

Auburn Public Library Advisory Board

Minutes from March 19, 2024

The Auburn Public Library Advisory Board met at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, in the Conference Room of the Auburn Public Library. The following individuals were present:

Board Members

Bonnie MacEwan, Chair
Karen Herring, Vice Chair
Bernard Anderson
Marcia Boosinger
Dan Surry

COA Staff

Tyler W. Whitten, Library Director
Ashley Brown, Public Services Librarian Manager
Leslie Johnston, Collection Development Librarian
Cynthia Ledbetter, Engagement and Outreach Librarian
Brandon Rowland, Digital Services Librarian
Daisy Griffin, Library Assistant
Anna Daughtry, Library Intern
Keith Williams, Public Services Executive Director

Guests

Debra Biel
Paul Clark
Harriette Huggins
James Newton
Louisa Patterson
Martha Shamp

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair MacEwan at 10:01 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the February 20, 2024, meeting were distributed to Board members in advance of today's meeting. Boosinger moved to approve the minutes as written. Surry seconded. None opposed.

CITIZENS' COMMUNICATIONS

MacEwan reviewed the procedures for Citizens' Communications from the Library Board Bylaws and reminded the attendees that visual aids must be submitted prior to the meeting. Whitten reported no materials were received prior to the meeting. MacEwan also reminded attendees that this is the sole opportunity during the meeting for attendees to speak.

The following individuals spoke:

- Martha Shamp spoke about the American Library Association and Library collections.
- Louisa Patterson spoke about censorship and parental rights and thanked the library for being a safe and welcoming space for all of Auburn.
- Harriette Huggins spoke about free speech and censorship.
- Debra Biel spoke about the newly appointed Horseshoe Bend Regional Library Director, a former APL employee.
- James Newton thanked the Library for welcoming everyone and for the diversity of collections.

MacEwan closed Citizens' Communications.

Surry thanked the guests for their comments.

Herring also thanked guests and reminded everyone that the library policies are aligned with Auburn's Core Values and Mission Statement which embraces the diversity of the City. Furthermore, the library policies do not favor or discriminate against any business, citizen, or group of citizens for any reason.

Anderson asked Newton to elaborate on what he meant by referring to bullies, and Newton stated he referred to those who seek to impose their personal views on the entire community.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Ledbetter shared a thank you note she received from the Christian Women's Job Corps.
 - Boosinger inquired if those in the group were library cardholders, and Ledbetter stated that more than half are members, with new registrations occurring at each visit.
- Brown shared a variety of positive patron interactions from Public Services staff.
- Whitten shared a thank you note received from patron Jane Tripp, who included a donation to the APL Foundation.

NEW BUSINESS

- The following policies were slated for review this month; neither the staff nor the board had any changes to suggest; therefore, the policies stand as is.
 - Display of Notices and Exhibits
 - Gifts to the Library

SERVICES PRESENTATION

- Anna Daughtry shared about her experience as a Library Intern over the past semester. She especially enjoyed learning about all that goes into the process of acquiring books and organizing books on the shelves. She shared that she is most interested in the children's collection and has been impressed with the children's programs and how well-attended they are.
 - Boosinger asked Daughtry if she has been surprised by anything, and Daughtry stated that she has been surprised by the high attendance at puppet shows.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS, IMPACT STORIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVOCACY

- Public Services staff reported various impact stories received through patron interactions from recent weeks.
- An email to the City Council and Library Board was received from Susan Youngblood. In it, she praised the APL's diverse collections and shared that she did not want anyone censoring materials because as a parent, she can determine what her children read. Herring asked that this be included in the minutes since it did not arrive in time to be included in the packet. It is attached.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

- Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant Updates
 - Ledbetter provided an update on current grant projects.
 - For FY2024, the grant was used to outfit the mobile library van purchased by the City to perform outreach activities within Auburn. As part of this project, \$11,000 will go to purchase materials for the van's collection.
 - For FY2025, Ledbetter is applying for a collection development grant to expand materials for children. Ledbetter reported that while the cap for this type of grant is \$20,000, some recent awards have been capped at \$15,000 due to the number of applications received by the Alabama Public Library Service. At this level of funding, approximately 6-7% of children's print materials would come from the grant.
 - Ledbetter stated that Library Services and Technology Act grants come from a federal program through the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

February 2024 Statistics

- Rowland noted that some numbers were down, which is typical for February (also noting it is a shorter month which means less data); however, overall numbers are currently up 13% from this time last year.
- Anderson noted the higher circulation month over month and year over year for Boykin and expressed concern about the reduced number of active Boykin borrowers.
 - Staff reported that they are currently exploring additional programming and outreach ideas for Boykin to boost engagement, and Rowland mentioned the addition of a dedicated search terminal in the Boykin hallway that will allow users to more easily search library resources and place holds for pickup at the Boykin micro-library.

- Rowland highlighted the new elements in the statistical graphs: the 'All time High' (ATH) and 'Historical Yearly Record' (HYR) data are now included as suggested in the previous board meeting.
 - Surry appreciated the new lines Rowland added to the statistical charts.
- Ledbetter noted the surge in on-site programming attendance that accompanied the Third Grade Reading Dragons field trips to visit with author Beth Bacon at the Library.
- MacEwan asked Rowland about updates from the Boykin Subcommittee.
 - Rowland stated the group tailored advocacy talking points over the last month, and they are now waiting on updates about the construction timeline.

Mission Alignment Plan Updates

- Herring inquired about the expansion of the Juvenile and Young Adult collections to include books on history and world religions.
 - Johnston indicated that collections need more resources to cover these topics, as evidenced by patron requests for coverage of different experiences and to allow kids from a variety of backgrounds to see themselves represented in the collection.
 - Herring acknowledged that this project speaks to diversity and meeting those needs.
- Brown mentioned that a public use laminator is now available, with publicity to follow soon.
 - Herring mentioned the possibility of including this service in the notice emails.
- MacEwen expressed appreciation for the ongoing work toward a proposed Favorite Author's Club and will be excited to hear about the outcome of this exploration.
- The Board expressed appreciation for the continued progress toward defined goals.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other items of business, MacEwen moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:49 a.m. Surry seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted.

Karen Herring

To: Auburn City Public Library Advisory Board

From: Louisa Patterson, 751 N Cary Dr, Auburn, AL 36830

Subject: Books in the library

Date: March 19, 2024

The 1933 book burning under the leadership of Hitler serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving diverse perspectives and defending the right to free expression. Books written by Helen Keller were burned because she advocated for the rights of the disabled. In addressing these book burnings, Helen Keller wrote, "History has taught you nothing if you think you can kill ideas. Tyrants have tried to do that often before, and the ideas have risen up in their might and destroyed them. You can burn my books and the books of the best minds in Europe, but ideas in them have seeped through a million channels and will continue to quicken other minds."

I have raised 5 children and taught in 4 different states for 25 years. As soon as you tell a child or student, they cannot read something, they are going to rush home and do just that! There is much information available to our youth at the touch of their fingers on their phones or computers. You cannot stop the curiosity of children. If one thinks removing certain books from the library will "protect our children," you are sorely mistaken.

APL provides mechanisms for parents and guardians to monitor the material your children may check out. Parents and guardians **SHOULD** have a choice of what kind of books their children can read. This is **NOT** for any other individual to decide for them because they don't like or agree with something someone has written. Should we ban books on one religion because other religions disagree with them? Should we ban the Bible? Are we going to ban books that mention slavery because it makes some uncomfortable to confront the atrocities of their ancestors? What about books written by Black or Latino authors because some people don't like them? Where does it stop?

Silencing has kept society from talking about many issues, particularly issues that some find controversial or uncomfortable to discuss. While some people may find it hard to allow these controversial materials to continue to take up residency in their libraries, it is not up to them to decide how people should live their lives or what they should read.

Censorship is often viewed as a violation of the First Amendment and the right to free speech. Freedom of speech is particularly pertinent to libraries, as it “encompasses not only a right to express oneself, but also a right to access information.” Limiting which books I choose to read violates MY 1st Amendment right to Freedom of Speech.

Auburn city’s Core Values and Vision Statement includes “respect, integrity, fairness without regard for personal beliefs or opinions, while providing diverse cultural opportunities.” The mission to protect and embrace the diversity in Auburn should also continue to be a part of the Auburn City Library through the availability of diverse books.

The Auburn Public Library has been faithfully carrying out its mission to serve ALL of Auburn’s residents and promote literacy and education in a welcoming and safe environment. Our local public library continues to be one of the most family friendly, diverse, safe, and welcoming spaces in Auburn. Having books in the local public library that represent all citizens should be applauded, not criticized. We all deserve the same respect, representation, and services as any citizen of the city, and this includes books at the Auburn Public Library.

I applaud the Auburn Public Library Advisory Board and its employees who continue to keep our library free from censorship by a few.

We should all heed the prophetic observation by 19th century German writer Heinrich Heine, “where one burns books, one will soon burn people.”

Tyler Wade Whitten

From: Bonnie MacEwan <macewbj@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 17, 2024 5:18 PM
To: Susan Youngblood
Cc: COA Governing Body Email; Library Board
Subject: Re: Please fight against library censorship; my family LOVES APL's diverse collection

Dear Ms. Youngblood,

Thank you for your support of the Auburn Public Library. The staff works hard every day to make the services and collections of the library a point of pride for the entire community. I consider it an honor to support their work as a member of the Board.

Best,
Bonnie MacEwan,
Chair
Auburn Public Library Board

On Mar 2, 2024, at 4:07 PM, Susan Youngblood <susan.youngblood@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Auburn City Council and Auburn Public Library Board,

You are well aware that Alabama is currently considering a bill, originating in the Senate, that would make it easy to remove library board members (SB10).

The upshot of this bill is **censorship** because it limits the independence of library boards, making sure board members operate under a constant threat of removal. We don't need Alabama to be a **nanny state**, micromanaging what my kids can access and assuming I can't parent.

I love the Auburn Public Library's diverse collections!

I certainly don't want decisions on parenting to be dictated by people who are completely misinformed (like the person who spoke at our City Council meeting making the completely false claim that children can get AIDS from touching books).

I want my library—Auburn Public Library—to contain literature that offers me and my family options with diverse perspectives, and I want **my husband and I** to be the people who decide what our children read. Furthermore, I want families who don't have the money to buy their own books to have diverse options.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Susan Youngblood
Auburn, AL

