

Botetourt County Library Board of Trustees

Minutes May 10, 2023

Public Meeting -- 12:00 – Blue Ridge

Present: Steve Clinton, Julia Patterson, Mary Lynne Leffel, Chris Becke, Brandi Porter, Marlene Preston, Julie Phillips

Presenter: Lisa Varga, Virginia Library Association

Call to order: 12:00

Minutes: Previous minutes were approved electronically and posted on the Library website: <https://www.botetourtva.gov/AgendaCenter/Library-Board-of-Trustees-2>

Public comment period

- No registered speakers. Citizens requested to speak even though not registered according to policy. Board agreed to permit an exception to the policy for this meeting only, allowing one unregistered speaker to speak for three minutes. Future meetings must return to policy of 24 hours advance registration.
- Danny Goad – Mr. Goad stated that comments about “people wishing to ban books is not true,” but that he objected to “pornographic materials” in the children’s section of public libraries. Mr. Goad read an excerpt from *The Every Body Book*, stated that the pictures were “vulgar,” and asked the Board to “get rid of this smut.”

Branch Manager update – Jaime Duval

- Duval noted key changes in the library layout to promote a more homey, cozy feel and is hoping to add murals as well. Tutors come in daily during all open hours, so she is looking at ways to accommodate the needs.
- The Summer Learning Challenge starts on Friday, and the Launch Event will be held next Friday, May 19.
- Duval stated that the library is much-loved by the community and that patrons mention former Library Director Steve Vest regularly.

Recommendation to extend Fincastle Library evening hours – Julie Phillips

- Phillips noted the Board’s suggestion to consider extended library hours during the January work session, and the increased demand from the Fincastle community for evening meeting room use. Fincastle staffing levels can accommodate increasing hours to match the Blue Ridge branch (open until 8pm Monday-Thursday). County Administration has approved the change, pending Board input.
- All Board members approved the change to extend hours, effective May 30.

Director’s update – Phillips

- The library's first Staff Development Day was a success.
- The Summer Learning Challenge launches on Friday, May 12. Calendars are available at each branch and online with a list of events.
- Libraries will be closed for Memorial Day weekend (Saturday - Monday).
- The Friends of the Eagle Rock Library submitted an Incentive Fund request for new furnishings for the Eagle Rock Library. The application will be sent to Board members in advance of the June meeting.

Book challenges – Lisa Varga, Executive Director, Virginia Library Association

- The Virginia Library Association is a professional development and networking resource for all types of libraries in Virginia.
- The library profession follows a [Code of Ethics](#).
- The last 24 months have seen a marked increase in book challenges, particularly in schools. Most titles in question include or portray the experience of LGBTQIA+ or BIPOC individuals. (See [list of most challenged titles](#).)
- What is censorship?
 - Censorship occurs whenever materials are removed from a library or display or relocated based on a content or viewpoint.
 - Groups advocating for the removal of materials may suggest the criminalization of librarians, rating systems and labeling materials, or budget cuts; engage in personal attacks on librarians or teachers, social media tactics, and threats.
 - Silent censorship occurs when community rhetoric intimidates librarians into not putting certain materials on shelves.
 - Removing materials carries significant legal liability for libraries, as in the recent case in Llano County, TX.
- Collection development – Librarians are trained to select and weed (deselect) materials, such as removing and replacing outdated science books.
- Challenges to materials - healthy part of civil discourse and opportunity to have conversations. Mass challenges are not helpful for community discussion.
- Function of library professionals
 - Focus on all users and providing access to information
 - Ensure strong ROI and stewardship of tax dollars
 - Have specialized training in quality, relevance, trends, needs, preferences, etc.
- Rating systems such as MPAA are voluntary, tied to distribution, standardized, not enforceable, and enacted by organizations with large staff and budgets. Public libraries do not have these resources, and multiple rating systems lead to consumer confusion.
- Q&A
 - Libraries keep up with trends and update collections without any mandate.

- Equal access for all – Many people do not have discretionary funds to buy books of their own; more efficient to have a shared resource. Libraries have balanced collections, including books that some agree with and some don't.
- Mirrors, windows, and doors – people should be able to find books where they see themselves represented and see/step into someone else's life experience
- First Amendment and libraries – Freedom of speech is linked to freedom to read and access information.
- Q&A for visitors permitted by speaker invitation at this meeting:
 - ALA policy - ALA and ALA president do not guide VLA policy or any policies that impact libraries directly.
 - First Amendment boundaries – Any books published by legitimate publishers can be candidates for addition to library collections.
- Preston thanked Varga for her time and consultation with libraries across the state.

Adjourn 12:55pm

**Next Meeting –
June 14, 2023 at noon
Greenfield**