

Phillips Public Library Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting Minutes
September 29, 2022

Members present (in person or via zoom):

Becky Steinbach, Meredith Hueckman, Galen Azbell, Bruce Marshall, Brittany Weisrock, Jenny Markle, Marc Peterson

Members absent:

Laura Tomaszewski

Staff present:

Rebecca Puhl, Jody Eckert, Evelyn Azbell

Call to order/establishment of a quorum

Meeting opened by Becky S. at 5:06 p.m.

Public Comments

Individuals signed up ahead of time to speak for 3 minutes each. The original list of names is available. Brief summaries below:

Patty Nutt--She has used the library for over 30 years. Months ago, she expressed concern about display at the library of queer authors. When she was told that the authors were underrepresented, she asked for a display of Christian authors. This has not happened. She feels she does not have a voice. She shared an article about a teen who went through transition surgery and regrets it and feels that she was pushed into it.

Lynn Boers--She is concerned about the number of books on LGBTQ+ and social activism topics. These books are rare within the system and are checked out very little. Books should be purchased based on need, so funds should be used to purchase books that the majority of the community will enjoy. She believes that people should be loving towards those who struggle with gender dysphoria but should not feed the confusion. She is not the enemy. She is concerned about FB comments between a board member and the director after the August meeting which put attendees and other board members in a negative light.

Jason Thomas--He is concerned that board members and the director are not listening to the public during meetings. He asks the board to listen and respond. He reminded all that they serve the public. He asks again for the term length of board members.

Janene Ravet--She, as a Christian, loves people even while calling sin to be sin. She reviewed and showed illustrations from a new children's book, *It's Perfectly Normal*. She quoted sections of the book which are very explicit.

Shirley Smith--She quoted from the back of *Jacob's New Dress* stating gender is inborn. These books help children who are different and are often bullied. The library and the board should serve everyone.

Julie Olson--Classics are rarely checked out, but we want those books to be available. It should be no different with some of these other books. She believes the board is listening and has made changes--stickers, moving books, etc. She also believes that the number of LGBTQ books is small (less than 1%) and should be available for the people who are questioning and would like to read them.

Communication and Correspondence

letters sent out via email; board members all received them prior to the meeting

Approval of 08/30/2022 minutes

Motion made by Brittany

Seconded by Meredith

To approve August 30, 2022 minutes as presented

Motion passed.

Reports:

1. Treasurer's Report

Report provided. Accounts are in good shape. No action needed.

2. Director's Report

Becky gave an oral expansion of her written report. New YA furniture has been installed. IFLS has new restrictions on billable damaged/replacement items. A small book sale is running now through Saturday at 3 p.m. Big thanks to Jake's parents for all of their help with the sale! No action needed.

3. Staff Meeting Minutes.

Written minutes provided. No questions from the board. No action needed.

Old Business:

1. Discussion/Action on Library Hours/COVID-19/Mask Requirements

Becky presented no changes to the current, approved policy. Jenny asked for Becky's intention regarding the plexiglass barrier at the front desk. Becky will ask the staff

how they feel about the barrier. Also, we will put a public health issue on the agenda for next month and look at removing the “covid” part of this agenda item.

2. Discussion/Action on Library building project

YA furniture is in place. No action needed.

New Business:

1. Discussion/Action on challenged Library materials

Introducing Teddy by Jessica Walton

Jack (not Jackie) by Erica Silverman

Jacob's New Dress by Sarah and Ian Hoffman

Julian at the Wedding by Jessica Love

My Rainbow by Trinity and Deshanna Neal

Motion made by Jenny

Seconded by Brittany

To adopt the recommendations made by Becky in the information packet provided to the board: Add a subheading in the Family Discussions section titled “Gender” and move four of the books (other than *Julian at the Wedding*) to this section. Also, other gender books will be added from other sections in children’s. All of these titles now have stickers.

Discussion:

Galen wonders if it would be better to discuss each title individually.

Meredith thinks these books should be categorized by the way the books are labeled in the catalog--all are listed in the computer catalog with genre as “LGBTQIA+. Children’s. Picture books.” Should they all be in their own section?

Becky Puhl agrees that the four titles that are clearly about gender identity should be guided by parents. *Julian* is primarily a book about friendship, so it should be on the shelf where it is.

Brittany (in answer to Meredith)--the key word is for searching purposes. But the existence of the queer character should not force the book to be shelved in a different place. The sticker helps to identify the existence of a queer character.

Bruce sees the *Julian* book as not appropriate and without good content--lesbian wedding, children off on their own, children falling in love, etc. However, he thinks the suggested actions of the board are a reasonable compromise and give parents important tools.

Vote by roll call: **Motion Passed**

Becky--yes

Brittany--yes

Bruce--yes

Galen--yes

Jenny--yes

Marc--yes

Meredith--no

Titles for Discussion in October:

Calvin by JR and Vanessa Ford

Different Can Be Great by Lisa Bullard

Dress Up Day by Lisa Bullard

Everything You Say about Me

That's Wonderful Is True by Dr. Casey

From Archie to Zach by Vincent Kirsch

Heather Has Two Mommies by Leslea Newman

Love, Violet by Charlotte Sullivan Wild

Papa, Daddy, and Riley by Seamus Kirst

Stella Brings the Family by Miriam B. Schiffer

A new challenge may also be included. Challenges must be submitted on the form. Becky P. received a letter regarding a book; she will contact the writer to let her know that a challenge form must be used in order for the board to address her concerns. Becky P. also requests that if anyone finds a book that needs a sticker or should be moved into a newly created category, please bring it to her so that she can update the material. Galen asked Becky to mention any such updates in the director's report to keep the board informed.

2. Discussion/Action on asking the city to ban weapons inside the Library

Discussion: The county cannot provide a panic button. The city might be able to do so, but Becky is not very hopeful. She plans to schedule an active shooter training for staff. Also, she would like to purchase an inexpensive cell phone both for making emergency calls and for a hot spot/mobile check-out device. Becky S. recommends looking into a tablet; it might be cheaper and more useful and wouldn't need a monthly plan. The board asks Becky P. to please put together a package of needs and costs for the next meeting.

3. Discussion/Action on meeting decorum

Discussion: Becky Puhl reminded the audience that she is listening and does realize that people feel strongly about these topics. She asked the public to respect others and keep the meeting civil. She thanked the crowd for making this meeting better than the last one.

Several board members made various comments. Is there a way to indicate on the agenda that public comments must be kept to that section of the agenda so new attendees will be aware? Board members expressed frustration with their inability to answer legitimate questions during the meeting. Could people submit questions or comments outside of a meeting?

Becky says that she and Jody and the other staff can answer many of these questions at the library; board members can answer questions as well. Bruce stated that the presiding officer can allow questions during a meeting; it is not illegal or improper, but the process must be consistently applied by the leader of the meeting. Becky P. offered a 5-minute option at the end of each meeting to address any questions. Becky S. likes this idea. Bruce cautions that the questions could not be commented on during the meeting in which they are submitted because the board is bound by the agenda. How about a question box?

Motion made by Bruce

Seconded by Brittany

To provide a question box at the end of each meeting for public questions. The question(s) will be read and clarified at the end of each meeting but not answered until the following meeting.

All ayes. Motion carried.

4. Discussion/Action on 2023 Budget

Discussion: Jenny is in favor of raising wages and lowering book budgets. She is concerned with the extra level of wage increases (beyond the “new hire” level) at the expense of cutting our book budget in half. Can Becky show us what happens to the budget when we run the numbers with the wages at the new hire level?

Meredith would like to see more documents of comparable library budgets. She would like to see how our wages compare with other libraries with similar budgets and book circulation levels. She doesn't like comparing library wages with Kwik Trip or city and county jobs. The jobs are just too different.

Bruce agrees that we should be careful. We don't want to cut our book budget too much and risk lowering our circulation (which affects our county funding). We need to look at similar library budgets and circulation numbers and how that should affect our wages and budget. He asks whether Jenny will go over wage/budget information with Becky P. to give a good presentation to the board next month. Becky is unsure whether that is needed as the city won't need specific budget details before the next library board meeting; she could schedule a budget-only meeting with the board next week if necessary.

Jenny: Does the city care very much about our details or just the bottom line?

Bruce and Becky P.: Mostly, just the bottom line; but we do have to be careful to be reasonable. Someone on the city board does look at the specific details.

Jody was invited to comment: She mentioned that libraries are not just about the books anymore. People look for programs and other resources as well. Fewer books might not have such a bad effect as you think.

Brittany hates putting a value on jobs she doesn't or cannot do. She also recognizes the value of e-books along with print books.

Galen asked what amount of cutting the book budget would make us comfortable?

Becky P. offered to make several versions of the budget (along with her ideal one) and get them to the board along with the information from other libraries as soon as possible. We can call a special budget meeting if we need to do so. Bruce suggests that Brittany and Jenny meet with Becky P. to go over information and make a presentation for the board.

5. Approve September 2022 bills

Motion made by Jenny

Seconded by Brittany

To approve September 2022 bills "above the line" in the amount of \$4593.68 and "Below the line" in the amount of \$8424.54. (includes the YA furniture)

All ayes. Motion carried.

6. Other new business to add to the agenda for the next meeting

Election of officers needs to be added to October's agenda

7. Set date and time for next meeting

The next meeting will be held *Thursday October 27, 2022*, at 5:05 p.m., at the city council room. A zoom link will be provided if possible.

Adjournment:

Becky S. adjourned the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Markle