

PUBLIC COMMENT

JUNE 16, 2023 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ST TAMMANY PARISH LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL

Please print all information. Please return to designated library staff member.
Please use one form for each agenda item you wish to comment on.

I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: _____
(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

FULL NAME: Mr. Michael (Mike) Sims

ADDRESS: [REDACTED] Sludell La

TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED] EMAIL: _____

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1 I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: _____

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FULL NAME: Thomas S. Abney

ADDRESS: [Redacted] Serden

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____ EMAIL: [Redacted]

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I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: 1
(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

ABUSE OF COMPLAINT & RECONSIDERATION SYSTEM

FULL NAME: CATHERINE (KITTY) CARMODY

ADDRESS: [REDACTED] SLIDON, LA 70458

TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED] EMAIL: [REDACTED]

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___ I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: _____
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FULL NAME: ROLAND GALLATIN

ADDRESS: ST TAMMANY PARISH

TELEPHONE NUMBER: — EMAIL: —

5:11 🌙

DURBIN



Bill McHugh



Bill McHugh



Jan 15, 2018 · 🌐

I believe Dick Durban.
Please share this post.
#shitholerepublicans
#shitholepresident
#dickdurban

10

1 share

Like

Comment

Share

Facebook browser interface showing a search for a specific user profile. The address bar contains the URL: facebook.com/photo?fbid=1530894476925106&set=a.1530894590258428. The search results show a profile for **Bill McHugh**, dated December 7, 2016. The interface includes navigation icons, a search bar, and a 'Share' button.





Bill McHugh

Add Friend

Message



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___ I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: _____
(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

FULL NAME: Tony Vespo

ADDRESS: [REDACTED] SLIDELL, LA 70459

TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED] EMAIL: [REDACTED]

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FULL NAME: Harry Monege

ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED] EMAIL:

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A

I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: _____

(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

FULL NAME: Greg Johnson

ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

TELEPHONE NUMBER [REDACTED] EMAIL: _____

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I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: 1. A
(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

FULL NAME:

Patricia White

ADDRESS:

[REDACTED] Slidell, LA 70460

TELEPHONE NUMBER

[REDACTED]

EMAIL:

[REDACTED]

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I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: _____

(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

FULL NAME: MILTON BEARD

ADDRESS: [REDACTED] Lacombe, LA

TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED] EMAIL: [REDACTED]

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___ I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: _____
(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

FULL NAME: JAMES R. PAYNE

ADDRESS:  70461

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____ EMAIL: _____

This information is a Public Record.

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Please print all information. Please return to designated library staff member.
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I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: BOOK REVIEWS
(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

FULL NAME: JERRY BINDER

ADDRESS: 

Slidell, LA

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 

EMAIL: 

PUBLIC COMMENT

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I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: _____
(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

Use of Reserve Room

FULL NAME: Mike Smith

ADDRESS: [REDACTED] Slidell, LA

TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED] EMAIL: _____

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I request to speak on the following topic/Agenda Item #: 1. A
(Your name will be called to approach the Board to speak.)

FULL NAME: Johanna Miner

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____ EMAIL: _____

This information is a Public Record.

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___ **I do not wish to speak** but would like my written comment below added to the public record of this meeting. (Your name will **not** be called to approach the Board to speak.)

Agenda Item #: _____

FULL NAME: Thomas T. Buwell

ADDRESS: [REDACTED] Slidell, LA

TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED] EMAIL: [REDACTED]

[External] Special meeting

Gmail <[REDACTED]>

Thu 6/15/2023 8:58 PM

To:meeting@stpl.us <meeting@stpl.us>;lboc <lboc@stpl.us>;Kelly LaRocca <kelly@stpl.us>

Good evening,

I was hoping to be able to attend the special meeting tomorrow, but I'm having issues with my A/C and have to wait for the repairman tomorrow morning.

I understand you are reviewing the policy regarding statements of concern.

In the April meeting I provided you with an idea on how to update the policy and I restated some of it at the last board meeting.

Here are a few things I would like to see in the updated policy to reduce abuse of the system:

1. Some penalties for over submitting claims. Similar to what I laid out previously.
2. Some way to make sure people have actually read the book and aren't just copying and pasting from the internet.
 - Teachers have tools that scan for AI generated essays.
 - Maybe have them answer a question about the book like who is the main character and what is the the plot
 - Random question from book. What's the first sentence from the 5th to last page.
3. Require them to respond once a decision is made, before it goes to a full board decision. If they still want the board to review require they show up. There could be some reasonable exceptions for not showing up but they need to provide excuses in advance or give the board some discretion on what is reasonable. If they refuse to respond or show up the original decision is upheld.
4. Keep books on the shelves until a decision is made.
5. One way to appease the accountability group is to build in a system where if a book is deemed to be pornography, to have a formal process to review the material acquisition process of that book. le who ordered it, was it a patron request, did anyone review the purchase.
6. An alternative system would be to have them show up to a meeting prior to staff reviewing at all. Make them stand up during a meeting and explain what concerns have. Then the board can make a decision if the claim is legitimate. If it's a real concern the regular process can start.

I have tried to see how other library systems deal with the statements and haven't found much more advanced than our current language. I don't know if the ALA or other professional organizations have guidance, but it would be good to find best practices.

Lastly and slightly off topic I do still have concerns on the graphic novels being behind the circulation desk is a violation of the first amendment. Some have suggested I file a lawsuit. I do not intend to do that at this time but I think it would be beneficial to have a constitutional lawyer review the policy and provide an opinion on the constitutionality of it. The cases I laid out are in this letter: <https://www.laclu.org/en/press-releases/aclu-louisiana-releases-open-letter-library-censorship>

Finally, thank you all for the work you and staff are doing on this. I really appreciate you working through this.

-Kevin Marino


[External] comments for 6/16/23 meeting

Barbara Hargrove <[REDACTED]>

Thu 6/15/2023 6:23 PM

To:lboc <lboc@stpl.us>

I sent this to this email address but it came back as undeliverable: meeting@stpl.us***So I am sending to this email address instead in hopes that it will be considered for this meeting.***

I am unable to make this meeting due to the time of day it is scheduled. However I would like to comment on the process by which library books are challenged.

At the last LBOC meeting a Statement of Concern by Connie Phillips listed page numbers that were wrong - she either didn't read the book or made several mistakes filling out the form. I propose that the rules be changed such that when there are errors on the Statements of Concern, the Statement would be rejected with a simple explanation that the form contains errors. If the form is received by the library in person or by mail, it would be rejected by mail. If received electronically, it would be rejected electronically.

Until a form with correct information is received the book would not be reviewed. And, importantly, it should not be the job of the librarians to make or explain the corrections. If someone has read the book and wants their Statement of Concern to be seriously considered then they should be able to take the time to fill out the form correctly.

Having library personnel looking over the form for errors would be the first step in the process. This would prevent a lot of time being wasted.

Thank you for your consideration,

Barbara Hargrove[REDACTED]
Abita Springs LA 70420

[External] Library meeting 6/16/23

kris robin <[REDACTED]>

Thu 6/15/2023 5:50 PM

To: Kelly LaRocca <kelly@stpl.us>

Kelly,

Thank you for all you do for the library. Those of us who love our library and librarians appreciate all of your hard work.

I am unable to attend the rules and regulations meeting tomorrow. I have 4 suggestions you may have already considered but here they are.

- 1) Require proof the book in question has been checked out of the library AND RETURNED in ST Tammany Parish by the person submitting the complaint.
- 2) Limit the number of books per Person per calendar year that can be contested without incurring a fee. Beyond that number there would be a fee involved to offset the cost to the library.
- 3) Only an individual who resides in our parish can challenge a book.
- 4) Only a single individual can submit a challenge, not an organization.

Thank you again,
K Robin

[External] SCOTUS

C. W. <[REDACTED]>

Thu 6/15/2023 5:27 PM

To:lboc <lboc@stpl.us>

Hi,

I'd like to know what case this finding my is based on.? I'm assuming it's not Board of Edu Island Trees Union Free School District vs Pico (1982) has this was narrowly applied to only school libraries.

There were no Supreme Court cases specifically addressing public libraries' ability to limit access to books based on pervasive vulgarity. However, the Supreme Court has recognized that public libraries have some discretion in determining the content of their collections. Libraries may establish reasonable policies to ensure that their collections are appropriate for their intended audience, which can include considerations such as age-appropriate material or community standards.

I am sincerely concerned about this policy. I would appreciate a quick response.

I also hope that you decide to place the challenges books back on the shelves as soon as possible.

Thank you,
Cynthia Weatherly

Section 409. Access to Library Materials by Minors

Effective Date: 12/13/2022

Revision Date: TK

The St. Tammany Parish Library does not, to its knowledge, have any materials in its collection that are "obscene" or "pornographic" by legal definition.

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) has determined that "public libraries must have broad discretion to decide what material to provide to their patrons."

Based on a review of case law by the St. Tammany Parish District Attorney's office,

1. Public libraries do not have the legal right or responsibility to act in the place of parents or legal guardians in deciding what material their minor children are permitted to read.
2. But public libraries may restrict access to materials by minors, as long as the motives for these restrictions are not unconstitutional.
3. On the basis of findings by SCOTUS, it is proper and constitutional to restrict minors' access to public library materials if they are "pervasively vulgar."
4. However, to remove or restrict access to books on the grounds of religious beliefs, politics, nationalism, or any other matters of opinion would constitute viewpoint discrimination and not be considered constitutional.

Therefore, it is the policy of the St. Tammany Parish Library Board of Control to restrict access by minors to individual books and materials that are found to be inappropriate, i.e. "pervasively vulgar" for minors.

Pending a determination that an item that is the subject of a Statement of Concern is "pervasively vulgar," according to the standard established by SCOTUS, access to the item will be restricted. These items will be available to all patrons 18 years or older and to those minors whose parents or legal guardians have given them permission.

Fwd: [External] Review process meeting

Becky <[REDACTED]>

Thu 6/15/2023 5:19 PM

To: lboc <lboc@stpl.us>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Becky** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Thu, Jun 15, 2023 at 3:41 PM

Subject: Review process meeting

To: <meeting@stpl.us>

Hi. I am unable to attend the meeting this Friday but would like to give input.

I have been attending the LBOC meetings since November. It seems as if certain people in our community have jumped onto the national bandwagon of attacking the library and certain books in the library. It appears complaints on books have been copied and pasted from other websites prompting book censorship. Book complaints reference a problem on say page 300 in a book with only 40 pages shows the book was not read. It is evident people complaining about books have not read them. There is no way to prevent these dishonest complaints. Perhaps 5 people need to ask for a review before it can be initiated. Perhaps the person making these complaints should have to attend the meeting when the book is discussed. If out of town I am sure they could be Zoomed in. It is quite apparent one person has abused the system with complaints on books she has not read and now taxpayer dollars are being wasted. People's time is being wasted. Library staff have been harassed. Parish council members harassed. Its a shame our community has had to endure this all for the agenda of a few. These books have been in the library for years and now all of a sudden they are a concern. This needs to stop.

Unfortunately I have no good advice to solve this but people need to be held accountable for lying when submitting a review. The library system is being abused. Perhaps the person should have legal action taken against them since apparently she has not read the books as evidenced by the referencing of a page number not in the book.

Thank you for listening.

Becky Bohm

Fwd: [External] Director's Report from LBOC 6/5/23 meeting

Lisa Rustemeyer <[REDACTED]>

Thu 6/15/2023 4:55 PM

To: lboc <lboc@stpl.us>

Thanks, Mary.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lisa Rustemeyer** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Thu, Jun 15, 2023 at 3:00 PM

Subject: Fwd: Director's Report from LBOC 6/5/23 meeting

To: <meeting@stpl.us>

Comments for the June 16th Special meeting:

Thank you very much for your attention to the matter of the abuse of our reconsideration process. No other parish has this many book challenges. Most we know of in Louisiana have two to twelve challenges. Ours is out of control.

It was very helpful to see the cost per challenge at the last LBOC meeting, noting it doesn't include the reading of the books that range from 32 to 700+ pages and if I'm reading it right, it also seems not to include:

- costs of postage, paper, any additional copies of the books past the first copy, and other supplies
- opportunity cost for other projects that may be delayed, such as the strategic plan
- time to answer Public Records Requests
- time spent by parish legal staff to evaluate claims in SOC's and other library needs related to this issue
- quantifiable volunteer time logged by LBOC members in excessively long meetings

So, the estimate is a very conservative one. There is also a human health cost to staff working overtime and being subjected to harassment. We don't want to lose good staff and have the cost of hiring for those losses. Our library staff are community members and are valued as such in addition to their competent public service to our parish.

For the 200+ books on our challenged list, the quantity, and method of production for most, constitute an abuse of our system. Those of us who have been following the attack on our library are exasperated with the behavior of the few entitled complainers who've submitted statements of

concern, who do not even read the books or, most likely, even visit the library, yet disproportionately impact library expenses, costing our system time and money meant for the majority of parish residents, not these disgruntled few. (About a dozen people total have submitted Statements of Concern). One of the worse effects is that books remain off the shelf for 40K visitors per month who may find them by perusing. And any patron can now, in 5-10 minutes, submit any title and the back up in the system alone will have it off the shelf instantly . . . **for years**. This is unacceptable. Please put the books back on the shelf until the challenge is heard. No child has been harmed by reading a book!

The STPL reconsideration process is in need of changes to meet the current environment of book banning viruses! It is wrong that a dozen complainants are going to cost the rest of us paying taxes \$85K+ (conservative estimate of complaints and cost: \$408*209) and that this process to return needed books to the shelf is on track to last three years, if there are no more SOC's submitted. One complainant alone is responsible for \$70K of this amount. It is far too easy to generate Statements of Concern using the copy and paste methods, not bothering to read the book and using the words of an outside group. Please take action to guard our amazing library system from this abuse.

Challenging our freedom of speech should be an intentional process that takes several days instead of a few minutes and a tip from a political website.

Here are a few ideas I've read about that may make sense:

- One of the proposed amendments to SB7 in the current Louisiana legislative session (on the governor's desk), required between 10-20 patrons objecting to the same material in order to trigger a review process. It should not include one complainant signing for a FB group. Individuals should be the complainants and each should submit a Statement of Concern.
- If SB7 is adopted, it would be reasonable for each of the patrons objecting to the material to complete their own original Statement of Concern. With more than one complainant, we'd likely not all prepare for, assume the cost of and spend the time reviewing a book at an LBOC meeting for which no complainant appears. That has happened at the last two meetings and is another way to abuse the current system.
- Limit who can submit a Statement of Concern to card carrying patrons who are residents; SB7 provides for this.
- Require a patron to come to the branch to collect an SOC form rather than have the SOC's so easily available online. Assign a staff member to chat with the complainant so that the complainant understands how libraries work with respect to material some patrons may not like.
- Require the complainant sign their name to the SOC as to whether they've read the book and the words on the complaint form are their own.

Thank you for your consideration and for protecting our amazing library system from political operatives with a goal of silencing voices and censoring books.

Lisa Rustemeyer
Covington 70433

[External] Comment on Agenda item for 6/16/2023 Special Meeting

Diane Casteel <[REDACTED]>

Thu 6/15/2023 4:43 PM

To:lboc <lboc@stpl.us>

Dear St. Tammany Parish Library Board of Control members,

The current process for submitting a Statement of Concern is being abused. Because all books for which these Statements are received are being removed from the stacks while awaiting review and voting, they are in essence removed from patrons' view and use.

More stringent steps are needed to be certain the person submitting a Statement of Concern is a card-carrying library patron and has a legitimate concern. In the past year it has been clear in a number of cases that the person submitting a Statement has not read the book in full, and such Statements should therefore not be eligible for the time-consuming and costly process involved in such a review and vote. In such cases the book should be returned to the shelves immediately. Additionally there should be a limit on the number of Statements of Concern any individual may submit within a year's time. I would suggest five items per year is plenty.

Thank you for your consideration of my suggestions.

I appreciate the work you do for our Library!

Sincerely,

Diane Casteel

Proud card-carrying library patron of Abita Springs

[External] Challenge policy

Barbara Mamoulides <[REDACTED]>

Thu 6/15/2023 4:02 PM

To:lboc <lboc@stpl.us>

Dear Board of Control Members,

Thank you for the time, effort, and leadership you give to our libraries. Your professionalism and wisdom is greatly appreciated.

I have spoken a few times at the monthly meetings about the challenged books, and I'm always of the opinion that books that are chosen for the library by the librarians should remain on the shelves in the sections deemed appropriate. The librarians know more about the books, the criteria that makes them appropriate for any age group, and their representation of the citizens than anyone else. They are the ones who see patrons come in and ask for help, and they see the power of new information.

The current challenge policy gives the power to restrict books to those who would control what everyone in the parish reads. I would like to see a change that would leave the books on the shelves during the challenge process. Leaving the books on the shelves where they are appropriately placed by the librarians during the challenge process allows the rest of the patrons to access the books as needed while the challenge is considered. Pulling the books immediately at the receipt of a challenge is an unnecessary limitation.

The process that we are seeing from challengers who copy and paste answers to the challenge questions is absurd. I review one or two of the challenged books almost every month, and it is clear to me that the challengers are not sincerely concerned about the books. They are making broad statements that reflect their desire to control, limit, and minimize the access of information that differs from their tightly held beliefs.

Public libraries have always provided materials with different views, opinions, writers, and subjects. The materials are there, and we have the option of reading them or leaving them. I do not want someone with limited education and life experiences determining what I read or what is provided for my children to read. We are not all from the same small bubble. The clients I see in my counseling practice are dealing with issues that some of the challengers don't even believe exist.

Our parish is diverse, and while that is alarming to some of the residents, it remains a fact.

Thank you. What you are doing to keep our libraries relevant is truly important work.

Gratefully,

Barbara Mamoulides MA, LPC

[REDACTED]
Mandeville 70448