

## WHITING LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

DRAFT Minutes - Special Meeting - Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup> - 1 PM

Trustees Present via Zoom: Robert Nied, Carolyn Frisa, Ed Grossman, Lyza Gardner, Kathy Poston, Donna McNeill-Hudkins. Absent : Rosamund Conroy  
Meeting conducted via Zoom Teleconference

Staff attending:

Public attending via Zoom (not a complete list, all I could “see” on recording): Emily Burkland, Bob Behr, Don Clark, Pete Tyrrell, Bobbie Windy Wied, Chester Telegraph, Claudio Veliz, Scott Blair, Ethan Weinstein, Linda Diak, Nancy, Patricia Mahaffey, Tamasin OT, Joy Slaughter (more attended, did not have the visibility)

### CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Robert Nied, Chair at 1:01 PM

Robert - Chair: Thanks to everyone for being here. We have had a few lengthy meetings recently, we appreciate everyone’s patience. This meeting is being recorded. We have more people joining.

### ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Will add a Public Comment period to this meeting. Explained that in previous meetings, we had loss of quorum, so we could not have the Public Comment portion. We will make this meeting as efficient as possible. Will add a Public Comment period before adjournment if there is no objection.

We have an Executive Session scheduled to discuss personnel issues, and we’ll talk about that in a moment. I know there are a lot of people here to talk about a specific program.

We have not actually talked about this specific Program because we’ve been talking in Executive Session about how the program was selected and the presenters were selected scheduled and vetted.

We want to discuss this Program., Add discussion of the program, Drag Queen Story hour, after, status of response to public records request.

Any other additions to the agenda?

Looking for a motion to enter Executive Session.

*Motion to enter Executive Session made by L. Gardner, seconded by E. Grossman*

Chair explained that we want to hold the time for the executive session to 45 minutes or less, that is our goal. Anyone not on the board will be placed into the waiting room and after Executive Session, public will be admitted back.

Comments made (public)

- (Peter Tyrrell) that they were on their lunch break and couldn’t wait for the executive session to be done, why didn’t they have the Public Comments first. Doesn’t think the meeting was scheduled for

folks that work. People who volunteer and work in the community can't attend meetings in the middle of the day.

Chair: Problem is that we have to have a quorum, so we poll the trustees and this was the only time available. We are in fact missing one trustee. This is the best time available for most of our board members.

If you have comments, you can forward to the library and they will be included in these Meetings Minutes.

- (Emily Burkland) - wanted a motion to have the Public Comments first for all of the people who showed up to this meeting. She asked that someone on the board make a motion to have the Public Comments section first.

The Chair explained that we may not be able to address some questions without going into the Executive Session first. We could start with the Public Comments, but we don't want to be in the situation where we have to say we can't discuss something because it's an unresolved Personnel Issue. If we resolve the personnel issue and come out of the Executive Session, then we are free to speak about the program in its entirety. That's our challenge. If they wanted to comment in a limited way, we could do that, but it would be more fair to say that we can speak about it more freely and completely.

We will be taking some action when we get out of Executive Session, and we assume the public would want to know that.

Meeting moderator put all guests (not on the board) in the Zoom "waiting room".

Entered Executive Session at 1:13 PM

Returned from Executive Session at 1:39 PM

After returning from Executive Session -

Chair - Welcome back, thanks for your patience. We are out of Executive Session. Please respond that you can hear.

We have reviewed a lot of information over the past week or so, very lengthy executive sessions and personnel issues are always a challenge, and it is incumbent on this board to act fairly and make sure we have all of the information we can possibly have. One of the issues before us was the resignation of our Director Deirdre Dorn, and I will ask the board for a motion to be made.

*Motion made by D. McNeill-Hudkins to accept resignation request by current Library Director effective June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Seconded by E Grossman and added that the board thanks and appreciates the Director's Service to the Whiting Library.*

Public Comment ( Emily Burkland ) She is very upset that we did this during a secret meeting, and she is - she does not want the board to let the Director go, that we do not have to accept her resignation.

Chair asked to allow us to let us continue and conduct their business.

E. Burkland - The board is elected, and asks if any other board member wants to not accept her (Librarian's) resignation.

C. Frisa emphasized that the director resigned, the board did not ask her to leave.

E Burkland - said we are an elected board, and we did not have to accept the resignation.

Motion carried.

#### STATUS OF RESPONSE TO PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

Per the Agenda, Chair reviewed the status of the response to the public records request by the Chester Telegraph. The requested records have been submitted in a timely manner and information sent, he stated that the documents had been reviewed by the town legal representatives, and that the only thing redacted was a password. He verified with the Chester Telegraph representative on the call that the information had been received. Chester Telegraph confirmed receipt. We still owe clarification on two text messages sent.

The Chair went over the addition of the discussions regarding the program that everyone is here to talk about. He'd like to give a timeline and chronology of events from the board's perspective and open it up to the Public for their comments. Will be as concise as I can be, and it is important that everyone understands.

#### TIMELINE AND CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- Members of the library board became aware that the Program was being offered via a Facebook Post. No one on the board was previously aware of the Program, it had never been discussed with the board during a Board meeting, that the Director attends or with the Program Committee. The board was a little surprised that this program was scheduled without the board being aware; not that the Director does not have the autonomy to schedule programs, but because this program was known to have had negative feedback from other communities.

There was a seminar held for Library Trustees and Staff in Vermont that included a number of things including book banning, but it also talked about programs that have had negative pushback from the communities, sometimes harsh pushback. The seminar used the "Drag Queen Story Hour" as an example of a Program that had garnered significant negative pushback. In fact, they talked about it happening in multiple places in the country. They also mentioned that this program was offered in many places without any issues.

There was the looming issue of what to do if there was a negative response. The scale and scope of negative responses varied from phone calls to complain, to threatening phone calls with obscene language, and in one Vermont Library, the program was picked up by an extremist website and distributed to their followers, who were encouraged to call. That library received hundreds of threatening calls, some threatening violence against the staff and participants and death threats to the staff.

So, when the board became aware of this program it was unnerving from two perspectives; one, we didn't know about the program and as trustees we are expected to know about programs in the library in case the Public asks us - in this case we would have to say that we didn't know anything about it and was at a disadvantage to communicating with the community. More importantly, being aware that this program could have potential issues of safety against the participants and the library staff. Not being forewarned, we did not have an opportunity to put

together any kind of response in case there was any negative pushback; no communication plan to explain the scope, scale and context of it to the community, no contingency plan if anyone started receiving any threats; if any of the staff were harassed or death threats made, we had no plan.

- The Chair, contacted the Director and asked that the program be “paused” until the full board had a chance to discuss it and could come up with a response to go forward. At no point did the chair, or the board ask that the program be banned, stopped or censored. We asked that it be paused just long enough to talk about it and come up with a response. The next opportunity to talk about it was within a couple of days. The board never intended nor inferred we wanted to stop the program, we just wanted to be prepared.

The Library Director and the Chair had a conversation via phone-call where the Director disagreed with the board request about pausing the program. The call was cordial, no consternation, it was a disagreement, a professional disagreement. The Chair explained the boards position, the Director explained her position and the phone call ended. Soon afterwards there was an e-mail sent to the board from the Director that contained information that the board felt was misleading, and not necessarily accurate. That became part of our discussions on the personnel level. It became clear from that e-mail that the director was unhappy about pausing the program.

We then became aware that a similar program was now offered on the Whiting Library site (became aware because we saw it on-line, called “Make-Believe Story Hour”). The advertisement with the same image as the previous program; one of the participants in the first program was a part of this 2<sup>nd</sup> offering, and similar in nature. We were taken aback that it appeared to be the same or similar program that was renamed, and again, the board had no notification, no communication or discussion of “what if we do it this way”, so again, no communication plan or contingency plan for the 2<sup>nd</sup> version either

We then started to discuss internally, not about the program itself, but how was it selected, how was it vetted, how were the participants vetted? Where were opportunities to improve communication between the board and the director? While we were having these ongoing discussions, the board became aware of additional information. That was, that the two presenters/performers that were scheduled for the original Drag Queen Story Hour had a website, and that website included both references to the story hour but, it also included explicitly adult material. Some of the information made us very uneasy. There were videos of the participants in character singing and lip-sinking in videos and the content was sexualized. It had images that were sexual in nature. They had a merchandise page, an ad for an appropriate tote bag for the story hours and right next to it was an ad for t-shirts, a representation of those characters, drawn. That image was disturbing, included explicit sexual content; compared a naked woman to a garbage dumpster, included the suggestion that a woman was a vessel for bodily fluids. Highly inappropriate to be associated with someone making a presentation at a children’s program, and it was right next to the ad for the tote bag. The juxtaposition of an image promoting a children’s program with an image promoting the sexualization of the performers that denigrated women, reducing them to the equivalent of garbage, and the explicit sexual content was jarring and disturbing.

This became part of our discussion from a personnel perspective. Posing the question, how were these people vetted and why are they presenting a children's program. It is not the question as to whether or not the Drag Queen Story hour is good or bad, in fact, everyone on our board thought it benign and could be joyful and a fun opportunity. When you select presenters that have a persona that is highly sexualized, and then superimpose those same personas the same characters, the same names into a children's story hour, that struck us as profoundly inappropriate.

This kind of performance, a children's performance, needs to be carefully selected, and it is vital that we have performances that cover a wide spectrum of information and provide children with subject matter that they can freely talk about and be comfortable with. When we saw those images, we had two scenarios come to mind. One, that a parent sees the program and thinks this looks fun I would enjoy this, let me Google it and find out about the performers. It would take 2 minutes to get from the website to those disturbing images. The likelihood that a parent doing due diligence and looking into the program, would find those images was very high. The worst-case scenario would be a 10- or 11-year-old with internet access decides to look into the Library program and finds those images. The confusion and disturbance that that might have on those young people is what we don't want to contemplate.

So, we are faced with a community that is upset about what has been discussed as censorship, when in fact, censorship never happened. No one said we can't do this program. What was said, was, let's pause it until we can discuss it to be prepared and figure out how to move forward. While the pushback and blowback were underway, we discovered information we should have known long before that. It's a good thing we found out about it, it's a bad thing that it has caused so much distress in the community, and it's a terrible thing that we have lost a wonderful director. There is cause and there is effect and this is very complicated, a big part of this is impatience and an unwillingness to look at the facts and information as a whole, and to make reasonable judgements. That didn't happen. We always work under the assumption that our staff is really good at doing this work. And that has been our experience. This program has been offered other places and had no problems. This led us to ask how has it been vetted elsewhere. Since the VT state Dept. of Library has a link to the Drag Queen Story Hour the chair reached out to the State Librarian and said, "you have a link to story hour, it has an error message, but that aside, how are these presenters vetted". The response was, we don't vet them and we don't recommend them. In the process of doing your due diligence, there's a resource that was a dead end. I mentioned earlier that in Montpelier, a library first announced that they were going to have this program and they were flooded with horrible phone calls and threats. They allowed the program and it was without incident. Our chair called that Librarian and asked how they got from the bad stuff to the ok stuff. How did you vet the performers (the same two) They said, what do you mean? The chair talked about the web site and what we found, she said she was un-aware of this content.

To some degree, we are pointing at a more systemic issue which is that everyone wants to present programs that are interesting, inclusive, that encourage open discussions. There is work to be done in terms of what that means, and what we should be looking at and how we would present to the kids in our community.

There are problems that exist far beyond ours here at Whiting Library. Bottom line is, and it's important for the Community to understand, there were multiple breaks/disruptions here in communications between the staff and board, there were issues with how performers were vetted, and the potential for really disturbing exposure of images to parents and children. That does not mean that a Drag Queen Story Hours is not in the future of Whiting Library, nor does it mean that the Whiting Library is not committed to programs that are inclusive; and contrary to comments on social media; that aren't very supportive of the LGBTQ Community, that is actually a priority to us.

Are there any other comments from the board?

E Grossman. Want to reiterate, the gut wrenching feeling to know how committed this board is to Whiting Library, and have it look like we're not. From my own perspective, I saw the DQSH advertised along with other summer programs, "Bubble Science" and "Tie Dying". No other context was included except for "love for reading". So, it perked my curiosity. I looked up the program on-line, along with some of the controversy, and the arguments for and against. I thought the positive positions made sense, and some of the arguments against it made sense. So, ultimately, I deferred to positive comments. I looked on the American Library Association, The VT Library Association and more specifically the Public Library Association. These resources were, after the fact, provided by the Director to the board after the Program was advertised. My surprise was confirmed when I looked at the on the VT Library site, the link had been restored for the Drag Queen Story Hour, and it linked to a site referenced to a conference hosted by the Public Library Association in Philadelphia for Librarians, Trustees, Library Staff and Friends. The topic was "Drag Queen Story Hour Reading Fabulously" and the first sentence was "Drag Queens reading to Children?" with a question mark. So, it made me feel that I'm not the only one looking for clarification. I looked up what the participants in the conference would learn; it was best practices for setting up for the story hour, and being prepared with strategies and language to explain, if necessary to defend this groundbreaking and potentially controversial program. For me this confirmed that having a context makes all the difference. Personally, I see the good points in the program, and I defer to the expertise here in running the program, I do agree that the content on the presenter's website is truly troubling. So, that's where I am now. I'm not against this program, I defer to the people who have expertise who are supporting this program.

Chair - Thank you Ed, any other comments from the board.

C Frisa, I would echo what Ed said - my own feelings, I don't speak for the other trustees, I was fully prepared to have this program. I was one of many who just wanted a plan to have in place in case there was any push-back on it. No one on this board personally found this to be a controversial program that we did not want to have. I think, and agree that it is very hurtful to be on the receiving end of these misunderstandings. I can only speak for myself, but I am very glad to be sitting on the board with everyone on this board.

Chair - Thank you. Anyone else?

K. Poston - truly the only ones who know what was discussed and what the issues were are the trustees themselves. Somehow it was perceived by the community that we were against Drag

Queens in general, and it was not the situation, it was this specific program, these performers in this particular program. Not the concept of Drag Queen Story Hour.

Chair - Anyone else?

OK, I'd like to open it up to Public Comment, I would ask that you use the "raise your hand" feature, I see that the chat info is also very full. I would ask that you be patient with us as we identify who would like to speak.

Apologize if these are out of order

Public Comments:

Linda Diak - my question, why is the board is involved in the programming of the library? You vetted your Librarian, you hired the Librarian who is trained in library sciences and serving the public in the Library. Why is the board making programming decisions? Thanks.

Chair: Thank you. It is a question that has multiple answers. Generally speaking, the Director has the autonomy to schedule programs. There were two issues here. Knowing that this particular program had resulted in this kind of public response in some cases, the reasonable common-sense approach would be to tip off the board that this program is offered, there are some issues associated with it, wanted to let you know in case you're questioned about it. In case we need to talk further about being prepared about what the outcome might be. That's one.

The other part of the answer is that after we recently had our strategic planning sessions, we had a clear message from the public that they wanted a broader array of programs, which is terrific feedback, and we agreed. We formed a program committee. The purpose of the program committee is to discuss programs, and also work with and assist the Director in putting on more programs; if there were extra logistical challenges, or things that needed help with. So, the program committee in this case, which is very new, would have been the perfect place to discuss that this program comes with some baggage, we need to be prepared, let's work collaboratively on it. That didn't happen. The Program committee wasn't utilized for that so this channel of communication between the Director and the board, went unused in this case. So, it's not a reflection so much on why we're involved, it's more a case, why didn't the systems we have in place work. To a large degree, the director has autonomy because the director has the full trust of the board to make those kinds of judgements. In this case we were surprised that the judgement wasn't made to call this out, given the baggage that comes with this particular program, so the board was not caught off-guard and worse cases scenario, we did not have an unfortunate incident when the program was presented

Follow up - L Diak - In all the other presentations of this program across the state of Vermont as well as the US, do you know if Librarians were required to run this past their board first, or is this something that you all chose? Because it seems from what we've been able to be aware of, in the public, that this is a point of contention that cost us our Librarian. Is that she developed programming and planned programming and put it out there, and then had to retract, which creates even more PR nightmares for someone doing that job. So, is this a normal course of

action that if anything has any controversy, it has to be run past the board, or is that just this board collectively decided, we should have known first?

Chair - Again, there is a two-part answer there. We haven't had to deal with any programs that were thought to be controversial. We haven't dealt with any programs, that we discovered even afterwards, that there had been negative action elsewhere. So, this is a pretty unique program. In this case, we were already aware, and the "library world", was already aware that this particular program had generated these kinds of things, and that it was important enough to be included in the seminar; that it was important enough to get the attention of the VT Library Association, it was important enough to get the attention of the Vermont State of Libraries to call it out to us. Not that we think this is necessarily a bad program, but you need to know and you need to be prepared. They were talking about the fact that you'll get requests to ban books, you need to be prepared, so we were essentially acting on that information and suggesting that we need to be prepared. Again, controversial programs are rare. Our staff, Director, our Youth Librarian have done an amazing job of selecting programs. This is unfortunately, a "one off". And in terms of your statement that the librarian resigning over this program, we can't really talk about the contents of the director's resignation, so we think it's assumptive to assume that the resignation was in direct response to this program.

L Diak, that's fair. So, you did all this research after you found out about this, diving into their website, which would not be presented at story hour, and yet, I'm curious, whether or not, in that your research determined that other library's require librarians to present these programs to their board, prior to scheduling them?

Chair - I can't answer that broadly, I don't know. I think it's a judgement call in terms of which libraries ask for all Programs to be approved, which libraries require a discussion if there is a discussion if a program has specific concerns, I don't know, but I think it's reasonable for a board of trustees and a Library Director to have a very open chain of communication and when there is a matter of doubt, or a reason to even consider a conversation, that opportunity should be taken advantage of . . .

L. Diak - well I would hate to see our community, or our Library that would be "oh gosh" the topic might be controversial, let's find every possible thing that could go wrong; because the extremist gets to win, they get to control the dialogue, that's personally what I don't want to see.

Chair - I think that's a really good point you make, I think it's disheartening that we're at this point where we are having this discussion because we have people in this country who will act extremely to almost anything. We're in what the news calls "culture wars". I think it's really unfortunately, but it is the reality of it. I don't think we've gotten to the point where we'll get a harsh reaction to a Tie Dye program, or kids blowing bubbles, but in this case we know. We had documentation, we had forewarning that this was a controversial program.

I also want to address something else that was alluded to, we didn't go searching or looking for problems with this. We reacted to the fact that we'd been told in advance that we need to be prepared for this kind of program; it is not a stretch to say that if we're talking about this program and people are bothered by it, why are they bothered by it, and this particular program



did it need to be vetted more, or did we do a fine job? All you had to do was literally “google” the name of the person we advertised as the person presenting this program and we in very short order were exposed to that information. It did not require a “deep dig”, we didn’t have to go to the dark web. This is something that anyone could have found very easily. Whether that person be a parent, a minor, or someone just randomly taking a look at what the library had to offer. This is a pretty exceptional set of circumstance. I don’t think people are going to be vetting the local fire-chief reading a story about fire prevention week, and that it would be controversial. I hope we never get to that point. But, unfortunately, we’re in a place now where there’s this constant heightened tension about anything that could be construed as cultural, and it’s really unfortunate, because this program, and many other programs, could probably be beneficial. But we are in a position, where we just can’t go forward with an assumption. We have to know, and in this case, there really was some genuine, significant concerns that we almost missed.

L. Diak - Again, then everyone in that case should be vetted. I can remember 15 years ago, going onto the VT Dept. of Education files where disciplinary actions are taken against teachers, 4 teachers in a recent period of time had been disciplined for duct-taping students to their chairs. 4, not 1 or 2, but 4. So, yes, if that’s the case, that there’s a cause for concern that “googling” could turn up something unfavorable or even ugly about anyone, about this group. They could come up with something about anyone. There are problematic people in all walks of life. To think that this immediately needs to be vetted, because they are drag queens; that’s where some of the pause comes from, from the community. To not entrust, or empower your library director is where much of the concern comes from the community.

Chair- Thank you Linda. This raises another issue too, in terms of how well do we define these things from a policy perspective. You gave a great example. Do we define these in the extreme saying, no program can be presented at the library whether it be the Fire-chief reading a story, or a program on making bubbles? Can none of those programs be presented without getting approval from the full board of trustees? Does everybody participating have to be vetted? That doesn’t seem to be reasonable and I agree with you. On the other hand, is there some opportunity here to clarify our policies and how we do things going forward. I think given the comments made, this is an opportunity for members of the community to be part of a committee to talk about “how do we do this?” How do we make sure we want to do more programs, we want to do inclusive programs, we want to broaden the scope of the programs we offer. How do we make sure that we don’t step in any potholes while we do this? Maybe we need to have that dialogue. There are lessons learned from this experience that we could incorporate and find a way to depend on reasonableness, but documented and make it as clear as possible so we don’t make any mistakes as we go forward. I think that that’s reasonable. I think that when you talk about this program, in this particular case with the performers that we’re talking about, is probably a “one off”. Probably, this program is pretty safe and reasonable, and the bigger issue was the people reacting un-necessarily to a reasonable program.

The fact that this Program, was this Program, and the problems with the baggage that it contained, points to the fact that we can do better. We need to figure out how to build policies around this and who needs to do what and when.

Anybody else want to comment or ask a question?

E Burkhead - I've been Googling them for a long time, here on my phone, went on the Drag Queen Web site and not finding anything. I understand that you went on a "deep dive" so you could cover up something that happened with you and Deirdre, but I want to go on record that the board could have "fixed" this and we could have kept our Librarian, and instead you guys went on some deep dive to find out, and to me, the big issue now is that we've lost our Librarian, and the board has this great new ?? to find a new Librarian. But we have a great Librarian and she was wonderful. If this is not normally your role, and you know, you either did or did not handle . . . I have a hard time believing that Deirdre actually resigned. Because you wouldn't let her push through with this programming. I don't know, I think Linda has brought up some good points, that as a community, we need to consider what kind of role we want the board to be playing if they are going to be making all these new rules now about vetting programs, like Robert is suggesting, then as a community we really want to be mindful moving forward on who's on our board, and what role they have in our Community Library. They are responsible for losing such a wonderful person because they couldn't find a way to get her back. It seems like they went on a very strange deep dive to find out some way to validate their beliefs. Like I said, I've been spending time googling and not finding the information they said was so present. I'm sorry to Deirdre that as a community we are losing her.

I want to say to the rest of the board, you do have the power in your board to control what goes on, you don't have to just do what the president says, you have that control. I hope you can find it, and use it and that the community can rally back around to make sure we don't end up back in this weird world where the board has more power and the Librarian has less power. Maybe some good will come out of this.

Chair - Response - here was no deep dive, if you google the name of either of the performers scheduled for the program, it brings up their FB page, their website, their FB page directs you to their website. It's a 30 second Google. And you will find yourself at the website, you'll see the buttons for video and shop on the site, and that's where you'll find those images.

E. Burkland - I can't find it. Send me what you've find.

Chair - I can't explain why you can't find it.

Other Comments?

Serge - I want to thank you guys, I know it's a touchy topic and a volatile environment and it does go in both directions. It can be extreme from one side to the other as far as acceptance or not acceptance of points of view and perspective. That said, I did a quick search while we're on this, and Houston had a sex offender Drag Queen Story time link in there, and the person who started the Drag Queen Story Hour was a judge, and is in jail now for 9 years for child pornography. So, you're not in the wrong space to vet these things, and to be concerned about who is speaking to our children. Again, I think everybody who has children and grandchildren, your priority is to make sure that they are educated, have the right moral values and are responsible citizens in the future. So, doing these things you're not censoring, you're making sure everyone is aware and has a choice and can make a decision. I personally think that there

are a lot of responsible respectful people in our society. Because there is a lack of diversity in Vermont, there is the perception of prejudice that really don't exist. Sometimes I think Vermonters go the other way to the other extreme to prove they are not racist or prejudiced. Recently there was an arrest where racial profiling was claimed. I come from outside Philly, where this happens all the time, it doesn't mean its racial profiling. It's just someone who fits a description. If I fit a description and am pulled over for that, then I'll abide and respond to it. I think we've gone from one extreme to the other. I think it's a good thing to vet things to make sure that who you have in your community. It makes sense what you're doing.

Chair - I want to make a brief response if I could. I think there's a danger here and I want to be careful not to . . . we're galvanized enough, not to say here are examples of things that weren't appropriate and scare us away from programs that are absolutely critical that we do. There was a comment on social media that this board was reluctant to have programs that were associated with the LGBTQ community. There were comments directed at me, inferring the same thing. I feel very strongly about the situation that we are in, that is part of this same culture war that would have people react to a relatively benign program. It is critical that we get out of the space we're in, where LGTBQ people are still asking for the right to be themselves in 2022. I have worked for years in the LGBTQ community as an ally, I helped organize and support a program here in Chester for LGBTQ youth to make them more aware of support networks, it is important for every aspect of our community to support all communities, including people who are LGBTQ, Trans and I have people in my family who are in that community who I love and support and it is heartbreaking to see them facing things like being told they can't use a bathroom, they can't get healthcare they can't marry who they're in love with. That has to end. A Library is a place of information for the Community, and we have to be part of that process. We need to present supportive, inclusive information. And to conflate the issues of this one problem with the lack of support for that community is just wrong. It's wrong.

I can tell you that everyone on this board is a compassionate, welcoming thoughtful person. This board would never ever make a decision that would support any kind of lack of support or inclusion for anyone in our community regardless of who they are. So, I support; the whole board supports with our increased programming, programming for the LGBTQ Community. I personally support it because of where I stand on this issue, and the work I've been doing, because it is close to me and means a lot. I don't want this program to discourage this work because that has to be part of our Library as well.

Do we have any other comments?

We had another item on the agenda, as a board, we discussed doing a Press Release to counter some of the community response and to clarify. I hope that we at least in part, we've done that today. So, for the time being, unless there's an objection, by anyone on the board. We'll table a discussion of any public statement. I'd like to give this board the opportunity to absorb comments that were made today.

I'd like the community to absorb the information that we've provided and we would be open to having more extended public conversations about this and take more of your comments. For the time being, we've shared as much as we can with you, I hope it's been helpful. I wish we

had a better outcome, but we are committed to going forward and presenting the kind of programs that are meaningful on all levels to this community.

I thank you for your patience, I know that this has been a difficult slog for everyone involved. I hope the Library and the Community can continue to work together.

Another Public Comment -

Comment by B. Beher. Thank you. Here with my wife N. Jergins and she has a comment too. I agree the other people that have mentioned that it is a true tragedy to lose a good librarian. If folks can just settle on that as a single thought, I think it's very important. In hearing the details about what happened, I can't help but think that this was avoidable. It is largely a personnel issue. There was a phone interaction, there was something else, there was a search and it is, to me a terrible thing, and so preventable and resulted in a resignation and the loss of a librarian. I know (making a comment), I think there was a failure in how this came about and it is not entirely the failure of the librarian. Even though there's concern about the content of a website, I would be concerned too. But all of these events and interactions resulted in the loss of a fantastic librarian, that makes no sense to me at all. Nancy has something to say.

N. Jergins - I believe that everyone who has spoken today sincerely means what they say, that they sincerely feel concerned for the community. And for the health of our children. I hear the board saying that they are open and inclusive. I do however think that this sounds an awful lot like a problem, that in the end could use mediation. But I think it sounds like there were a lot of new procedures put into place, and that the board had an opportunity to clarify, or to meet with Deirdre and discuss the processes. It appears to me right now that the board has the power and it could exercise the power today to accept Deirdre's resignation. There was another possibility, which would have been to not accept the resignation and have an ongoing conversation about the lines of authority to proceed. It does feel like the board has pulled a power play, and it doesn't seem fair to me. That's one line of thinking.

The other is purely fantastical on my part. I happened to be reading Upton Sinclair's, "It can't happen here". I got very interested in it because of all the things that are happening in very conservative states regarding book banning, and so forth. This kind of event portrayed in the book, is a very slippery slope. I think that it could be part of people's concern right now, in that it does appear totally reasonable, what you're saying makes sense in its own context. But it does smack of a slippery slope, it makes people nervous to think that they may be losing their personal individual ability to choose how they're going to read and learn and operate within a community. That's my comment.

Chair - Thank you. I'd like to add that the board did have a discussion with the Director when she submitted her resignation, and in terms of the content of that discussion, we really, from an HR perspective, couldn't reveal that conversation without the Director's permission. We had additional conversations beyond just simply receiving the resignation.

So, there was more to that discussion, because it was appropriate to have more, but it's not for us to talk about.

Thank you for the comments, we appreciate it.

OK, we will end Public Comment, thank you for your patience and appreciate everyone being here and the comments.

**ADJOURN**

*Motion to adjourn by L. Gardner, 2nded by C. Frisa, unanimously approved adjourned at 2:48*

Respectfully submitted on May 24, 2022 by Donna McNeill-Hudkins