

ABILENE PUBLIC LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
November 7, 2022
Regular Board Meeting

The Abilene Public Library Advisory Board met at the City Council Chambers at 4:00 PM, Monday, November 7, 2022. A quorum was present.

Board Members Present: Clint Buck (Chair), Dorothy Davidson, Denise Moore, Tim de la Vega, Joe Specht, Elizabeth Norman, Judith Phaneuf

Board Members Absent: None

Also Attending: Julee Hatton, Library Director; Trent Dietz, Assistant City Attorney; Linda Camacho, Library Administrative Assistant

Media present: Bryan Bethel, Abilene Reporter-News; Noah McKenny, KTAB News, Patrick Fogle, Protect ABI Families

Mr. Clint Buck called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as submitted. First motion to approve from Elizabeth Norman; Denise Moore seconded the motion. No objections, conversations, or adjustments made; minutes accepted as presented.

Mr. Buck opened the public comment period. The following individuals addressed the Advisory Board:

- Tammy Fogle : Opened with a prayer to protect the minors.
- Eric Bengs: Read excerpts from two (2) books, "The Bluest Eye" and "The Handmaid's Tale" graphic novel, said not appropriate for YA or any child.
- Carolyn Walden: Here to defend the innocent from moral danger.
- Samuel Britton: Quoted a bible verse.
- Charles Byrn: Asking the board to make the right decision on books for the children.
- Diana Heartman: Book "Monday's Not Coming" not appropriate for our children.
- Karen Light: Book, "Sold," on sex trafficking not appropriate for children or library.
- Andreelynn Stephens: Quoted from the bible, also quoted the 1st amendment rights.
- Cathy Johnson: Quoted the bible, evil good and good evil it's a matter of the heart.
- Cheryl Sawyers: Having a group of people preach one specific part of religion and morality does not speak for the entire whole of Abilene; quoted 1st amendment.
- Francisca Rodriguez: Asks all civic leaders to stand with them in truth.
- Carlos Quiñones: Up to us to guide our children in the right path
- Ryan Goodwin: Wants the Holy Spirit to guide the board members on their recommendations to the city.
- James Sargent: Quoted the 10th amendment, protect our children, take a stand and give the power to the people.
- Jay Miller: Be cautious with what you do in making these decisions.

- Dee Dee Turney: Provide good healthy, wholesome books,
- Christina Batten: Let Abilenians be balanced in mercy and justice that they come in.
- Matty Simpson: Hope our hearts grow 10 times for the children of our community.
- Patrick Batten: Stand up for our kids and do the right thing.
- Rebecca Gingrich: Quoted the 1st amendment, It's about our community standards. City council needs to review all policies.

With no other speakers coming forward, the public comment period was closed.

Director's Report: Ms. Hatton reported on library statistics from Fiscal Year 2022. There was an increase from the previous year in reference questions, library visit total increased to 324,205, around 70,000 people more than last year. There were 5,548 study room visits, 9,147 attendees in the meeting room visits, 436 events held, 354,398 Items physical items circulated, 6,000 new library cards issued, 28,000 public Internet sessions, and 14,000 volunteer hours, this does not include the digital items and is the totals for all three (3) library locations. This is a preview of the annual report to come.

Ms. Hatton also reported on the kids catalog stating it's a new catalog that has been launched on our current catalog site that includes subjects with large graphics to make it kid-friendly in use. A special thanks goes to the Abilene Library Consortium for working with us to set this up and get it running. It only searches items within the current collection that are classified as juvenile and owned by the public library. It will still have all the account features as the normal catalog, but just in a new area. No Hoopla or Overdrive titles will be available through this catalog.

Special Review Committee Report: Mr. Buck read the entire Special Review Committee Recommendation report as follows;

*SPECIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATION*

November 7, 2022

The Abilene Public Library received 30 reconsideration requests between August 21, 2022, and October 1, 2022. Any reconsideration requests received on or after October 1, 2022, and on or before December 1, 2022, will be processed and a recommendation presented at the next quarterly library meeting. As a reminder, any book subject to an open Reconsideration Request is pulled from the shelves of the Abilene Public Library pending final action by the Abilene City Manager.

These 30 reconsideration requests were submitted by six (6) individuals. Four (4) reconsideration requests duplicated another petitioner's request. Therefore, this Recommendation addresses 26 titles.

PREAMBLE.

The Abilene Public Library strives to meet the various needs of all its residents. It is the duty of the

Abilene Public Library Director and staff, this Special Review Committee, the Abilene Public Library Advisory Board, and the City Manager to apply the stated goals approved and adopted by the Abilene Public Library Advisory Board.

Material that may meet one or more resident's needs may be contrary to the sensibilities of other residents. Such is the nature of all communities.

The library does not and cannot place the needs of one individual or group of individuals over another individual or group of individuals. The library strives to provide adequate resources to meet the needs of all its citizens.

The library supports the right of the individual to access information, no matter if it may be considered controversial, unorthodox or unacceptable to others. Abilene is home to a diverse citizenry reflecting a broad range of perspectives, ideas, and needs. The current collection reflects the dignity, viewpoints, needs and interests of our citizens in accordance with the overall demographics of the City of Abilene, not just a perceived majority.

RECITATION OF FACTS.

The Special Review Committee comprised of Clint Buck, Joe Specht, and Denise Moore conducted five (5) meetings to meet with four (4) individual petitioners. Two (2) petitioners elected not to meet in person, and one petitioner met with the Committee on two (2) separate occasions. These meetings were held at the Main Library on the following dates and times:

- *Friday, September 23, 2022, at 2:00 p.m.;*
- *Wednesday, September 28, 2022, at 9:30 a.m.;*
- *Wednesday, September 28, 2022, at 2:00 p.m.;*
- *Monday, October 3, 2022, at 9:30 a.m.; and*
- *Wednesday, October 12, 2022, at 2:00 p.m.*

Julee Hatton, Director of Library Services, was also in attendance at each of these meetings.

Petitioner's requests for the reconsidered titles varied from removing a book from the shelves of the Abilene Public Library to reclassifying the book (i.e. moving a Young Adult Fiction book into Adult Fiction) to creating a specially segregated section for books specifically identified by petitioner. Two (2) petitioners wanted the book "Sold" by Patricia McCormick to be removed from the Abilene Public Library.

A prevalent theme from all four (4) of the petitioners with whom the Committee met in person was that of "inadvertent discovery" — that a minor library patron would accidentally stumble upon a book containing undesirable content and/or images deemed offensive by the patron or patron's parent or guardian. This theme was consistently, and clearly communicated by each of the four (4) petitioners who met with the Committee and the Committee kept this concern in mind while conducting its review.

The import of submitting a Reconsideration Request cannot be overstated. Asking a public library dedicated to serving all its residents to reconsider a book is a monumental request. In essence, a petitioner is purporting to know and/or believe his or her rights and/or beliefs carry more weight than another citizen's rights and beliefs. So, Reconsideration Requests must weigh heavy on each petitioner as each request weighs heavy on the Special Review Committee, the Library Advisory Board, and the City Manager.

Of the 26 books subject to recommendation today, the six (6) petitioners collectively read, in their entirety, six (6) of the books. As a result, petitioners were, by and large, unable to articulate any contextual understanding for the sentences and/or snippets they relied on in their respective reconsideration requests.

The members of the Special Review Committee endeavored to consider each title in its entirety. The Special Review Committee focused its attention on the 14 physical books owned by the Abilene Public Library.

The Abilene Public Library exists to "provide materials, services, and programming to help community residents obtain information which meets their personal, educational, professional and recreational needs". The foregoing statement is in accordance with the policies last approved and adopted by the Abilene Public Library Advisory Board on August 1, 2016, specifically referencing the Collection Development Policy, the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement and the Freedom to View Statement (all of which are available to the public on the City of Abilene website).

RECOMMENDATION.

We recommend the following young adult books be reclassified into the corresponding adult section:

- *A five (5) book series called A Court of Thorns and Roses by Sarah J. Maas, including two (2) titles specifically subject to a reconsideration request: A Court of Thorns and Roses and A Court of Frost and Starlight;*
- *Damsel; and*
- *Flamer*

We believe the following juvenile and young adult books are shelved appropriately within the APL collection and, therefore, recommend no action on the following books:

- *The Moon Within;*
- *Foul is Fair;*
- *Sold; and*
- *Yolk*

The following books are exclusively available in an electronic format. In other words, there are no physical books for these titles housed in the Abilene Public Library. The absence of an actual physical book effectively eliminates any chance for a child in the library to inadvertently stumble across it.

Additionally, the Abilene Public Library is developing a library card (hereinafter, the "Restricted Access Juvenile Card") that would restrict these electronic titles, among others, from being checked out. The Restricted Access Card will be elective for parents or guardians of minor children.

Therefore, we recommend no action on the following titles considering the absence of physical access to these titles, along with the future rollout of the Restricted Access Juvenile Card:

- *My Body is Growing: A Guide for Children Ages 4 to 8;*
- *Bumped;*
- *Burned;*
- *Crank;*
- *Lawn Boy; and*
- *What Girls Are Made Of.*

We believe the following adult fiction books, adult nonfiction books and/or audiobooks are shelved or categorized appropriately within the APL collection and, therefore, recommend no action on the following books:

- *The Bluest Eye (abridged audiobook);*
- *All Boys Aren't Blue: a memoir-manifesto;*
- *This Book is Gay;*
- *Kite Runner;*
- *Slaughterhouse Five; and*
- *Queer: A Graphic History*

We recommend the following adult graphic novel be relocated from the adult graphic novel section at the Mockingbird Branch to the adult graphic novel section at the Main Library:

- *Handmaid's Tale (Graphic Novel).*

During our in-person meeting, the petitioner agreed the following adult books were appropriately shelved in the adult section and, therefore, requested no action. We, therefore, recommend no action be taken on the following titles:

- *Red Hood;*
- *Red, White and Royal Blue; and*
- *You Too?*


Two (2) Reconsideration Requests were for books not owned or proffered by the Abilene Public Library and, therefore, no action is necessary:

- *Lolita; and*
- *Two Boys Kissing.*

That is the commendation for the special review committee, motion to approve from Mr. Specht a second is not required. Mr. Buck opened the table for discussion. Mr. de la Vega asked to review the juvenile and young adult books: the Moon Within; Foul is Fair; Sold; and Yolk before voting, Mr. Specht withdrew his motion, Mr. de la Vega made a motion to table with a second by Mr. Specht. Vote was taken with six (6) in favor and one (1) opposed (Moore). The motion passed and this recommendation was tabled for a meeting at a later date.

Meeting adjourned: 5:12 p.m.

The next scheduled Advisory Board Meeting is February 6th, 2023, at 4:00 PM, City Hall 555 Walnut St. 2nd floor, Council Chambers



Clint Buck, Chair

Linda Camacho

Linda Camacho, Library Administrative Assistant