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes  
February 17, 2023

The Executive Committee of the Pamunkey Regional Library (PRL) Board of Trustees (BOT) met on Friday, February 17, 2023, at the Upper King William Branch Library.

**Attendees**

Attending were Trustees:

- Goochland County: Barbara Sensabaugh, Barb Young (Committee Chair)
- King and Queen County: Patricia Simpkins (Board Chair, Committee Member)
- Hanover County: Ryan Martin, Julie May (Committee Secretary), Mike Smith, Joe O'Connor
- King William County: Mary Shipman (Committee Vice Chair)

Unable to Attend:

- King William County: John Edwards

Guests Attending:

- Pat Hunter Jordan of Mechanicsville
- Peggy Lavinder of Mechanicsville
- Christy Schumacher of Mechanicsville

Library Staff Present:

- Tom Shepley – PRL Director
- Sherida Bradby – PRL Deputy Director
- Jaime Stoops – PRL Deputy Director
- Jeff Huff – Collection Strategy Librarian
- Levi Carter – Collection Management Librarian/Mobile Services Manager

**Call to Order/Welcome**

Executive Committee Chair Barb Young called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM, welcoming all in attendance. She explained that Committee members would not be making motions today, but the Committee is able to bring motions to the full Board of Trustees for future consideration. Citizens' Time was limited to fifteen minutes, with three minutes per speaker. The Agenda was considered. No amendments to the Agenda were suggested.

**Citizens' Time**

Pat Hunter Jordan of Mechanicsville, Virginia, spoke to the Executive Committee about how much benefit she received from public libraries as a young person. Her mother was a teacher. Her mother guided her to comprehend books that were a stretch in content while she was growing up. Libraries helped prepare her for college. She firmly believes libraries need to

remain a non-partisan place, with no censorship of library materials. Everything should be accessible.

Christy Schumacher of Mechanicsville thanked the Committee for hearing her concerns. She stated that this is a very different time from the years when she was growing up in Hanover County. She spoke to the Committee about the Young Adult novel, Looking for Alaska by John Green. She read a passage from the book about oral sex and instructions for better oral sex for boarding school students by their friend, Alaska. Ms. Schumacher requested help from the Committee members for making the youth collection a place where her twelve-year old will not encounter such content.

Peggy Lavinder of Mechanicsville then presented her concerns to the Committee. She has been a stay-at-home Mom since 2002. She became active in *the Friends of the Mechanicsville Library*. She has worked with *the Friends of the Mechanicsville Library* for 17 years. She is a long-time library supporter and advocate. She thanked the Committee for service to the Library. Going to the Library is democratic. There ought to be no judgement by Library staff or Board, no infringement on the rights of others.

Barb Young thanked all the speakers.

## **New Business**

### Collection questions, policies and procedures

Barb Young suggested that the Committee work to see if the Board could move forward with these topics. The Powerpoint presentation about Collection Development created by Library Staff this winter was introduced into the discussion. Director Shepley handed out paper copies of the Powerpoint presentation to Committee members and others in attendance.

Julie May made a statement about the Pamunkey Regional Library Collections. "Pamunkey Regional Library Collections include Children's Media, Teen or Young Adult Media, Adult Media, Newspapers, Magazines, and Reference Materials. This year, citizens and County Supervisors, to my knowledge, have not been concerned about any of the Library Collections except for the Teen/Young Adult Collection.

I suggest that the Library Leadership consider splitting the collection for the Young Adults from the Collection for minor Teens during this decade, as literature for Young Adults is growing more controversial and sexually explicit. We might consider having a Children's Collection and a Teen (under 18-year-old) Collection. Adult literature would thus be provided for adults and for minors who seek it out. Children are already using the Adult Collection frequently, to delve into topics that are underrepresented in the Children's and Teen/Young Adult Collections. By moving media with the most mature content into the Adult Collection, we would be indicating that some content may be challenging or less appropriate for children."

Ms. May then presented a proposal about a labeling system for the Library’s Teen Book Collection:

## “Proposal for Young Adult Collection Label Guidance

Some of the materials in our Library collection for Teens and Young Adults contains materials that may conflict with citizen’s deeply held values, religious, social, scientific or political beliefs. Good libraries contain materials that are controversial as well as things that are uplifting or entertaining. Because our Library policies place the responsibility for guiding children’s selection of reading material upon their parents and guardians, the following Young Adult Labeling System is offered to assist our community adults with their guidance responsibilities.

Present and future Young Adult Collection Books will be placed in one of four groups by Library Staff:

<u>Young Adult Collection Groups</u>	<u>Definition of Groups</u>
Young Adult	Not Yet Grouped
Young Adult – 1	Book/Recording Suitable for All
Young Adult – 2	Book/Recording Containing Some Challenging Content
Young Adult – 3	Book/Recording with Challenging, Sexually Explicit and/or Controversial Content

This proposed policy is meant to address specific concerns of citizens and leaders of our four-county region. It may not be possible to use this Labeling Guidance on the digital collection. If this proposal is adopted by the Pamunkey Regional Library, it ought to be reviewed after the first year to determine if it has provided benefits for the citizens. Improvements to the Young Adult Collection Labeling System ought to be suggested to the Board of Trustees by Library Staff after one year, and periodically thereafter.”

Barb Young then spoke about parental permission for children to read books. Ryan Martin supported the idea of helping parents to help their children select appropriate reading material. He supported Ms. May’s proposal.

Joe O'Connor recommended that the Committee Chair speak last on the topic. Joe thanked Ms. May, and then asked how the Library Leadership would define books that are controversial or challenging. He stated that books may have vulgarity and not be pornographic.

Mike Smith asked staff if books are considered Young Adult Books because characters in the books are young adults, or if the books are considered appealing to readers who are young adults. Mr. Smith asked who determines if a book belongs in the Children's, Young Adult, or Adult Collection. Are book classifications something that is in general agreement on various Internet Websites, he asked.

Mr. Huff responded, the majority of literature websites on the Internet would agree on the classification of books as Young Adult Books.

Director Tom Shepley noted that our Library depends upon the expertise of others to make the decision of which book is placed in which collection. Mr. Shepley stated that nothing magical makes a person more mature emotionally or in their reading level as the person ages.

Mike Smith conducted an experiment. He randomly select sixteen books from a list of banned books and searched the Henrico Library website for these titles. All the books in question were classified as Young Adult. He also searched for Welcome to St. Hell: My Trans Teen Misadventure which was classified as Adult. He did similar searches, with smaller sample size, at several other Virginia libraries with similar results.

Mr. Smith believes that there are enough resources available for parents to research book that their children chose to read. He believes the business of selecting books for the PRL collection belongs to the professionally trained library staff, and they are doing it well. He thinks the PRL collection is at least ninety percent the same as the collection at other comparably sized libraries. Mr. Smith believes that the Board of Trustees should not interfere with the staff's book selections and classifications.

Joe O'Connor tried to think of a policy that would satisfy all parties. He said, we need to look at the times in which we live. We may need to review the policy and adjust the policy to fit the time. The professionals ought to do the work. People have been calling Mr. O'Connor to express their opinions. Mr. O'Connor thanked Mrs. Schumacher for never requesting books be removed from the Library.

Ryan Martin then asked Collection Staff, "Does anything in your book buying promotions indicate that a book you might purchase for PRL contains sexually explicit passages?" Mr. Martin suggested that staff label books to indicate that there is sexual content in the Teen/Young Adult Books.

Joe O'Connor said he thinks that Teens will not be learning anything about sex from our book collection.

Mike Smith expressed concern that books about occult or politically sensitive subjects also might be labeled controversial.

Barb Sensabaugh asked Mr. O'Connor about his suggestion to review and update the Collection Policy. He acknowledged that some books might be moved to a new part of the Collection after a policy update.

The question was raised: when a patron requests a relocation of a book, is that process part of our Collection Policy?

Barb Young wondered if the number of Reconsideration Requests for a title makes a difference in the outcome of a reconsideration review.

Mr. O'Connor stated that an individual's request for a book relocation should be given as much consideration as a group request.

Director Shepley said that to date, never has a book been relocated after a Reconsideration Request has been made. He noted that he is not made aware of every Reconsideration Request.

Mary Shipman stated she agrees with Mike Smith's position: we need to trust the expertise of our professional staff.

Ryan Martin asked if this discussion was a moot point.

Joe O'Connor noted that it is always beneficial to listen and respond to citizens' thoughts and ideas.

Ms. May pointed out that youth in our nation have been experiencing serious mental health challenges, including suicidal activities in recent years.

Mike Smith responded that the books in our Library may be helpful to many of our young people when they are struggling.

Mr. O'Connor noted that cellular phones are more dangerous than books for youth.

Mr. Smith pointed out that the PRL Board has done nothing to change the current Library Collections Policy. We have been learning, he said, because of our citizens' inputs. He does not see how things could be executed properly if we took action. He doesn't see how we could improve upon our present system.

Mr. O'Connor said, this is kind of a workshop for us to brainstorm. We won't have an answer by next Wednesday (February 22, 2023). We are hearing everybody, he stated.

Ms. Young stated, “Staff, we are considering your time and workload. We ought to take a look at the Policy and the Reconsideration Request Form. Are Library Policy Manuals in all of the Library Branches?” Mr. Shepley confirmed that this is true. Ms. Young asked if the Committee was comfortable with that as our next step.

Mr. Smith suggested that Ms. Young, as Chair, ought to bring a motion to the Board for staff to review the Library Collection Policy.

### Governance and Board Development

Mr. O’Connor noted that he had recently received a packet of information about the Commonwealth’s Freedom of Information Act (Code of Virginia) from the Hanover County Attorney, Mr. Dennis Walter. This information is important to how Trustees of the Library work as a Board. The Commonwealth’s General Assembly sets all of the legal procedures for all local governing boards. Other Trustees may also be receiving Freedom of Information Act documents by mail.

Mr. Smith recommended that our Board make one session per year when we review our responsibilities and limitations.

Ms. Young suggested that we add a governance review segment to each of our scheduled Board Meetings. She plans to bring to the Board Meeting the suggestion of scheduled governance reviews.

Mr. Smith reminded attendees of the limitations of Trustees. Trustee contact with staff is limited to contact with the Library Director. Daily operations of staff are to be determined by only the Director.

Ms. Young summarized the meeting progress. The Executive Committee Chair will bring a motion to the Board to request a review of the Library Collection Policy. The Chair will also recommend a self-review for Trustees (as recommended in the Virginia Public Library Trustee Handbook). Chair will recommend that the Board review its governance responsibilities.

Mr. Smith said that he would like the Library Trustees to look again at our Board structure.

Mr. Martin asked us to define what the Board will be doing for Citizens’ Time during Board Meetings. He suggested that fifteen minutes total for Citizens’ Time may not be sufficient to allow participation by all the people who have made the effort to attend a meeting. He recommended a Citizens’ Time designation of thirty minutes, with three minutes per speaker be established as a norm. He agreed to bring to the Board a motion to update our By-Laws by changing the Citizens’ Time.

Ms. Shipman asked about the Executive Committee Schedule. Chair Ms. Young agreed to bring a revised Executive Committee Schedule to the next Board Meeting.

With no further business, Ms. Young closed the Executive Committee Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie May  
Executive Committee Secretary