

St. Tammany Parish Library
Board of Control Special Meeting
June 28, 2023
St. Tammany Parish Council Chambers
21490 Koop Dr.,
Mandeville, LA 70471
9:30 A.M.

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Rebecca (Becky) Taylor, President. Kelly LaRocca, Director, called the roll and declared that a quorum was present.

Present: Bill McHugh, Anthony Parr, Mary Reneau, Becky Taylor

Absent: Jake Airey, Carmen Butler, Ann Shaw

Emily Couvillon with the Civil Division of the District Attorney's Office was also present as legal counsel for the library.

B. Taylor explained the rules for public comment. A three-minute time limit is established for each member of the public wishing to speak (for or against) an item on the Agenda. In the case of a Statement of Concern (SOC) decision, the person who filed the SOC is given five minutes to speak. B. Taylor informed the Board that they may request a brief recess if needed, as a quorum of four board members is required to conduct the meeting and there are only four board members in attendance. Public comments were accepted by email (lboc@stpl.us) until 8:00 a.m. on the morning of the meeting.

1. NEW BUSINESS

A. Statement of Concern Decision - *Flamer*

There were four SOC's submitted for the book *Flamer* by Mike Curato by the following people: Connie Phillips, representing the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project, Rosalind Murr, Jacki Schneider, and Frances Smith. K. LaRocca read each SOC aloud.

The recommended action by C. Phillips is: "Restrict access to minors as outlined in statute above. Require parent to check out for minor. The book should be shelved in a section where minors do not have access. A separate place in the library. A room or some section where

minors do not have entry without parent and minors cannot check out.” Reason given: “Content violates the state obscenity statutes [sic]. 2021 Louisiana Laws, Revised Statutes, Title 14 - Criminal Law.” Cited excerpts from the book.

The recommended action by R. Murr is: “Remove it from any children’s sections, ask for ID to check out and not allowable for a minor to download.” Reason given: “This is breaking child.”

The recommended action by J. Schneider is: “This book is in violation of state Obscenity Laws. Content violates the state obscenity statutes [sic] 2021 Louisiana Laws, Revised Statutes, Title 14 Criminal Law. I suggest that a separate board be formed comprised of parents and teachers to review these books prior to purchase.” Reason given: “It promotes sexual activities and violence to our young people. It’s [sic] contents are pornographic.”

The recommended action by F. Smith is: “Take it out of the library.” Reason given: “This is not for children to read. 76, 132. I couldn't read it myself. It has no use in the public library and certainly cannot help our children prepare themselves for a happy normal life.”

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher’s summary, number of copies STPL owns (4), total circulation on all print copies (23), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Kirkus Reviews*, *The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*, *School Library Journal*, *Shelf Awareness*, *Booklist*, and *Hornbook Guide to Children*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. A total of 1,126 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is categorized as Young Adult Non-fiction and is shelved in the Adult Non-fiction section at STPL with 741.5973 Cur YA as the call number. The book includes a Young Adult (YA) sticker on the spine.

K. LaRocca reviewed the committee’s evaluations of the title which includes demographics of the committee members, the committee’s reports, and the committee’s recommendations.

Since C. Phillips and J. Schneider cite the Louisiana Criminal Law Revised Statute 14:91.11, the book was evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the statute. K. LaRocca stated that legal counsel has advised the Board that all four criteria in the R.S. 14:91.11 must be true to be a violation of the statute. The committee did not find a violation of the statute.

Summary of Committee Reports: The book does not primarily consist of or is devoted to the sexual acts described in Part A 2 of La R.S. 14:91.11. Sexual acts are implied but are not drawn explicitly. Self-harm is considered but not acted upon. The scene leads to the character’s self-realization. While pornography is mentioned, it is part of the backstory of the character to show the character’s mental state. The story describes a young man coming to terms with himself and his family. It deals with bullying, race, and religion. The book is intended for older teens. Young children would not understand the story or the emotional journey that the main character takes. Overall the committee thought the tone of the book was similar to a PG-13 rated movie or television show. The story is well told and has emotional impact. The book

illustrates complex emotions of teen boys and also the hypocrisy of teen boys. The creation of a separate board made up of parents and teachers is a policy that would have to be made by the Library Board of Control (LBOC) or even the Parish Council.

Options for the Board: This book was originally shelved in the Adult Non-fiction section with a YA label. It was moved behind the circulation desk due to the resolution to move all graphic novels that portray sexual conduct behind the circulation desk. The Board could choose to keep the book behind the circulation desk, move the book back to Adult Non-fiction with the YA sticker, move the book back to Adult Non-fiction without the YA sticker, or remove it from the library. K. LaRocca reminded the Board that the tiered card system treats this title as an Adult book.

Committee Recommendation: Book should remain in the collection and is appropriate in its current location in Adult Non-Fiction. Note: The resolution to move all graphic novels that portray sexual conduct as defined by the LBOC was made after the committee's meeting.

Public Comment:

Connie Phillips, Rosalind Murr, Jacki Schneider, and Frances Smith, the patrons who submitted the SOC's for *Flamer*, were offered five minutes for public comment. None were in attendance and none appeared for public comment.

Roland Gallatin – Spoke for five minutes in place of Connie Phillips. Stated that *Flamer* violates the Harmful to Minors statute and disagreed with the committee's evaluation of the criteria in the statute. Stated the book has no theme, portrays bullying and cross-dressing, insults Catholicism, Asians, gays, includes profanity, racism, uses derogatory language towards homosexuals, and contains suicidal ideations. Cited excerpts from the book. Stated he is outraged that his tax money has paid for the book, which he refers to as garbage. Stated the Director has violated the library's rules by purchasing the book because it does not serve a community need. Stated that the book should not have been purchased, but since it is in the collection, it should remain behind the circulation desk.

Gary Lacoste – Abita Springs, LA. Provided a handout of suggestions to the Board. Suggested having a copy of the books available for viewing at the Covington and Slidell Branches. Suggested posting the SOC's for the upcoming books to be reviewed on the website at least 30 days before the board meeting. Referred to the book *Flamer* as garbage. Agreed that it should not be in the YA section. Asked for clarification on what age groups are appropriate for the different categories of books. Asked for the meaning of terms such as minors, young adults, picture books, and graphic novels.

K. LaRocca explained that graphic novels are not connected to a particular age group and are called graphic novels because the book uses art to tell a story rather than full text. She

explained that *Flamer* was written for young adults up to 17 years old and was located in the Adult section before being moved behind the circulation desk. She explained that the term young adult refers to readers between 12-17 years old, juvenile books are for children 11 years old and under, and a minor is anyone under the age of 18. K. LaRocca stated that the library is currently working on creating a reference collection of the challenged materials for the public to view in the library. B. Taylor thanked G. Lacoste for the handout of suggestions and stated that the Rules and Regulations Committee will consider this, as they are currently reviewing the Statement of Concern policy.

Becky Bohm – Mandeville, LA. Stated *Flamer* does not violate the statute. Stated that the book mentions topics that are relevant to boys in the 14-17 age group, such as masturbation, bullying, and fitting in. Stated that profanity was used in the book to prove a point and to show how upsetting it was for the character. Stated the book should be placed back in the Adult section.

Erin Kennedy – Folsom, LA. Stated that *Flamer* is a graphic novel based on events in the author's life. She explained that the panels shared online as examples of obscenity are actually from hazing scenarios. Stated that the actions alluded to are not visually represented in the scenes and the intent is to make the protagonist and reader uncomfortable. Stated that graphic novels can tell powerful and compelling stories.

Lisa Rustemeyer – Covington, LA. Commented that the library budget divided by the number of residents in the Parish equals \$45 per person. Stated that there is no pornography or explicit sex in the book and it was shelved appropriately prior to restricting it behind the circulation desk. Stated that libraries should have stories that represent everyone.

Harry Morgan – Slidell, LA. Stated he is a Christian and that everyone will be accountable for this one day. Asked for the books to be put where children do not have access. Stated that children have no rights and it is up to parents to raise them until they are of proper age to make decisions. Stated he has a moral compass and prays that the Board does as well.

Laura Dinapolis – Covington, LA. Stated that *Flamer* is an adult graphic novel that is based on the author's personal experiences and has never been located in the children's section of the library. Stated that with the tiered card system, no minor can check it out without permission from their parent. Stated that literature is art and should not be restricted.

Mike Smith – Parish Council, District 9. Stated that he is speaking as an individual, is not representing a group involved in library discussions, and is not speaking for everyone on the Parish Council. Stated he has a responsibility to advocate for the best interests of all people in the Parish. Stated he took an oath to follow the laws of the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights. Suggested using a reserve room in the library, which he says is a practice in every major library he has visited. Stated the materials are accessible to the public by asking a librarian. Stated that he does not think having a reserve room is a violation of free speech.

B. McHugh asked M. Smith to clarify whether or not the items were in reserve rooms because of the subject matter. M. Smith confirmed that there was adult fiction such as *Catch-22* and *Catcher in the Rye* in the reserve rooms. B. McHugh asked which libraries have reserve rooms with those types of items. M. Smith listed the Memphis Main Library, Memphis University Library, LSU, and noted that the University of Virginia has a collection of slave narratives. M. Smith stated items are put in reserve rooms for a variety of reasons. B. McHugh commented that the reserve rooms that he has personally seen have housed historic or rare books and were not placed there based on the subject matter of the book itself.

There were two public comments from individuals who did not wish to speak. One in favor of restricting the book and one not in favor of restricting the book.

Discussion:

A. Parr stated that the book made him uncomfortable. Spoke of the poignancy of the overall message of the book. Explained that he once taught history at the Northlake Behavioral Health System (NBHS), previously Southeast Louisiana Hospital, and feels that this book could have been used to help deter self-injurious behavior of the at-risk population. Stated that the book has value and should remain in the adult section without the YA sticker.

M. Reneau agreed that the book has value. Stated that when her own three sons became adults, she learned about their experiences in summer camp and how they were impacted by those experiences. Stated that her sons are professionals and well-respected in their communities. Stated that the book should remain in the adult section without the YA sticker. Stated that children are going to do unacceptable and irresponsible things that their parents would not approve of when they are not supervised. To remove this book denies teens in similar situations the understanding that they are important, valued, not alone, and encourages them to take a stance.

B. McHugh stated the common theme of all four books being discussed at the meeting is acceptance. Stated that in *Flamer* the theme is self-acceptance. Acknowledged that there are a lot of gross things in the book, but recognized that teenage boys say and do a lot of gross things. Stated boys engage in immature behavior of all kinds, but it is part of the process of growing up. Stated he does not see any pornography in the book. Noted the end of the book where the figure appears to the main character, Aiden, and says the following quote: "Even if all of them were to forsake you, you are enough." B. McHugh stated that Aiden's self-realization that he is enough and is valuable is the theme of the book.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to return the book *Flamer* back to the Adult Non-fiction shelf location with the YA sticker to remain on the spine. It was seconded by A. Parr. Roll call vote:

Airey: Absent Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: No Shaw: Absent Taylor: Yes
Motion carried.

B. Statement of Concern Decision – *Frankie and Bug*

K. LaRocca presented the SOC for the book *Frankie and Bug* by Gayle Forman. The statement was submitted by Connie Phillips, representing the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project. K. LaRocca read the statement aloud.

The recommended action by C. Phillips is: "Move to request only section as this book violates the [sic] The Harmful to Minors Statute in particular R.S. 94:91:11 [sic] in particular section 3. 'The material is offensive to the average adult applying contemporary community standards with respect to what is suitable for minors.' Transgenderism is rare, sexual disorder with mature subject matter. Books of the nature should be shelved in a [sic] "Upon Request" section of the library." Reason given: "Mature subject matter that does not comport with the value systems of the citizens of St. Tammany Parish. There should be no effort to 'normalize' this [sic] confuse children about their sexuality."

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher's summary, number of copies STPL owns (3), total circulation on all print copies (3), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Publishers Weekly*, *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, and *School Library Journal*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. A total of 901 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Juvenile Fiction section at STPL with J Form as the call number. K. LaRocca noted that the book did not have a chance to circulate very much, as it was purchased in June 2022, available on the shelf in August 2022, and was challenged shortly thereafter.

K. LaRocca reviewed the committee's evaluation of the title which includes demographics of the committee members, the committee's report, and the committee's recommendation. The

title was previously challenged in September 2022 and was reviewed by a committee. That complainant wanted the book removed from the collection because they felt the book was “all about being gay.” The SOC committee at that time concluded that the book was appropriate for the intended audience and had value to the juvenile fiction collection.

Since the current complainant cites the Louisiana Criminal Law Revised Statute 14:91.11, the book was evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the statute. K. LaRocca stated that legal counsel has advised the Board that all four criteria in the R.S. 14:91.11 must be true to be a violation of the statute. The committee did not find a violation of the statute.

Summary of Committee Report: There was no sexual content in the book. The book is written for older children and strong readers. Young children will not find the book appealing. the committee recognizes that not all families would be comfortable with their preteen child reading about the content of the book. The book portrays the threat of racial violence and mentions a serial killer. The committee thought the book had great literary value as realistic and historical fiction. The subject of the book is not sexuality but a window into another time. The book holds lessons on empathy, fairness, and some challenges that other people go through.

Options for the Board: Return it to its original location in Juvenile Fiction, move it into the Teen section of the library, move it into the Adult Fiction section of the library, restrict it behind the circulation desk, or remove it from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book is appropriate in its current location in the Juvenile Fiction collection.

Public Comment:

Connie Phillips, the patron who submitted the Statement of Concern for *Frankie and Bug*, was offered five minutes for public comment. C. Phillips was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Roland Gallatin – Spoke for five minutes in place of Connie Phillips. Stated *Frankie and Bug* is another example of the Library Director violating the library rules. Stated the book is an open endorsement of transgender ideology for children without an opposing view, balance, or counterpart. Stated that he is at the meeting to make a record and that he does not think that the Board is going to listen to anything that he says. Compared the Board meetings to a kangaroo court on steroids and told the Board to enjoy it while they can. Stated that the Board does not provide oversight to the library and described them as one entity. Stated he is tired of hearing the same cut and pasted reports. Stated that he does not think it is appropriate for him to speak to the Board in a tone of voice that one would use to discuss what color to paint the

library conference room. Stated that the library has been taken over by the radical left. Stated the library has the law on its side, but his group has the taxes on their side. Stated that the Board is insincere with the use of their tone of voice when discussing the matter. Accused the library of endorsing one side over the other and being biased. Spoke of the American College of Pediatricians being against transgender ideology for children. Spoke of their adversaries, the American Academy of Pediatrics, endorsing transsexual ideology for children.

A. Parr asked R. Gallatin if he had requested that the library purchase the list of books that he mentioned in a previous meeting. R. Gallatin answered that he has not, but intends to. He asked if the library will purchase the books if he requests them. K. LaRocca informed R. Gallatin that the library did purchase all but one of the books he mentioned. One of the titles was not available. R. Gallatin thanked K. LaRocca for purchasing the books and stated that he will request more.

B. McHugh asked R. Gallatin to clarify his statement that the library is advocating for a single point of view over others. R. Gallatin explained that if all the books were one point of view up until last week, he presumed his statement is a valid conclusion or observation. B. McHugh asked for the Library Director, K. LaRocca, to respond to R. Gallatin's statement. R. Gallatin clarified that when he refers to "all the books" he means transgender advocacy for children books.

K. LaRocca answered that the library's juvenile collection consists of 159,000 items. Of those items, there are 79 books that include topics of transgenderism, homophobia, and LGBTQIA+ themes, which is .13% of the juvenile collection. K. LaRocca stated that the library is not promoting one viewpoint over another in regard to that topic. R. Gallatin argued that it is not a fair comparison and stated she is comparing transgender ideology books to books that have nothing to do with transgender topics. He clarified and asked how many books advocate an issue and how many books oppose or portray a different viewpoint of an issue. B. McHugh suggested that R. Gallatin request 79 books to purchase that advocate the opposing views and the library will purchase them for the collection. R. Gallatin stated he would do so and thanked the library again for taking the initiative and purchasing the books he previously mentioned.

Gary Lacoste – Abita Springs, LA. Asked about juvenile books being located on the upper shelves so that they are not accessible for small children to see. Stated that *I Am Jazz* was on a display table at the Mandeville Branch. Stated that two board members said that the YA sticker should be removed from *Flamer*, and one said it should remain. Asked how does one member overrule two. Also asked for clarification on where *Flamer* will be shelved.

K. LaRocca answered that it will be shelved in the Adult Non-fiction section, where it was originally. G. Lacoste asked if removing the sticker would help prevent the book from accidentally getting shelved in the children's section. K. LaRocca explained that the call number on the spine delineates that the book is shelved in the Adult section. G. Lacoste mentioned his suggestion again regarding the books being available for the public to view in the library. B. Taylor addressed G. Lacoste's question about the YA sticker decision. She explained that the motion that was passed places the book back in the Adult section with the YA sticker remaining on the book.

Laura Dinapolis – Covington, LA. Stated that *Frankie and Bug* is not offensive or harmful. Stated she would give it to her child to read if they were in a similar situation. Stated that Connie Phillips has decided that any mention of transgender topics in literature should not be allowed for minors to look at unless a parent checks it out for them. Suggested that people stay in their own lane and mind their own business. Asked for the book to remain in the juvenile section.

Johanna Miner – J. Miner asked for her three-minute public comment period to begin after she asks a question and receives an answer. Asked for an explanation of the Juvenile and YA sections. K. LaRocca explained that the juvenile children's area serves children ages 0-11 years old and contains picture books shelved low to the ground. Juvenile Fiction and Juvenile Non-fiction titles are on higher shelving because they are meant for older children. Audio and video materials are located on separate shelving. The teen area serves both young and older teens aged 12-17 and only contains Young Adult Fiction. Young Adult Non-fiction books are interfiled with Adult Non-fiction books. The tiered card system treats them as adult books. J. Miner stated that *I Am Jazz* and *Frankie and Bug* were in the children's section, not the adult section. K. LaRocca explained that the reason they are located in the children's section is because *I Am Jazz* is a Children's Biography and *Frankie and Bug* is a Juvenile Fiction book. J. Miner told K. LaRocca that she stated to a previous public commenter that the book was put back in the Adult section. K. LaRocca clarified that the previous commenter's question was about the shelf location of the book *Flamer*, not *Frankie and Bug*.

J. Miner's three-minute public comment period began. Stated she read *Frankie and Bug* and it is not until page 192 that transitioning is mentioned. She stated it is not historical and is about transitioning from a girl to a boy. Stated that children do not need to know about this. She read Ezekiel 3:16 from the Bible aloud. She declared to the Board that they have been warned for the second time about what they are doing to the children in the community.

There were two public comments from individuals who did not wish to speak. One in favor of restricting the book and one not in favor of restricting the book.

Discussion:

A. Parr stated that as an amateur historian, he has read a lot about oppression, subjugation, and fear. Stated that it was nice to see a historical fiction novel full of kindness and acceptance of differences. Agreed with the committee's recommendation to keep the book shelved in Juvenile Fiction.

B. Taylor stated that the book is historical fiction because it is set in the 1980s, not the present time period. Stated the book does not violate the statute. Agreed with the committee's recommendation to keep the book shelved in Juvenile Fiction.

M. Reneau agreed that it does not violate the statute and should be shelved in Juvenile Fiction. Stated that children should read about how to get along with others.

B. McHugh stated the book is about acceptance. Complimented the author about the work and creativity that she put into writing the book. Noted that the end notes show that the story is based on solid evidence of the topic. Stated the book is valuable to a young person.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to affirm the committee's recommendation to return the book *Frankie and Bug* back to the Juvenile Fiction section. It was seconded by M. Reneau. Roll call vote:

Airey: Absent Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: Yes Shaw: Absent Taylor: Yes
Motion carried.

C. Statement of Concern Decision – *Fred Gets Dressed*

K. LaRocca presented the SOC for the book *Fred Gets Dressed* by Peter Brown. The statement was submitted by Connie Phillips, representing the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project. K. LaRocca read the statement aloud.

The recommended action by C. Phillips is: "Restrict access to minors as outlined in statute above. Require parent to check out for minor. The book should be shelved in a section where minors do not have access. A separate place in the library. A room or some section where minors do not have entry without parent and minors cannot check out. D.A. Warren Montgomery has instructed you to have a separate place where minors cannot go so shelve it in this section." Reason given: "Content violates the state obscenity statutes [sic] 2021 Louisiana

Laws - offensive to the average adult applying St. Tammany Parish community standards. Stop sexualization of our kids.”

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher’s summary, number of copies STPL owns (6), total circulation on all print copies (9), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Booklist*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Horn Book Magazine*, and *School Library Journal*. A total of 1,102 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Juvenile Picture Books section at STPL with E Bro as the call number.

K. LaRocca reviewed the committee’s evaluation of the title which includes demographics of the committee members, the committee’s report, and the committee’s recommendation.

Since the current complainant cites the Louisiana Criminal Law Revised Statute 14:91.11, the book was evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the statute. K. LaRocca stated that legal counsel has advised the Board that all four criteria in the R.S. 14:91.11 must be true to be a violation of the statute. The committee did not find a violation of the statute.

Summary of Committee Report: The book contains no mention of sexuality. No genitals are shown. Simply drawn buttocks are portrayed but not in a sexual context. Not wanting to wear clothes is age appropriate behavior for preschool children. Young children will find Fred not wearing clothes amusing, not sexual. Playing dress up at that age is not sexual behavior. The book has educational (scientific) value as the text gives parents opportunities for dialogic reading by asking open ended questions.

Options for the Board: Return it to its original location in Children’s Picture Books, move it into the Adult section of the library, restrict it behind the circulation desk, or remove it from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book is appropriate in the Picture Book section. Peer libraries also have it shelved in their “Easy” or Picture Book section.

Public Comment:

Connie Phillips, the patron who submitted the SOC for *Fred Gets Dressed*, was offered five minutes for public comment. C. Phillips was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Roland Gallatin – Spoke for five minutes in place of Connie Phillips. Stated again that the library is violating its own rules. Stated the underlying message is that boys can be girls. Spoke of trans ideology being advocated to children. Stated he does not expect to sway anyone, he is there to make a record and be heard. Spoke of other states with legislation underway regarding the

prevention of advocating transgender ideology to minors. Spoke of trying to confuse healthy children and putting them at risk. Stated that people do not want unhealthy children fabricated out of healthy children and that is what is at stake here. Stated that the Board is supposed to be impartial, but stated that B. McHugh is biased against Republicans.

Gary Lacoste – Abita Springs, LA. Stated that it is troubling that Fred fits into his mother's clothes, but not his father's clothes. Stated that is deceptive, as the illustrations at the end of the book show that his parents appear to be the same size. Stated that it is questionable whether or not it should be considered grooming.

Becky Bohm – Mandeville, LA. Commented on C. Phillips' statement in the SOC about Fred's buttocks being shown in the book and stated that the buttocks are depicted in a very basic manner. Stated that the book is shelved appropriately in the Picture Books section. Noted that the American College of Pediatricians has 700 members and is considered a hate group, whereas the American Academy of Pediatrics has 67,000 members. Commented that the library purchasing requested books on both sides of the issue shows that the library is here for all.

Leyla Hekmatdoost – Covington, LA. Stated that *Fred Gets Dressed* is benign and cute. Stated that clothes do not determine someone's gender. Stated that trans people do not decide to be trans because of books, but they do deserve to see themselves represented in books. Spoke of people who take delight in hurting marginalized people. Stated that anyone who finds the illustration of Fred's butt sexual, they should seek therapy.

Joan Simon – Covington, LA. Stated that *Fred Gets Dressed* is a beautifully illustrated sweet, innocent book that is a true reflection of real children. Stated it has brought out the morality police with all of their fears and prejudices. Recommends shelving the book in its original location in the Picture Books section. Read excerpts from the Freedom to Read Statement.

Erin Kennedy – Folsom, LA. Commented on G. Lacoste's earlier statement about Fred fitting in his mother's clothes and not his father's. E. Kennedy stated that the reason is because Fred was wearing his mother's sleeveless blouse, not a dress. Read a quote from author Peter Brown as he described his inspiration behind writing the book, which includes an instance of playing with his mother's makeup. Stated that Brown is married to a woman named Susan and did not grow up to be gay or transgender.

Laura Dinapolis – Covington, LA. Spoke of her kids running around naked after swimming and her son wearing her grandmother's shoes. Stated her son did not grow up to be gay or

transgender. Stated that the book does not violate state obscenity laws, is not grooming children, and should not be in a restricted area.

Alexis Smith – Pearl River, LA. Stated that she takes her kids to the library twice per week. Stated that *Fred Gets Dressed* is a book about what every parent faces – a toddler who does not want to wear clothes. Gave an example of her son playing dress-up with his older sister. Stated there is no porn in the library. Stated that an illustration of a butt in a picture book is not going to turn a child gay or trans.

It was noted that there was one public comment card listing multiple agenda items submitted by a member of the public who had previously spoken under Agenda Item B. Separate comment cards for each agenda item are required to be called for public comment. There were no written comments on the card and the individual did not elect to complete additional cards for the current or subsequent agenda items. There were two public comments from individuals who did not wish to speak. One in favor of restricting the book and one not in favor of restricting the book.

Discussion:

B. Taylor stated the book does not violate R.S. 14:91.11. Agreed with the committee’s recommendation to return the book to the Picture Book section.

M. Reneau stated that the LBOC has a responsibility to provide resources for all members of the community, not just any particular political, religious, independent, liberal, or conservative groups. Stated that we provide books for a diverse community. Stated that denying access to books that certain people want and need to read is censorship. Explained that she is not pro or con for any group and is standing on the side of fighting against censorship. Agreed with the committee’s recommendation to return the book to the Picture Book section.

B. McHugh stated that this book is about acceptance and kids being loved by their parents. Reiterated the earlier point that Fred was wearing his mother’s blouse and not a dress. Agreed with the committee’s recommendation to return the book to the Picture Book section.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to affirm the committee’s recommendation to return the book *Fred Gets Dressed* to the Picture Book section. It was seconded by M. Reneau. Roll call vote: Airey: Absent Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: Yes Shaw: Absent Taylor: Yes Motion carried.

D. Statement of Concern Decision – *Pinks Is for Boys*

K. LaRocca presented the SOC for the book *Pink Is for Boys* by Robb Pearlman. The statement was submitted by Connie Phillips, representing the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project. K. LaRocca read the statement aloud.

The recommended action by C. Phillips is: “Move to minor restricted area of the library. Where kids cannot have access without an adult checking out the material.” Reason given: “Not suitable for children in St. Tammany Parish See La. R.S. 14:91:11 [sic] The material is offensive to the average adult applying contemporary community standards with respect to what is suitable for minors.” Cited pages, excerpts, and a profanity count from a different book.

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher’s summary, number of copies STPL owns (2), total circulation on all print copies (28), comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and *Hornbook Guide to Children*. A total of 1,050 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Picture Books section at STPL with E Pea as the call number.

K. LaRocca reviewed the committee’s evaluation of the title which includes demographics of the committee members, the committee’s report, and the committee’s recommendation.

Since the current complainant cites the Louisiana Criminal Law Revised Statute 14:91.11, the book was evaluated based on the criteria set forth in the statute. K. LaRocca stated that legal counsel has advised the Board that all four criteria in the R.S. 14:91.11 must be true to be a violation of the statute. The committee did not find a violation of the statute.

Summary of Committee Report: The committee noted that page numbers and quotes listed in the SOC are not in this book. There is no profanity in the book, no sexuality, and no nudity. The children pictured in the book all wear traditionally gendered clothing. There are no boys wearing dresses. The book only discusses gender in terms of appropriateness of colors. The book has education (scientific) value as a color concept book. It shows children of different races, ethnicities, and abilities and has beautiful illustrations that show the variety of shades and hues of the color spectrum. This book was patron-requested.

Options for the Board: Return it to its original location in Children’s Picture Books, move it into the Juvenile Non-fiction collection with other books about color (the science of color), restrict it behind the circulation desk, or remove it from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book is appropriate in the Picture Book section. Peer libraries also have it in their “Easy” or Picture Book section.

Public Comment:

Connie Phillips, the patron who submitted the SOC for *Pink Is for Boys*, was offered five minutes for public comment. C. Phillips was not in attendance and did not appear for public comment.

Roland Gallatin – Spoke for five minutes in place of Connie Phillips. Stated that the committee’s report is inaccurate. Read an excerpt from the publisher’s summary that says, “empowers kids and their grown-ups to express themselves in every color of the rainbow.” Stated that people are not colors, but mammal bodies. Stated that the book advocates transsexual ideology. Asked if the Board has ever seen a book that was not appropriate for the public. Stated that STPL is associated with the Louisiana Library Association (LLA), which is associated with the American Library Association (ALA). Referred to the president of the ALA as a lesbian Marxist and asked if that represents impartiality in serving the community needs of St. Tammany Parish. Stated that the number of children who are claiming distress about their gender is increasing. Stated the profile is changing and it is no longer primarily males claiming to be females, but now young girls are having gender distress. Stated that the treatment and surgery was pioneered in Europe, but has been cut back dramatically. Stated that the ideology targeting children leads to them transitioning. Spoke about the impossibility of a male having a baby.

Gary Lacoste – Abita Springs, LA. Asked again about being able to review the books prior to the meetings.

Becky Bohm – Mandeville, LA. Noted that the SOC for *Pink Is for Boys* contained information for a different book with different page numbers and content. Asked for the book to remain in the Picture Book section. Spoke about validity of the SOC’s.

Erin Kennedy – Folsom, LA. Expressed her apologies to the Board and stated that none of them deserve to be lectured or to have biblical verses directed to them in this manner. Stated that the book is simply about children wearing different colors.

Laura Dinapolis – Covington, LA. Stated that the book is a lovely illustrated children’s book with no offensive material in it. Spoke of the SOC containing information about the wrong book. Asked for the book to remain in the Picture Book section. Spoke of threats from the opposition to defeat the millage renewal. Stated that more than 1% of the community disagrees with them.

Jamie Segura – Covington, LA. Stated that these books are real life. Asked for the books to be kept on the shelves, not restricted. Stated that some day there will be books written about this

travesty. Stated that the complainants cannot deal with their own homophobia. Spoke of the audacity for a member of the Parish Council to come speak before the LBOC and called it political intimidation by Mike Smith. Asked the Board not to be deterred. Stated she is a proud lesbian, a lifelong Louisianian, a taxpayer, and not a pedophile. Spoke of the United States being a nation for Americans of all races and faiths. Stated the public library is for all.

There were two public comments from individuals who did not wish to speak. One in favor of restricting the book and one not in favor of restricting the book.

Discussion:

A. Parr commented that he thought the book was innocuous and agreed with the committee's recommendation to return the book to the Picture Books section.

B. Taylor also agreed with the committee's recommendation. Stated it is not a violation of R.S. 14:91.11.

M. Reneau stated that she was surprised the book was challenged. Stated that the book's theme is that anyone can wear any color they want. Agreed with the committee's recommendation.

B. McHugh questioned whether or not anyone would have challenged the book if the title were *Blue Is for Girls*. Stated that the book is about acceptance and that all colors are for everyone.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to affirm the committee's recommendation to return the book *Pink Is for Boys* to the picture books section. It was seconded by M. Reneau. Roll call vote:

Airey: Absent Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: Yes Shaw: Absent Taylor: Yes
Motion carried.

E. Resolution regarding extension of time to allow for procedural due process of Statements of Concern received since March 2023.

Discussion:

K. LaRocca asked for a waiver of the 45-day time limit for responses to pending SOCs received since March 2023 and asked for the response time to be extended to 120 days from the date of this resolution. B. Taylor was amenable to the extension. A. Parr spoke of the 45-day time limit and it was clarified that there are currently 210 SOCs and no more than 20 have been

completed. He agreed to the extension. B. McHugh commented that the extension gives library staff the time needed to review all of the challenges.

Public Comment:

Becky Bohm – Asked the Board grant the 120-day extension. Thanked the Board for their work.

Vote: A. Parr moved to adopt the resolution to extend time to allow for procedural due process of SOCs received since March 2023. It was seconded by M. Reneau. Roll call vote:

Airey: Absent Butler: Absent McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: Yes Shaw: Absent Taylor: Yes
Motion carried.

2. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by M. Reneau and was seconded by A. Parr. All were in favor, none were opposed, and three were absent. The motion carried.

Becky Taylor, Board President