



JACKSON COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT (JCLD)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS WORK SESSION
Medford Branch Library
Board Meeting Room
205 S Central Ave, Medford, OR
July 29, 2024, 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Present at the meeting were: Board Members Viki Brown (President), Susan Kiefer (Vice President), Marta Tarantsey, and Marissa Barrientos Shepherd. Kevin Keating joined at 4:35.

Additional attendees: Kari May (Library Director), Kelda Vath (Assistant Director, Support Services), Joan Vigil (Assistant Director, Public Services), Brynn Fogerty (HR Manager), Ginny Auer (Foundation Executive Director), Heather Scott (Finance Manager), Ryan Bradley (Marketing Manager), and Val Nowak (Executive Assistant)

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

President Brown called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. Roll call was taken. Kevin Keating was absent. Marissa Shepherd joined virtually. The Land Acknowledgement was read.

DISCUSSION ITEMS (Inform/Discuss)

Ashland Pride Banner

Director Brown began by summarizing that the District Board is reviewing and reconsidering the decision made by Library Director Kari May to remove the Pride Banner from display in the Ashland Library. Director Brown clarified that the session was being held to inform the Board, and that no decisions would be made. Members would be reviewing the policies related to the issue and discussing any questions that they had.

She then asked Director May to give a brief history of the banner. May summarized that the banner was donated to the branch by the Ashland Friends of the Library and has hung in the Ashland Library stairwell since 2019. The banner was hung in an effort to create a safe and welcoming environment during a time when a local group was promoting harmful anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric. It has remained in place ever since.

May stated that over the past five years, the banner has drawn questions from consultants, and some have commented that it could be construed as the Library making a statement. In April, the Board received an email from a patron that was the motivation for determining whether the banner being on permanent display was in alignment with JCLS' Display and Exhibit and Gift Acceptance policies. It was felt that the banner did not meet the criteria of either, and the decision was made to remove the banner from permanent display at the end of June 2024.

Director Tarantsey thanked Director May for convening the work session and noted that there has been a significant amount of communication from the community as well as from library staff in support of the banner remaining on display. She noted that the banner may be a statement, but that it was a statement of welcoming and inclusivity. She called attention to the action steps described in the letter sent by the JCLS Queer Affinity Group and asked if the Board had ever voted on any request for reconsideration in the past. May responded that to her knowledge, no request for reconsideration decision made by the Library Director has been appealed to the Board.

Director Tarantsey acknowledged that while the banner display does fall under a grey area of displays and artwork with regard to policy, she indicated that she would support the banner being reinstated, as it is a symbol of inclusivity and welcoming to marginalized groups. She conceded that it could be perceived as making a statement, but that it falls under the stated values of the Library.

Brown summarized the email that had been received in April. The patron had indicated that she was a member of another marginalized group and felt that the display of the symbol of one group excluded other groups whose

symbols were not being displayed. Director Brown sought input from Ashland Branch Manager Kristin Anderson and responded to the patron, who did not pursue other action.

Director Tarantsey next brought up the other requests from the Affinity Group and asked the Board members for their responses. She suggested that instating a liaison role would address their request for improved communication. Director Kiefer stated that she is concerned that the library be safe and welcoming for everyone, especially marginalized and oppressed groups. She would like people to perceive the library as being safe without the library having to display supporting materials specific to their groups. She stated her preference to not display materials that might be associated with political implications. She commented that her willingness to remove the banner is not related to it being a matter of contention, but rather that she does not feel it fits the display parameters outlined in policy. She stated she would not be opposed to installing other art in line with the policies.

Director Keating joined the meeting at 4:35. Director Brown asked Director Shepherd if she had any comments or questions. Director Shepherd stated that she supports Director May's decision, and that the Library has to be careful of making a political statement. She commented that the Library has statements of welcoming and inclusivity at the entrances, and that it is the assumption that it is practiced. Director Keating stated that he also stands with Director May, and that he had nothing further to add at the time.

Director Brown stated that JCLS policy implies that displays are topical and temporary. She acknowledged that the banner being on prolonged display made the issue more delicate, but stated she also supports Director May's decision. With regard to the letter from the Queer Affinity Group, she noted she was in support of more EDI training for the Board, but that there are limitations between governance and operational duties of the Board and how they interact with Library Staff. Reacting to the letter's action items to satisfaction, therefore, would be difficult, but Brown noted that there will be a statement issued at the August Board meeting that will accompany the action taken by the Board.

Referring to the letter, Director Tarantsey brought up that there have been slurs directed towards LGBTQ staff, and that the banner indicates a more tangible sign of welcome than a printed sign. She asked if there a request for proposals is open for public art that would incorporate whatever welcoming message the banner had previously conveyed. Director May responded that the intention is to find a suitable replacement, and that that they are in the discussion phase of that project. While they have not yet issued a call for proposals, they have already received a submission.

With regard to the letter's action items, Director May said that issuing a statement reaffirming support of the LGBTQIA+ community is an important next step. She noted that there is a session available in the United for Libraries Conference on serving on a board during times of polarity for interested Board members, and that there would be further training made available. May acknowledged that conduits for communication between Library Administration and JCLS Affinity Groups were identified as being priorities during this process. May noted that she has met with the leadership from the JCLS Queer Affinity Group since receiving the letter.

After asking for further questions and comments and hearing none, Director Brown stated that she will work with Director May to create a statement in preparation for the board meeting on August 21. She noted that while a majority of Board members had indicated support for Director May's decision, the action, discussion, and vote would take place at the JCLD Board meeting on the 21 of August.

ADJOURN

President Brown adjourned the meeting at 5:02 p.m.

/s/ Val Nowak
Recording Secretary