

NORTH SHELBY LIBRARY DISTRICT, A PUBLIC CORPORATION
October 19, 2023 Minutes

STATE OF ALABAMA
COUNTY OF SHELBY

The Board of Trustees of the North Shelby Library District, a public corporation, at the library October 19, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. Having confirmed that notice for the meeting was posted in advance at North Shelby Library 5521 Cahaba Valley Rd., Birmingham, AL and that a quorum of three Trustees was present, the meeting was called to order by Kay Kelley.

PRESENT
Morgan Barnes
Kay Kelley
Ann Price
Beth Ronilo
Tim Ryan

Kate Etheredge, Director of Library Services and Tina Bailey, Business Manager

Guests: see attached

BUSINESS CONDUCTED

MOTION: Tim Ryan-Accept agenda as amended

SECOND: Ann Price

VOTE ON MOTION: Unanimous

MOTION: Beth Ronilo- Approve minutes

SECOND: Morgan Barnes

VOTE ON MOTION: Unanimous

MOTION: Beth Ronilo-approve termite bond with Cook's Pest Control

SECOND: Tim Ryan

VOTE ON MOTION: unanimous

MOTION: Tim Ryan- election of officers: Morgan Barnes- President, Ann Price- Vice President, Kay Kelley- Treasurer, Beth Ronilo- Secretary, Tim Ryan- Member at Large

SECOND: Ann Price

VOTE ON MOTION: unanimous

MOTION: Kay Kelley- request to adjust assessment bill- Parcel number 09307006024.000


SECOND:

VOTE ON MOTION: failed to get second


Next Meeting: December 7, 2023 at 4:00 PM

NORTH SHELBY LIBRARY DISTRICT, A PUBLIC CORPORATION
October 19, 2023 MINUTES

READ AND APPROVED:


Morgan Barnes


Kay Kelley


Ann Price

Tim Ryan


Beth Ronilo

GUESTS ATTENDING

Name	Name
NANCY EKBORG	Jennifer Herrin
Courtney Ealy	Josie Herrin
Donna Notland	Sadie Herrin
Judith Wright	Susan Goertz
Robert Hill	JOYE SHEKRIE
Sophie Henderson	LEE M. SKERRILL
Jenny Camp	Elizabeth Anderson
Renee Linderman	Phaedra Galloway
Jamie Brucher	Will Blaney
Betty W. O'Neal	Paul Garbis
Allan M. O'Neal	Linda Bargar
Elizabeth Camp	Allison Sinclair
Lauren Reece	Shelia Pavlovic
Cheryl Holt	JONAS ANDERSON
Alison Beatty Wilk	Ray Camp
Chuck Holt	Mollie McFarland
Cheryl Landreth	Will Sims
Jo Anne Coggins	Lizzie Sims
Sarah Jumper	
Marlyn Day	
Gordon Day	
Kelly Coyt	

Received
10/19/23

Today, I stand before you as a concerned mother and foster parent, advocating against the recent calls for censorship of books with LGBTQ themes in the children's department of this library.

As parents, it is our responsibility to nurture and guide our children towards becoming compassionate, tolerant, and accepting individuals. We cannot achieve this by sheltering them from diverse ideas and perspectives. It is also our responsibility to make sure they feel valued, worthy, and good about being who they are.

When my 5 year-old foster daughter told me she wished her beautiful brown skin looked like mine, I relied on books like these [*hold up books from home*] to make sure she had regular exposure to stories of beautiful, powerful, intelligent, and capable black women. If we ever have an LGBTQ foster child, I will no doubt be coming to this library to look for books with LGBTQ characters to help nurture their sense of belonging and self love.

These books give LGBTQ children the opportunity to see themselves represented in literature. Imagine the impact of finding a character who shares your experiences and struggles, who validates your feelings and shows you that you are not alone. By keeping these books in our libraries, we are ensuring that every child, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, has the chance to feel seen, heard, and valued. These books may even offer them a lifeline, telling them potentially for the first time that their experiences and feelings are valid, that they deserve to be represented and understood.

It's important to note that books with LGBTQ themes aren't just for LGBTQ children, they are also a gateway to understanding, empathy, and knowledge for their peers. They allow our children to explore identities, and experiences, fostering an open-mindedness that is essential in our increasingly diverse world. By censoring these books, we are sending a message that LGBTQ identities and love stories are somehow wrong or inappropriate and risk perpetuating harmful prejudices that lead to discrimination and exclusion.

Censorship does not protect our children; it limits their potential to grow into compassionate, well-rounded individuals. Instead, let us encourage open dialogue with our children. Let us guide them through these books, answering their questions, and fostering understanding. Let us teach them the values of empathy, kindness, and respect.

Thank you.

Sophie Henderson

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

Received
10/19/23

NAME Elizabeth Camp

DISTRICT RESIDENT ? Yes



Address:



ive

Please send me a personal response. Email: _____

I would just like to say that I am a local resident, someone who grew up here, not some kind of activist from outside the district, and I fully support and applaud the decision to keep children's books with LG BTQ + ~~area~~ and other "controversial" themes in the children's section where they belong. The calls for censorship do not represent me or my community.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

received
10/19/23

NAME Renee Linderman

DISTRICT RESIDENT ? Yes



Address:



, 35242

Please send me a personal response. Email: _____

I am attending tonight because I love this library and I am against any form of censorship. The library was a special place when my two children were small. We loved to visit Ms. Kristie and Mr. Mac. When we homeschooled, we checked out stacks of books each week. The library should be for ALL people and all children and we should all be able to see and check out books that represent us, regardless of race, sexual orientation or gender. Please protect ~~our~~ the freedom of our library.

Renee Linderman

NS Director

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, October 19, 2023 1:22 PM
To: NS Director
Subject: October Board Meeting Statement

Received
10/19/23

[You don't often get email from [REDACTED] important at
<https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

The North Shelby Library is my family's library. There are several books that I personally disagree with at this library, so I accompany my children and we discuss those books. There are other patrons at this library that appreciate these books. It would be infringing on the right of these other patrons to bully the library staff into the removal of these books when its clearly my responsibility to determine what is appropriate for my own children. It is equally not appropriate for these other patrons to infringe upon my right by censoring my family's access to whatever information that I deem appropriate for my own children. I guarantee that they would genuinely be quite displeased if I was trying to tell them how to raise their kids or what information that they were allowed to access.

Sincerely
Jennifer Herrin

Sent from my iPhone

NS Director

received
10/17/23

From: Jessica Bartran <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2023 1:37 PM
To: NS Director
Subject: Written statement for board meeting

Hello, I am unable to attend the board meeting this Thursday but I would like to address the board via written statement:

As someone who is currently raising two young children in this district and brings their children to this library, I would like to express my thanks to the board for protecting intellectual freedom. Although hiding certain books from children might not meet the dictionary definition of censorship, but regardless of whatever word we have decided to call it, the intent is still to limit exposure to information which makes it effectively the same.

I find it sad that people are conflating LGBTQ-friendly material with sexual or "adult" content. This indicates a deep misunderstanding of the LGBTQ community and while everyone is entitled to an opinion on this subject, that entitlement ends when it affects other people. I know it is my responsibility to limit my children's access to media that I do not agree with and I do not expect other people to do that for me. Again, thank you for your hard work and for helping to make this library a friendly and welcoming environment for all children.

-Jessie Bartran

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

received
10/19/23
resp. 10/24/23

NAME Cheryl Landreth

DISTRICT RESIDENT ? Yes



Address:

[REDACTED]

42

Please send me a personal response. Email: (

[REDACTED]

① ~~How~~ Has The Book Review Committee been put in place? Are they active yet? Is Kate over This committee? How will the committee function?

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

received
10/13/23
resp 10/24/23

NAME Susan Goertz

DISTRICT RESIDENT ? Yes



Address:

[Redacted Address]

242

Please send me a personal response. Email:

[Redacted Email] m

What is the annual cost for North Shelby Library & Mt. Laurel Library to be members of the American Library Association?

As a district resident, how am I benefitting from that membership (if at all)?

NS Director

Received
10/17/23

From: April Wallace <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2023 9:40 PM
To: NS Director
Subject: Thank you, NSL

You don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

Ms. Etheredge and North Shelby Library staff,

The community appreciates all the North Shelby Library does to include ALL in the library's collection, displays, and programming. I support the library and the library board's efforts to ensure open access to materials. Books hidden from view or children's books moved to the adult section are not the solution. I sincerely thank you all for what you do every day and please keep fighting the good fight.

Thanks,
April Wallace
Pelham, AL

Thursday, October 19, 2023



North Shelby Library Board
5521 Cahaba Valley Road
Birmingham, Alabama 35242

Dear Board Members,

I speak for citizens who use and love libraries and want to keep them free from political restrictions. Libraries have become community centers, enriching our communities and lives.

Our former President, Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "You are not going to conceal facts by concealing evidence that they existed. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book..."

Former President Ronald Reagan said, "There are no constraints on the human mind, no walls around the human spirit, no barriers to our success, except those we erect."

The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, says this about books:
No other form of communication commands the understanding, respect, attention and enduring engagement that books do in guiding the course of political, cultural and economic decisions and practices. Nor does any other form of expression rival books in their capacity to integrate often disparate communities of scholars and leaders, humanists, scientists, professionals in law, business, medicine, education and public policy. Books elevate ideas above the hyper-specialized pockets of inquiry to build bridges across communities of interest into public discussion which is reflected in the media where books serve as the platform of debate.

There is a revered book which formed our value system. It says that a man may sell his daughter, that a man may have two wives at the same time and that a man may kill anyone who works on the Sabbath. We might not agree with those concepts, yet we would never restrict anyone from reading that book.

And where do we find all these books that so educate us, but which we might not be able to afford? In our local, open, free LIBRARIES!

Children will learn about others who are different than they are in school, theatres, super markets, neighborhoods and daily living, whether or not they read about them.

Parents who want to deny their children exposure to books with which they disagree about the many kinds of children in this world, will be better off discussing those differences with their children than forbidding books.

Controlling the books a person can find in their public libraries is a way of trying to control others. Hitler's Nazi's didn't start with the gas ovens. They started controlling books people could read. Communist China controls its citizens by limiting what they see and read. The former U.S.S.R. decided what books people could read and today Russia's publishers self-restrict what they publish. Our anti-communist McCarthyism banned books in America in the 1950s.

One of our favorite writers, Sean of the South, found refuge in libraries. He learned to write by reading profusely and considered librarians his best friends.

Please continue to support your library's freedom to choose books for your patrons. You are a valuable resource and addition to this community.

Nancy Ekberg



35243

Former reporter in Chicago, IL, Cleveland OH and Michigan

Former director. Magic Moments, Alabama's wish org. for children who are life-threatened

Widow, mother of three sons and grandmother of 5

Dr. Jim Vickrey, Ph.D., J.D.

received
10/19/23

October 6, 2023

A NOTE TO THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN NORTH SHELBY COUNTY ...

I am writing you on the 147th anniversary of the founding of the American Library Association in Philadelphia. It is the oldest and largest such organization in the world, which, despite its being made a bogeyman in recent days, continues to be an outstanding bulwark against book-banning and a champion of access to our public libraries for ALL. It should be supported and forgiven when it slips up occasionally.

I am writing also as a former, long-time resident of Shelby County, who championed all of the libraries in our area in my time.

When I was President of the University of Montevallo (1977-1988), I supported the UM Library, to be sure, even suggesting in the late Seventies that we begin an annual Banned Book exhibit. It continues. There was less active campaigning by a few then to attack specific books in the public libraries of the county, but I knew there would be ones in the future on a near-regular basis. Such campaigns are like sine waves in our history: They come and they go on a predictable basis and are most notable when people are upset about this and that trend in our society. When I was a boy in the Fifties in Montgomery, it was books about race and sex; in the Sixties, when I was studying at Auburn and Alabama, it was materials about civil rights, communism, religion (remember "God is dead"?), and socialism; later, it was books about homosexuality; still later, materials about "Black history"; and now it's anything "woke," a word without serious meaning, even to those who use the term indiscriminately, such as Florida Governor Ron DeSantis (read his book; he uses "woke" like Alabama legislators use "liberal"). Sadly, even my old friend, our Governor has used it.

At UM, I also went out of my way to support public libraries throughout Shelby County, speaking at a dedication at one of them, as I did at the dedication of the new library at Auburn when I was SGA president there in 1963. The Alabama Library Association has twice honored me with an award for my First Amendment efforts on behalf of public libraries in our state. I revere libraries. That is why I chaired the body that recommended to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education the nation's first Network of Alabama Academic Libraries and then served as chairman of its board. It connects electronically every library in every senior college in Alabama, including all of the public universities, as well as all of the private ones desiring to join. It is now in its fourth decade.

I support libraries and I love being in them. I have since 1953 when I ran across a book about a Nobel Prize-winning, Black American diplomat in a library in the capital city. I told the Alabama Public Library Service Board about that when I addressed them last month. I've enclosed the three-minute speech I made to them. When I read that racial attitude-changing book 70 years ago, it would have been considered shocking by some Alabamians. No one thought to ban it back then.

I do not support, no matter how well intended, any efforts likely to hinder the free and unhindered access of all Shelby Countians and all Alabamians to the resources of our public libraries. I say that even though I myself would not expose myself or my sons to every book in them. That is the American way: I make those judgments myself, and I will fight (rhetorically) efforts to make them for me and my kin. No public library has ever forced any of us to read any materials we don't want to be exposed to.

As the father of two, now grown, sons, one reared in Shelby County, the other born in Montevallo less than a year before we moved back home in Montgomery in July, 1988, I understand the purported concerns of parents about library books to which they don't want THEIR children to have access. I understand, but I don't appreciate their efforts to deny my family, including my seven year-old grandson, and OTHER families access to books they may want to read. There have always been such concerns and censorious campaigns to ban, hide, label, or move books. I remember when To Kill a Mockingbird was on the list of bad books; it still is in some quarters, as we'll see when the APLSB list of unliked books is compiled. It will become a new Banned Book List.

Public libraries are **public** resources. They are not resources merely for children – and they definitely do not provide public baby-sitting services. ALL of us are their patrons. ALL of us pay for them, not just the parents of young, impressionable children, who, if overprotected, will remain so. Those so outraged by a few books in them are free to start their own libraries, just as so many parents started their own schools to avoid racial integration in the public schools. Every underaged child visiting a public library also has access to a library in his or her school.

Let me put it this way. Bookstores such as Books-A-Million and Barnes and Noble are open to all comers. Books in them are not banned or hidden or moved merely because a parent fears a child might encounter an age-inappropriate book. It's the parent's job to supervise his/her child, not the store personnel. Most people recognize that fact. That same approach should apply to public libraries. Note: I'm not here including public school libraries, which have different missions, and are hardly immune from book banning. However, they, too should be run by professional librarians.

We live in an odd time in the history of our country. Many fearful people want to stop a number of trends they don't like – from realistic literature and transgender medical services, nasty politics, and a proxy war with the Russians, to controversial speakers, voter registration for all, legalized marihuana, and more. I don't like some of them. But, that does not justify changing the way we govern ourselves. People decades ago felt just as strongly about women's suffrage,

civil rights, birth control, and more. Many of them have come to change their views. So, it will be in the years ahead about today's effort to restrict public libraries and/or to turn them into nanny-providing services because some parents cannot or will not supervise their own children.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you.

Dr. Jim Vickrey
Retired educator and grandfather

P.S. Please note that, if you should cast local librarians *in loco parentis*, an approach public colleges and universities had to give up decades ago, you will be doing a disservice to them, which will inevitably result in their having to segregate disfavored books so that they can keep up with the books and those they have been assigned to parent. Otherwise, how can they play the inappropriate role assigned to them.



Hoover, AL 35226

October 17, 2023

North Shelby Library Board
5521 Cahaba Valley Road
Birmingham, AL 35242

received
10/19/23

Dear Board Members:

I am writing in support of the Library Board's courageous defense of our First Amendment rights, and in opposition to the efforts of organizations and individuals who seek to ban books from public libraries in Alabama. As a retired language arts teacher and current dyslexia tutor (Certified Academic Language Therapist), I have spent more than 40 years teaching students how to read and write, and teachers how to teach the language arts. I therefore think I am well qualified to address this issue.

Efforts to ban books are not new; they have had a long history worldwide. The first book burning took place in China in 213 BC -- unauthorized history books were the target. Since the invention and commercial use of the printing press in 1454, the Bible has become one of the most censored texts in history. In the 1950s, some parents were convinced that comic books were causing juvenile delinquency! And history reveals that many of the most cruel and undemocratic regimes attacked the right to freedom of the press. Black Beauty, a story narrated by a horse, was banned in South Africa during the Apartheid era.

In my opinion, the latest cadre of book-banners are wolves in sheep's clothing. Let me explain. These groups have objected to a Dr. Suess book because it promotes taking care of the environment, although the Bible does the same in Genesis 2:15: "Humans are commanded to care for God's creation." Judy Blume's book, Are You There God, It's Me Margaret has been excised from some libraries' collections because it talks frankly about menstruation.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, a book that was published over 45 years ago, focuses on a black family living in Mississippi during the Depression. The children in the family do not understand why they are treated differently from their white peers. This book has been banned because of its "harsh depictions of racism and its use of racial slurs." Should authors like Mildred Taylor, who has crafted a very accessible, moving piece of historical fiction, extol the virtues of racism and/or ignore this chapter in American history? Shouldn't we strive to learn from the mistakes of the past, not bury them?

We are all aware of the phrase, "it's a slippery slope" to describe a dangerous course of action. The proponents of banning books claim that they seek to protect children from "sexually explicit content." One national group, with an Alabama chapter, claims that a primary part of its mission is the removal of "pornographic, obscene, and indecent" books from public libraries so that minors aren't exposed to them. That sounds perfectly reasonable, but are the children's classics mentioned above and dozens of others pornographic, obscene, or indecent? Of course not.

Up until now, the United States has stood firm against censorship and book banning because, unlike many nations, we've had the protection of the First Amendment. The framers saw the need to protect our speech and writing from **government** censorship. In contrast, every parent has the right and the duty to censor or monitor their children's access to speech, images, and text that are pornographic, obscene, or indecent. But these book banning groups overreach – they seek to block access to every book that they find offensive. These groups want to impose their world view and political agenda on others in the name of "protecting the children."

As a lifelong reader and educator, it pains me to know that librarians and library board members are under siege. These dedicated professionals should be receiving our heartfelt appreciation and vocal support for their tireless work to serve their communities and make them stronger. Public libraries already have a long-established process for screening and approving books. Let library staffs continue to follow these guidelines and get back to the business of serving the local citizenry. I, like many others, consider our public libraries to be one of the most valuable institutions in our state. I treasure them and the access they provide to readers of every age. I also thank you, the Board, for your service, especially during this time when our freedoms are threatened.

Sincerely,

Susan M. McCarthy, PhD, CALT