



**LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
MINUTES WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2023
4:00 P.M.**

The Board met in regular session in a hybrid format via Zoom webinar and in person.

Chair Ghilieri called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

1) ROLL CALL

Board Members Present: Frank Perez, Amy Ghilieri, Ann Medaille

Board Members Absent: Lea Grace

County Staff Present: Library Director Jeff Scott, Assistant District Attorney Herbert Kaplan, Assistant County Manager David Solaro

2) PUBLIC COMMENT

Colton (last name unavailable): Voiced approval for the drag queen story time events, saying drag was a form of performing art, and the events did not sexualize anyone or anything.

Britt Curtis: Supported the drag queen story time events as a mother of two preschool-aged children. She noted she and her children regularly visited the local library to enjoy story times, participate in Crafternoon programs, read to dogs, and play games on the computers. Her family also attended the Pride parade in support of the Washoe County Library System (WCLS) and participated in other library art events and projects. She noted her four-year-old had just received his own library card with the purple wallet, and he loved using the book machines. She said she and her family always felt safe, valued, and vested in at the library, and she hoped WCLS would stand strong against the attacks on drag queen story time performers and events, and continue to put children first.

Valerie Fiannaca: Spoke regarding her opposition to the drag queen story time as she felt the event was not appropriate for children, and noted she had spoken with the District Attorney as well as Child Protective Services regarding the matter. She did not understand why anything having to do with drag queen performers was being done during library story times.

Michelle Rudan: Spoke on her opposition to the drag queen event. Drag queens are not for children. Feels they bring on gender stereotypes. Not religious. Feels the event is negative prospective to the children.

Jesse James: Is a library patron stated not to throw stones, wants to cast a wider net, sea of love against hatred. Chris is the genuine article does not hurt to revisit book of Romans.

Alicia Funkhauser: Mom and proud supporter of the Washoe County library systems. Her child and herself go to the library on a regular basis. She enjoys all the programming especially the drag queen story time. For my little one this event encourages acceptance, self-esteem building, connecting with folks in the community that are not always accepted. Let you know I am standing strong with you and the library and hope we can continue to have drag queen story time and similar events. I don't think it's fair the way it is being attacked. A way that is very false, only stigmatizes it more, a lot of the folks who are unaccepting are not seeing the full picture, not open to understanding what it is about. Fearmongering makes me feel really sad for the Washoe County library system to have to be going through that. Hope you can continue with this. We are in support and always will be.

Ted Lambert: Does not normally come to speak since he felt everything was going very well and is happy with the way the library is being run and the diverse information it provides. As a long time, educator you will only frequently hear only from those dissatisfied, which usually tends to be small in minority. He gave an example of how he played music before class, and one student complained, the administrators said it was disruptive, but it was only one person who complained. The ones who are complaining are not the majority, your providing services even if it seems like a little, unless it's most people. It's not representative of how the rest of the library supporters feel.

Reva Crump: Sent an email to the library board members but cannot seem to get a hold of any of members. Sent it to the library board of trustees, the Commissioners, and the recommended email on the agenda. Accessing the packet via the website agenda stated the November minutes won't be available and will be provided at the meeting. It is difficult to comprehend that no one in the library system can type the minutes for the Library Board of Trustees meetings when there were two months in which this could have been done. I fell it is professionally embarrassing for this to be occurring. They are not available three days before the meeting its an open meeting

law violation because they are supposed to be a part of the package and that is supposed to be available to the public. Yet again for the second time they are not I did send it to the Commissioners, and I told them why. We have no access to the library board of trustees representing the public because they don't have emails. They should know that when they use their private emails for Washoe County Library business, their emails in private account are subject to subpoena and you're setting yourself up for problems you don't want to have. Please Trustees get yourself emails with the Washoe County system. It is ridiculous that this has not happened yet. When you go through the Director's slideshow, I want you to look for rainbows every time you see them and I want you to keep these stats in mind, that Washoe County whom this library is set to serve is made up of 26% Latino/Hispanic, 6% Asian, 3% black/African American, and the rest other with the exception of the largest group being Caucasian. Of that whole group 3.5% are LGBTQ or otherwise and 9.3% are Veterans. Try to understand how many Asian events you see ever propagated or even promoted. How many black, Caucasian, or Latino events do you see promoted? And how many Veteran affairs do you see promoted.

Chris Daniels: AKA Ginger Devine it has been my honor for the past four years to serve as a drag queen for the drag queen story time. Wanted to come down in person and introduce myself and put a face to the name and let you see my identity and that would possibly make a change. I love our library staff; they are incredible humans who work tirelessly to put on incredible programs that serve a diverse group of individuals and identities and that can be challenging and difficult. They are doing their best and an exceptional job. So many voices talking about this event and specifically me and I really wanted to throw my voice into it because we are talking a lot about children but this isn't really about the children who attend the event, The first time I did story time the other drag queen Aspen Meadows and I spent two hours after the event talking to all the kids and the families, they said it was so important , never thought they would see in their lifetime what it means to them because their family is seen they are accepted, and loved they have dignity and we listened to every one of those stories and how important it was but we don't hear those stories during these public comments there are these metaphorical children somewhere out in the universe that are somehow opposed to drag queens we are actually talking about the ones that are attending the events. There are three inherent needs all humans have, a need for safety, belonging, and dignity and I feel like this event helps capture all three of those needs. The protesting of these events is really about the erasure of queer for public spaces. We are here we are loving individuals I care about reading library has always been a refuge for me and the fact that I can participate in the event, that encourages children to read. I look forward to many more opportunities to read as a drag queen at story time.

Ally McWilliams: Voiced her support for the drag queen story hour and all the events the library offers. Has been going to the South Valleys, Sierra View, Downtown library and has volunteered with the Friends. The library is a valued part of our community

and appreciate the wide variety of activities for all ages. People can choose to attend or not attend the events the library offers that is optional. Thanked the library staff for all they do for the community.

Mary Jones: Wanted to reiterate that she is 100% behind Director Scott and the library staff because they value inclusion of everyone and thank you.

Bruce Parks: Insisted his objection to drag queens had nothing to do with hate or prejudice, and anyone who thought it did was a fool. He opined there was no need for adult entertainment in public libraries. He continued: we love the libraries and what they do along with all the programs they have. Our concern is just that one program. I don't know why the heels are being dug in so hard over this it doesn't make sense to me. For those who think that those who object whom by the way is the majority of the community if you took an honest poll, is the majority objects to just this one program for the reasons stated numerous times here. They are valid reasons and not misconceptions on our part, we understand what is going on. We do not hate the LGBTQ community we celebrate that they are represented in the community and with libraries. This is a discrimination lawsuit to the rest of the community. How long until you face a discrimination lawsuit? It is coming be advised of that. How many Pacific Islanders do we have in Washoe County? How many Asian Americans? The largest segment growing in our community are the elderly. When has the book mobile stopped at the VA hospital to help the veterans? Another underrepresented group of people in the community.

Samantha Richardson: Early Childhood educator and a longtime Washoe County library school member. One thing to do for children is to read to them and hope they become passionate readers and increase the vocabulary along with academic success. To better understand the world around them. By reading one book to a child per day by the age of five they will be exposed to 290 words if you read five books that will put them at over one million words. All this research and none of it speaks of the detriment about why children should not be read by books by someone different than them. All research says it is nothing but good. Different Society groups, sexuality, gender open minds and gives the children opportunity to connect and show them they are valid in the truth. Only time there is harm for children being exposed such as this is when children being raised by adults not treating their own bias and teaching children to have that bias which puts them through fear/ignorance. We are all unique and we must open our minds to others and learn from one another. What would our community be like if we kept drag queen story hour? What if it was a place for all people? What would our community be like if we continue to offer a safe space to gather around for a good book?

Stephen Moore: Vocalized his support for the drag queen story hour. Heard more than once the argument disproportionate inclusion. That we are not giving to others the same opportunities as the drag queens. Conclusion seeing drawn is if not

everyone can have it, then on one should. These things take time it can't happen all at once they take time to roll out takes time and trust. Just creating spaces where people feel included and seen helps them feel more confinement and empowered, led by individuals in the community who are brave enough to do that. The more people that come forward they are the more it occurs. Support for veterans and support for different backgrounds are all wonderful when we talk about these programs and how they are available to the LGBTQ people.

Maggie Brader: Background in education. Motherhood started for her by taking her children to the Washoe County library she is grateful to the library and all the programs and craft, story time or any of the enrichments it offers. My children are now teenagers and at the phase where they are trying to figure out who they are. My children have mentors, and it does not matter to me who my children's mentors are or how they identify. If you are a good human, then you are a good human. Our board of directors are here because you believe in something big and wants to support our community. You think a lot about programming, and they are not easy decisions to make. Looking at wide swap of folks from many different backgrounds what I would like to do today is apologize for the behavior for some folks in our community that attack your for trying to do your job. There is no need to threaten with filing complaints for open meeting laws instead can we not all be human and understanding without attacking each other. My children have benefited from the programs of the library. There is no need for attack.

3) Approval of Minutes

On motion by Vice Chair Perez, seconded by Trustee Medaille, which motion duly carried, the Board approved the minutes from the November 16, 2022 meeting. All in favor, none opposed.

4) Old Business

None

5) New Business

a) Presentation: Friends of Washoe County Library Donation

Jaime Hemingway, interim PIO/DO and Friends liaison, presented to the board, stating the Friends program was incorporated in January 1981 with over 500 members dedicated to fundraising and funding support for the Washoe County library. Friends of the Washoe County Library strives to give kids education support and vibrant programs, gift funds, library materials. Through fund raising projects the Friends of the library have raised over \$3 million dollars for the Washoe County library system. In January of 2023 the Washoe County Friends allocated \$90,000.00 of funds to support the technology

services, summer reading prizes, marketing, staff development and training. The multitude of diverse projects benefit the entire staff and system. Recommendation that the board acknowledge the \$90,000.00 donation from the Friends of Washoe County library which demonstrates its continued support of libraries.

b) Presentation: Washoe County Library Strategic Plan 2023

Director Jeff Scott presented the strategic plan for 2023 plan update for year 2. Stimulate imagination talked about the book mobile for Sun Valley for around August 2023 Book team planning/book team promotion with the Friends around March. Book machine at Cold Springs Community Center. Book machine at Sun Valley Teen and Family Resource Center scheduled around May 2023. Provide welcoming spaces by reviewing and fund additional smart chutes. Review furniture and equipment. Dashboard of recorded staff training. Sierra View library renovation to take place around February or March of 2323. Lit fiber internet at Gerlach to take place around June 2023. Plan to add additional staff of service at Incline Village. Senior Center renovation. Workforce building will provide workforce training and virtual space opportunities. Circulate hotspots Spanish Springs partnership with Reno Sparks Indian Colony and Pyramid Lake Paiute tribe. Lifelong learning by improving the welfare and provide more resources for lifelong learners and seniors in Washoe County. Identify and create Senior tech classes, on the road tech café, and review partnership with senior serving agencies. School support by ensuring Washoe County library system support in school children to help them succeed. Review and support databases subscriptions that support the local schools. Search for partners and enhance homework help. Celebrate our diverse community by ensuring we are serving everyone and celebrating all in the community. One way is to look at technology instructions with vulnerable populations, diversify training. Promote the library by renewing the tax initiative and ensure the library is financially secure. Work with Board of County Commissioners to gain support for the renewed tax initiative and work on the messaging for the tax initiative.

Trustee Medaille asked whether the tax initiative was still in the early phases of renewal and what was being requested. Director Scott explained the goal was to renew an existing tax which supplemented the Library System's budget with an additional one percent of every hundred dollars collected in property taxes by the County. Those funds went directly to the public libraries, giving the system more independence to operate. As property values increased, so had the Library's revenues, funding the renovations of aging branch locations, the development and enlargement of the libraries' collections, and increased services to support the County's growing population and community needs. However, the expansion tax was set to sunset soon, and it would be crucial to gain the support of Washoe County Commissioners and work to have the tax renewal initiative added to the November 2024 ballot.

Chair Ghilieri expressed appreciation for Director Scott's work to stay on track with the Strategic Plan.

6) Reports

a) Library Director Updates:

Director Jeff Scott talked about staff day at the library; was unable to get the video out but did provide a link. Attend KOLO v book club with Rebecca Kitchen. Spoke about new books coming out in 2023. Weather leaks at Reno and Northwest are for once minimal. Not too much of an impact for heavy winter. Park passes have arrived from the Nevada State Library Parks. The pass is valid at all 27 Nevada State Parks. The pass does not include federal, regional, or other public lands in Nevada that are not part on the Nevada State Parks. The circulation team is reviewing and making these available once review is complete. Will have a press release for more information. Challenge team update thanked all the participants updated information is on SharePoint. Hiring will open a new recruitment for the Library Assistant II positions shortly. Plan on having a large panel with almost every branch having a Library Assistant or a Library Aide vacancy. Our plant caretaker for downtown Reno was featured on the local KUNR station.

b) South Valleys Library Report:

Julie Ullman branch manager presented a slideshow to the board. Was glad to show the renovations that were paid in part by a grant from former Commissioner Bob Lucey. Wrap up the past year from photos. You can see we have tremendous participation going out into the community, South end of town and supporting system events, Touched on the Christmas parade, Holland project, etc. Scavenger hunt for community to participate to learn more about libraries, Storytime, making buttons, making the library a welcoming place to be. Donner Springs and Pleasant Valley taking advantage of the scheduled reading week. Tons of participation with the school district library card program including the middle school lunch book group led by Jennifer Cole. It is unique and original thinking going on to get people into libraries and out into the community.

c) Outreach Team Report:

Jonnica Bowen branch manager at North Valleys library presented a slideshow to the Board. Jonnica is a current chair to the outreach committee, a new service team established fall of 2021 various library staff are on the committee. Create service team mission and vision in support of the Washoe County Library System strategic plan for 2022-2025. The committee will be overseeing procedures, functions, and training for the community. Including outreach services and homebound services being led by Debbie Gunderman. The YSLE service team will maintain oversight of early literacy and educational outreach. Has a revamped webpage for outreach services for anyone to make a request for services. Book deserts by branch service area is a live form accessible from anywhere. Shared some example photos of what outreach looks like.

7) Staff Announcement:

Natalie Villegas from Incline Village wants to open Saturday from 10am to 4pm and have the kiosk open and checked out over 150 items most of them kids.

8) Public Comment:

Valerie Fiannaca: Thanked us for the hard work done and our service. Wanted to propose something that might be more appropriate than drag queen story hour. She thinks they could do a production musical or otherwise portraying people in our history of the United States that would absolutely be appropriate for all children. I know several actors/performers. I am sure I could get many people involved in this project. George and Martha Washington, the Lincoln Road apartment, Frederick Douglass. I am sure we can get with the historical society from Reno involved in this and many of the drama teachers from our high schools we can portray Thomas Jefferson, Nikola Tesla, Martin Luther King Jr. and I could go on and on. I am sure at least a 30-minute production would be fascinating for the children and our students. Just wanted to present the idea. She will work on more and bring it back to the board.

Mary Jones: Stated she feels the library should talk about the programming that has already been addressed.

Bruce Parks: There is no personal animus here, nobody is under attack that is not the intent we are not advocating for the removal of the director. I think by large he has done great he has done a great job. There is a wicked tenant for those of you that are aware of that particular philosophy it says harm none. Its our position the drag queen story hour is in fact harmful to children if you know anything about developmental psychology you agree. In fact, the American Pediatric Society agrees with that statement. At the very least it shows confusion. At its very worst it exposed children to Pedophiles which has been documented. We simply want to protect our kids. We are not advocating for anything more or less than that. Our stand is that this is harmful not beneficial. I always wonder why. I am all for reading to kids, I think it is great. I read to my kids as they were growing up. We visited the library quite frequently, and I would like to think that was instrumental in their achieving the successes that they have. Still don't understand why there is no movement of the needle if you will on this issue. The presentation that was given in the last Library Board Meeting did nothing to dissuade my opinion.

Ashley (last name unavailable): As much as I don't want to accept certain things that people say I have learned to very much love the other person as my neighbor. But when I feel that people are not learning other people as they are and accept you and I have to stand and say something. I think its imperative that we talk about this right now because to take away drag story was actually a very incredible disservice to our community. Our community is built on acceptance and reading a little expression. It is built on love and accepting other human beings as they are even if you don't agree with their opinions, or how they present themselves. What I think as a person who's lived in this community my whole life and worked in this community. I work with children with disabilities, I have worked for the County and for wherever and I have gotten to know very many people. One thing I can tell you is children look at people and they accept and I think that is something we should take into our own consideration and into our own hearts. We should learn to accept people as they are. I know that drag queen story time will have you see celebrations and I have gotten

to see how much love is there not anything trying to express things not harm to children. I feel this event is modern and moderate and do not see any problem with it. I think getting rid of it would be a disservice.

Unknown individual: Felt the presentation was amazing and was glad to save his comment toward the end of the meeting because he felt there were a lot of incredible things that the library system does and certainly expanding awareness and understanding. It was exciting because I feel like a lot of the things that were brought up during public comment were really addressed during the meeting because a lot of those communities that were brought up that are not being reached out to or reported not being reached out to or being reached out to and those services are increasing and expanding which is exciting. I would also like to mention that LGBTQ persons are Veterans are black, brown, indigenous non native speakers like Spanish. There is so many LGBTQ persons in our community. It made me feel like there was an assumption that when we say LGBTQ person, we are really only talking about white people or people whom are not Veterans or people who do not speak English. But that is not true. I just wanted to make that know that the LGBTQ community includes all those individuals. Especially our elders as well so there are lots of folks in the LGBTQ community, just so that we are clear and it was really exciting hearing the meeting because if you want to increase services maybe we should pool our efforts together and try to raise more money for the library because they would be able to provide more services as opposed to suing them or trying to pull funding which means they would actually have to limit their services and outreach which means that everyone would be hurt by it. Not just drag queens or people that go to drag queen story time but everybody in our community would feel devastating impact of library funding being cut and having to astronomically reduce their outreach and services they provide. Also wanted to reiterate this is a volunteer event and parents are not being forced to come to the event, they elect to attend. There is assumption that parental rights do not extend to individuals who choose to go to drag queen story time that we are not honoring their choice as parents as to why they bring their children. It feels manipulative and controlling as if we were trying to tell parents what they should do when in fact, everyone should have a choice as to what free events they go to and how they want to raise their children. Seems like we are trying to limit and take away possibilities and opportunities for parents and how they would like to raise their children and the values they would like to impart upon them.

Jays Ozuna: Community organizer in Reno that has a young niece she would hope that her niece would be raised to be the kind of person who accepts all people and would hope that she would want to go to these story times, and she would feel completely safe to let her come to these story times with these drag queens because she has met a lot of drag queens here in Reno who are sweet and amazing people. For anyone to accuse a drag queen who has no accusations around being a pedophile is just very vile and homophobic. Very queer phobic I don't think we should be allowing that kind of hate speech to be making a decision like having drag story time at the local libraries that brings a lot of joy to people and anyone who thinks that drag queens are dangerous to children obviously do not know a drag queen and they are not involved in the queer community and I think that we as a society are not

going to progress further. We will not accept that kind of hate speech because it is more dangerous than a person protesting outside of the Sparks library last summer with a gun. That is more dangerous to children than drag queens giving their free time out of the goodness of their hearts and I don't think as a community we should take that for granted. Director Scott asked District Attorney Kaplan if an emailed public comment needed to be added to the comments. Attorney Kaplan stated that generally it's not required but it has been done in the past. The email for public comment from Jacqueline Baldwin will be placed on record.

Trustee Perez wanted to follow up on a couple of items that were mentioned so things could be clear. On the library website it does say right below Trustee Moser's biographies to contact the Library Board of Trustees by email at libraryboard@washoecounty.us. Trustee Perez wondered if it might be possible some of the messages had gone into a spam filter, but he noted messages were also included in the Board packets.

Director Scott responded that, depending on what came in, it would be in the packet. Trustee Perez indicated he knew some citizens opposed to Drag Queen Story Time events wanted the subject added to a future agenda for further discussion, but he did not envision that happening again, as the Board had already heard and discussed the subject in previous meetings and had received the public's comments both in support of and in opposition to the events. Trustee Perez recalled the Board had given direction to the Library Director supporting the Drag Queen events and other programming to encourage diversity, outreach, and inclusion.

Chair Amy Ghilieri adjourned the meeting at 6:14 pm.