

Greater Clarks Hill Regional Library Board Meeting

September 13, 2022 • 11:02 am

In attendance:

Greater Clarks Hill Regional Library System Board

- Russell Wilder, Columbia County
- Marlena Bergeron, Columbia County
- Tripp Calloway, Columbia County
- Janet Wheatley, Columbia County
- Marianne Frye, Columbia County
- Rita Johnson, Warren County
- Lynn Crews, Burke County
- Bill Tinley, Burke County

Missing

- Nicky Smith, Lincoln County

Staff

- Mary Lin Maner, GCHRL Library Director
- Devin Morris, Regional Administrative Coordinator

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:02 am.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved unanimously and without comment.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the May meeting were approved unanimously and without comment.

New Business

Reconsideration of Materials- *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier (2012)

A decision was made on this book during the May meeting, but Priscilla Bence was unable to attend at that time so the board chose to allow her to speak during the September meeting. This is her statement:

“Last March I read a book called *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier and then I wrote up a review. I think the audience they wanted was middle school, so it has been put in the Youth section of the library, actually when I found it, it was up one shelf from the bottom. So it concerned me because I have an early reader grandson, he’s gonna go from Children to Youth and it makes no difference to him, he’s gonna read everything in Youth. So I’m concerned about the children in Youth having the interspersed books that are so extremely pro-alternative lifestyle. *Drama* is a fantastic example, the author even uses funny comics and art to get the point across that if you’re not considering being homosexual that you are the odd man out and you’re wrong. So I really recommend anybody who questions how sincere that

movement is to read Drama. So I am coming back here, because I missed the appointment in May because my husband was in the hospital, because I do want to request that it be put in another locations, that it be downstairs or someplace designated, I think books that are advocating so much for an alternative lifestyle from children and youth ought to be in a separate locations so that the parents are supervising and the kids aren't just able to go see this kind of literature on the upper floor.

The second reason I'm coming is to recommend a book that I put a request in for, I'm just about done reading so you can have it when I'm finished. It's really a balanced, there's a pro-gay theology and a pro-Christian theology back and forth throughout the whole book, so it's a really good read. Probably would fit easily with the "Good Book" or in the religious section down in your reference department. It's just really extremely balanced.

I will go ahead and pass this out, some thoughts that I had last night (Priscilla passed out copies of her typed up notes to the Board). The concerns that the community will bring, probably increasingly as time goes along, because there is a backlash I believe. Separating these books out I think would really reduce a lot of friction with the community, I think that you would see is actually a great increase library usage. I think people who have cards right now, a lot aren't even using the library because they are kind of disgusted with some of the things in the library that is kind of getting prevalent and so I think this would, the advantage to separating these books out, what it would reduce the concerns and challenges, the disadvantage being that you wouldn't get to see people like me as much. You wouldn't get to see all these wonderful people here. But it would increase the use. I think it would increase readership. And I think what you would be doing by doing something like that is also saying that the community opinions are even more important than the ALA (American Library Association) Rainbow Committee, which is sending you a list every year of the books that they recommend.

I understand from going on the link that they recommend about 120 a year. Well, do they give those to you free or do they give you some incentives? I don't know. But the community input is much more valuable, I think, than the Rainbow input. And I think what you have now is a tough decision because are you going to discriminate against the majority of the population, which is me and the other Christians and Hindus and Muslims, and say that we want this kind of ideology to our youngest members of society to influence them for their future lifestyle? Or do you want to back up and say, no, we want the civilization that we grew up in. We want a lasting civilization that God gave us. And that's a big decision for you to make, and you're going to offend somebody. Whatever decision you make, you will offend somebody. But I propose that you offend the minority and not the majority of us."

The Board stood by their decision that was made in May to keep the book in the Juvenile section as it is the appropriate age group for Middle School readers.

Mrs. Bence inquired as to what her next step to escalate the situation would be and she was told that she would have to take it before the Board of Commissioners for Columbia County.

Reconsideration of Materials- *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell (2005)

Laurie Key is here to present her reconsideration request for *And Tango Makes Three*, here is her statement:

“Thank you for the opportunity for allowing me to come and dialogue with you. My name is Laurie Key. Wife of wonderful husband, mother of two lovely daughters, ages three and one, and a weekly patron of the library. We come every, usually Tuesday. Lover of learning and a great proponent of reading. Former school teacher, public school teacher. The reason I'm here today is about four months ago, four or five months ago, my three year old grabbed the book from the fiction section of the children's library called *And Tango Makes Three*. I usually scan over, like you said, the cover, skim the pages, et cetera, to make sure it's appropriate book for her age and just what we want to bring in our household, my husband and I. But she grabbed it, it was on the lower shelf, it was actually displayed. Most books are placed outside of order like this, but it was one of the display shelves within her reach. I didn't realize the content of the book, we were trying to hurry. The baby was probably crying and I thought, oh, this is a picture book it's about animals. Just looked at it briefly said, okay, throw it in the stroller. We were in a hurry. So I just made an assumption it was okay. It wasn't until I got home that I was reading it, noticed it wasn't about a mama and a daddy penguin raising a baby, but a homosexual pair of Penguins that raised the chick after the zookeeper thought that they must be in love. Quote, the two penguins built a nest together, slept together, just like the other couples. The story continues that one day, Roy and Silo, the penguin couple saw that the other penguins could do something that they could not do, ie. Produce off screen. To help this couple, the zookeeper later placed an egg in their care to start a traditional family or a nontraditional family. The zookeeper decided to call the baby Tango because it takes to tango. This is a well-documented story, true story from the zoo in New York City.

My critique is about the very slight, suggestive language that's geared towards vulnerable children and its current placement here in the library. The pictures and presentations I said in my appeal are very attractive. If I were an author, I would want to contact that illustrator. It is my strong belief that parents have the authority to deem what they are comfortable with their children reading and presented with early on. However, because this book was placed, as it was, within my daughter's reach again, she's three years old. It was not currently labeled. I did not realize the content it was addressing. Little did I know, we just assembled upon one of the most controversial books of the children's section, the Children's Library. I'm sorry. The School Library Journal notes that since this book publication, the ALA has reported that *And Tango Makes Three* was the most frequently challenged book between 2006 and 2010. It was the second most frequently challenged book in 2009, and it was the fourth most banned book between 2000 and 2009. Between 2010 and 2019, it was the six most banned book. This is all over the US. So in my opinion, the Zookeeper was very presumptuous and definitely had some bias in his interpretation of animal behavior and then what he should do to help them to become fathers. Obviously, it takes two a mother and a father, as we know, to tango or to make offspring. And it can be confusing for a young child to understand what the origins of life are, as well as how to relate to others same sex or opposite sex.

Although it is not the norm, there are occurrences in the animal kingdom of homosexual behavior. Once children are exposed to examples in the animal kingdom, it will be more palatable for them to accept gender dysphasia, dysphoria, homosexual relationships, etc. in humans. As I take my children weekly to the Board Book section. We're talking the Board book geared towards zero to two or zero to three, the picture book section, easy readers, and the nonfiction section. It seems like more and more of these books are more prevalent. The more exposure to a topic, the more normative it will

become. In the Board Book section currently, there is a certain normalizing of nontraditional families and books such as *Love Makes a Family* by Sophie Beer, with two dads chasing away monsters under a child's bed, two moms kissing their children goodnight. The book *My Two Dads and Me* by Michael Juston. *The Family Book* by Todd Parr, *Bath the Cat* by Alice McGinny and *Families Can* by Dan Sachs. These all paint a very positive picture to young toddlers, younger than one of the goodness of anyone and everyone uniting as a family or in marriage.

It is no wonder why there isn't more fuss about books such as these, because of a book that's far more concerning to me is *I Am Jazz*. I don't know if any of you are familiar with this. It promotes transgender rules to elementary schools. Last night I came by the library. It was available on the shelf in the fiction section. The narrator says, I have a girl bodies. As, quote, I have a girl brain, but a boy body. This is called Transgender I was born this way. It's very explicitly modeling a desirable perspective on changing gender roles and identity. This book is geared towards ages four and plus, that's one year from where my daughter is. I'd like to ask the board members if they would be comfortable promoting this book for their four year old son, daughter, granddaughter to read. If not, something must change. I, for one and many of the parents in our community are not comfortable without our children having free access to these types of books. They are being promoted and highlighted in the new book section with books such as *Mama and Mommy and me in the Middle* by Nina Lapur and *I Love You because I Love You* by Moon C. Van.

I myself identify as a Christian. I believe that there is a Creator that made each of us, male or female. I believe that we all have gone against his good plan. We are made to know the one who made us, but we cannot because of our rebellion towards his design. All of us have rebelled against Him. He offered the solution of himself paying the price for this rebellion by giving his own son Jesus. By faith and his gracious offer, we can have a restored relationship with them and his creation. I am on here to create drama for the board and the library. I am a taxpayer, a concerned patron, and a citizen of Columbia County, just like anyone else. I want my children to be able to be active participants. I'm not one that wants to say, I'll just do the curbside pick-up. We have enjoyed story time a lot. I mean, we come here multiple times. My kids love it. I'm a (former) schoolteacher. I want them to be involved. We're considering home schooling. I don't really want to say, okay, let's shelter them from everything. I want them to be involved and in the future we will be reading this book. We will be learning this perspective and talking about it, but not at one and three years old.

I want my children to be able to be active participants and patrons of this library. However, because of concern stated, it is not a safe place for them to come and freely browse and read books just like any other child in the children's section. Can't we just let kids be kids and shelter them from issues that we are still grappling with ourselves and our society. There is a certain agenda that is trying to influence the minds of my preschool children, and I feel the library is favoring the majority. Like Crystal has said of the parents and families in this I'm sorry, they're favoring the minority of the parents and families in this community.

Yes. I am going to censor, like you say, I'm going to browse. I'm going to look, I'm a parent that's going to be involved. However, are these other parents that are wanting the books interspersed? Are they given the same instructions I'm given? I have friends that are homosexual. I have friends that are transgender. However, if we want to take a none bias, something has to change. We've got to continue

this discussion. We can't just say, I'm sorry, that's not valid. Next, my solution is to relocate these books, that's one solution. I'm open to discussing other solutions, but I'm not happy where it is now.

So here's my solution. There is a 300 section where books addressing issues such as diverse families, adoption, divorce, remarriage are contained in the nonfiction section that would be out of reach currently of young children. I'm about five, and its high level, so a child would probably have to be late elementary school to be able to reach the section. Although I'm still not in agreement with kids at any age having access, it is a possible solution for younger kids. Books with similar titles in this section include *Who is in My Family* by Robbie Harris, *The Great Big Book of Families* and *Welcome to the Family* by Mary Hoffman. And it also contained there *It Feels Good to Be Yourself*, a book about gender identity, which is teaching children what these terms mean, what is binary, what is homosexual. All of these terms, they're teaching children exactly what that means. So it is a very interesting read and informative.

In summary, I'm not asking for just this one book *And Tango Makes Three* to be reshelved, but all that have been listed in my presentation as well, and I can only have one copy, but I could provide that to the board as well as those written in my appeal earlier, which included *Prince and me*, *I am Jazz*. *Who are you? She, He Me*. *Free to Be* and *when Kayla was Kyle*. And I understand that it's a difficult situation because in the Pines Library, it's not just what's in our physical library. We can order books, I guess, throughout the whole state of Georgia. However, if a book were to be ordered say from Atlanta, it would be kept, is what I understand, the circulation desk for that person to pick up. It wouldn't be reshelved. What I'm concerned with right now is just our library, what is here circulating on a regular basis. And just to note, these books are highlighted, if you're looking specifically for homosexual books that contain sexual content or anything like that, you can look for that online. And they have those tags online, but they do not have those tags, any labeling here in the physical library, is that correct? I don't want to miss it.

Finally, to provide an alternative book in the religion section, I didn't know about this book. I would submit to you *A Child's First Book about Marriage* by Jamie Ortland. To add to the children's collection, most Christian authors writing picture books, they will be categorized in the religious section. I'm just asking for the same balance in the way that we are categorizing books regarding LGBT issues as well. I want equal access to the library. That's what I'm submitting. And asking you as a board, how can we do this? How can we continue the discussion and not just shut it down? Let's be open to how we can make everyone in the community have this equal access. If I continue on too much longer, I make myself write a book about these issues. In all seriousness, I submit to you my great concern and hope for you to consider how we might make this right and a safe place for my children and many in my surrounding emissions."

The board asked questions and due to time constraints will have a discussion and make a decision via email on the Mrs. Key's request.

Another attendee who did not provide their name made a comment about the Reconsideration of Materials process, here is her statement referencing confusion from the Board of Commissioners:

"I'm not on that thing here, but you mentioned the Board of Commissioners twice now. I have contacted them on library books for weeks, and I've sent many letters, and they have said to come

here. So I don't know what's going on with the communication, but you've mentioned that twice now, and I have spoken with my county commissioner, and she has said you come here. Well, I'm very confused on it seems like and I may be wrong, but it just seems like we're playing dodgeball. Do you understand what I'm saying is, okay, we're here. No, you have to go to the county commissioner. County commissioner saying, oh, no, you have to come here to the library, which is the right avenue, so your time is not wasted, nor is our time wasted for our children's benefit, because personally, I would not want and I'm like Laurie here, I looked at all the books that my son read, because that's what real parents do. They give books appropriate, better age appropriate to their children. But like you said, when they're intermixed, like picture book, like that, and I've seen them, I have pictures of them where they're highlighted, and that's inappropriate. But that's my main question here today. Who are we to talk to?"

Mary Lin explained to her that all reconsideration requests start with her and informed the attendee that no one from the commissioner's office had let her know of any book complaints that they had received. Mary Lin provided her contact information to the attendee so that she could contact her, should she wish to proceed with a reconsideration request.

Mrs. Bence asked about the number of reconsideration of material requests regarding books with similar LGBTQ+ topics have been submitted. Mary Lin informed her that aside from her request there have been no other requests about this topic. She also stated that in the last three years there had only been one other reconsideration request and that had been for an adult book.

Katie Allen was then permitted to make a question/comment/statement:

"I have a question. I was told to make five minutes comments if I could take the five minutes, because it is very relevant and maybe, like you said, some food for thought on all this. This is my book challenge it's just a comment. I was in library, by the way. My name is Katie Allen. Thank you so much for letting me speak. I was in the library not long ago. My daughter brought to me the children's book. *I'm Not a Girl* by Maddox Lion. It was on display and caught her attention. That same library trip, I saw two other books on display in the team section promoting similar ideologies. I asked librarian why these books were prominently on display, and her answer was that the main library makes that decision and they have to follow it or they could lose their jobs.

So this concerns me, and she's speaking candidly, particularly because libraries claim to be servants of free expression. However, we are seeing a national trend that our public libraries, just like our schools, are becoming places of forced ideologies instead. So back to the book. I want to make the point that it is harmful to introduce these concepts to children. The sources I'm referring to are the publication *Navigating the Transgender Landscape*, which is provided by Child and Parental Rights campaign. It's available through their website, other sources, or news publications, and the expert opinion of Bernadette Royals, a Harvard educated lawyer who specializes in child safety matters, specifically of a psychological nature. So when I say facts, those are the sources that I'm referring to.

So studies claiming that transitioning children leads to better mental health are either very short term or paid for by the entity to financially benefit from the treatment. And that makes sense. You put a child through treatment, they're not happy. They get what they want. Of course they're going to be

happy right afterwards. So it's a short term thing. However, long term studies actually show that there's either no benefit from transitioning and a lot of them show that there is a significantly increased occurrence of depression and or suicide. The narrative that transitioning prevents suicide is not credible fact. Children suffering from gender dysphoria often have coexistent psychological concerns such as depression, sexual trauma, anxiety, autism, and others that are not addressed through transitioning.

If you've ever watched the *Soft, White Underbelly* series that goes deep diving into homelessness, you will see a very clear connection of transgender lifestyle and prior sexual assault incidences that are undealt with. Fact, Puberty blockers cause bone loss, early mental causal symptoms, and reproductive harm that is often irreparable. Fact, Nearly 10 families are currently suing the Talbot Gender Clinic in London. Have you all heard about that or read that in the news? One of the most prominent gender clinics in London is being sued right now and I think potentially closing down because of the lawsuits. Because these parents were told that two reblockers are safe and effective and it turns out they are not. So to say that they are safe and effective is another.

As providing tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs. As a taxpayer, the books in the library need to represent community values. The proportion of these books need to represent the proportion of the community expressing a desire for these books. I would be curious to see the formula that was used to determine why so many of these books seem to have emerged in such a short amount of time. I understand that many of you might believe the narrative because it is so prevalent that if you don't transition a child, they're going to be depressing and commit suicide. Is it sad that's the narrative that's being pushed. But actually, if you look at the other side of the facts, that is not true when you look at those long term studies and the sad thing is that it weaponizes a genuine concern for children and it uses it to generate an exorbitant amount of corporate profit. If adults can be convinced that sterilizing children is good for their mental health, and the possibilities are limitless as to what else could be sold to parents desperate to try anything to make children happy in the moment, regardless of the long term consequences, I'll end it with a risk results analysis, if you will.

If you choose my set of facts that encouraging children to live transgender lifestyle, the potential result, if I'm wrong, is that the concepts are not introduced to children and that the vast majority of them will outgrow their gender dysphoria without the need for medical intervention. Additionally, they may even be more likely to address the underlying causes of their dysphoria, such as depression or sexual assault. If you choose the marketed set of facts and continue to expose children to these concepts, we're running the potential results that these children will follow through with the hormone treatment and surgery and will likely to continue to have depression suicidal ideation. So we need to choose our risk wisely. I urge you to look into both sides and start doing this as a medical issue.

I can tell you from my previous prelaw studies right now that this is not a censorship issue. There are a variety of things that we censor from children that have to do with health and safety.

You'll notice you cannot advertise tracking products on TV, right? That's not censorship. That's a health and safety issue. You'll notice that certain things are not allowed to be in a work environment because of sexual harassment laws. That's not censorship. That's a health and safety issue. So if we start looking at the transgender issue as a health and safety issue, I think that is not censorship. That is doing what is our duty as adults in this community of looking beyond the marketing and the narrative and putting those books in a section where parents have to actively seek them out who are interested for the health and safety of their children.

And then finally, I want to address the American Library Association. It is a partisan organization. It is not a government organization. They do not pay for our books. From my understanding, they don't pay for your salaries. Citizens do. So are we slaves to the American Library Association. Because if we are, that is a bigger issue, because if you research their website, their view quite literally is that if you do not expose a child to some sort of material for any reason, that you are censoring them and violating their rights. That is assine. That is asking who we're filing with our school library, then we need to rethink that, because that's wrong, that's unsafe. And so please, I ask you, if you are not legally required to follow the American Library Association, that you behold and that you step away from that organization and please do not use our tax money to support them. Anyway.

An attendee asked if we receive and federal money, Mary Lin explained that we receive grants from the federal government through the state for technology and e-books.

Russell had to stop all questions after that point to wrap up to meeting as it had gone over time and was causing the next meeting to start extremely behind schedule.

The board members had a brief discussion, but decided to move the email to make their decisions so that the meeting could end and the next one could begin.

Due to time constraints the meeting was unable to finish as planned.

Treasurer Report

GCHRL Director's Report

Report of Committees

New Business

Unfinished Business

Next meeting: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 at 11:00 am at the Columbia County Library.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.