

**St. Tammany Parish Library
Board of Control Meeting
June 5, 2023
St. Tammany Parish Council Chambers
21490 Koop Dr.,
Mandeville, LA 70471
6:30 P.M.**

MINUTES

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

Present: Jake Airey, Carmen Butler, Bill McHugh, Anthony Parr, Ann Shaw, Becky Taylor

Absent: Mary Reneau

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 (3) 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 decision, the person who filed the Statement of Concern is given five (5) minutes to speak. All comments must pertain to an agenda item announced, and there is no general public comment at the end of the meeting. K. LaRocca explained that the public can complete a comment card for general public comment. Comments will be made part of the public record and copies will be sent to the Board. Public comments will also be accepted via a dedicated email address for future meetings.

B. Taylor introduced two new board members: Bill McHugh and Anthony Parr.

1. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Library Board of Control that was held on April 24, 2023.

Discussion: There were no suggested corrections to the minutes.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Vote: A. Shaw moved to approve the minutes from the April 24, 2023, board meeting. It was seconded by C. Butler. Roll call vote:

Airey: *Yes* Butler: *Yes* McHugh: *Abstained* Parr: *Abstained* Reneau: *Absent* Shaw: *Yes* Taylor: *Yes*

Motion carried.

2. NEW BUSINESS

A. Financial Reports – April 2023

Discussion: K. LaRocca reported that the library has received 96% of what has been budgeted in ad valorem revenue, for a total of \$11,274,340.08. Two more payments of state revenue sharing are expected to be received by the end of the year. K. LaRocca reviewed the revenues and expenditures. The budget percentage at this point in the year is 33%. Revenues are at 33.53% and expenditures are at 34.82%. K. LaRocca explained any lines that are over or under budget. Some lines are expended early or later in the year. The Health Trust line is at 45% due to claims from the end of last year that will be moved to 2022 by the auditor. The Workers' Compensation line is at 90% due to paying that expense early in the year. The Publication of Legal Notices line continues to be above budget due to longer board meeting minutes, which are published in the St. Tammany Farmer. The Advertising, Signage and Printing lines are expended closer to Summer Reading and will also be used for strategic planning implementation through the end of the year.

Lines such as Network Utility Software, Polaris Maintenance, Web Design Consultant, and PC Network are expended early in the year. The Termite Contract and Carpet Cleaning lines are expended later in the year. The Insurance lines are expended in large portions throughout the year and will be in balance at the end of the year. The Staff Travel-Local line will be expended as staff travel between branches increases during Summer Reading. The Library In-Service Training line will be expended later in the year for annual All Staff Training. The Programming lines will be expended throughout the summer.

The Improvement to Physical Plant line is under budget due to the Maintenance Department's move to the new Annex building. They are planning maintenance projects in the fall and the line will be in balance by the end of the year. The lines under Capital Outlay-Library Resource Acquisitions are expended at different points in the year and will be in balance by the end of the year.

Public Comment:

Kevin Marino – Mandeville, LA. Thanked the new Board members for taking on this responsibility. Spoke of frivolous Statements of Concern and the financial costs associated with processing them. Stated that it is an abuse of the system and a financial burden. Asked the Board to consider making changes to the policy concerning Statements of Concern.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to approve the April 2023 financial reports. It was seconded by A. Shaw. Roll call vote:

Airey: Yes Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: *Absent* Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

B. Summer Reading Presentation

“All Together Now” is this year’s summer reading theme. The Board was shown the 2023 Summer Reading Challenge promotional video produced by Benny Bruce. Children, teens, and adults earn prizes by reading for 12 hours over the summer. The programming coordinators highlighted the events and activities offered for each age group this summer. There are registration prizes for each age group, completion prizes, Pin Club for ages 6-11, BINGO games, and prize drawings. Patrons can register online via Beanstack, our online reading tracker. Children can also register in-person and receive a paper reading log. This year’s reading goal is for patrons to read 1,500,000 collective minutes throughout the summer. We have already reached 301,546 minutes so far this summer. The kickoff parties at Slidell and Madisonville were well-attended and a success.

Events for Adults: Blood drives via the Ochsner Blood Bank, arts and crafts workshops, and fitness classes. Some adult classes are offered via Zoom. Events for Teens: Various arts, crafts, and cooking workshops and fan-favorite Friday night events such as Mystery Dinner Theater. There are 73 teen volunteers this summer. Events for children: Various Storytimes, playdates, StoryWalks, movies, special guests, and Read with a Pup. There are special programs for ages 8-11. Family Fun events: Crafts and games with themes such as camping and gardening. Special guests and performers: Magician shows, the PopRocks musical duo, and the Ukulele Lady. Community partners: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, The National Weather Service, LSU Ag Center, St. Tammany Parish Mosquito Abatement. Local author Debbie Venhekamp will read and talk about her book *The Girl Who Loves Lemons*. The coordinators are very excited for this year’s Summer Reading Challenge.

C. Director’s Report

K. LaRocca reported that staff met with Quality Group Movers to coordinate the Technical Services Department move to the new building in June. Renovations at the new building are close to completion. Staff met with Roofs Restored USA for a pre-construction kick-off meeting for the South Slidell Library roof replacement.

The library has been funded \$70,320 by E-Rate for category 1 services for the 7/1/23-24 funding year. E-Rate is the Federal Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund. Category 1 services are made up of our internet and phone services to all branches through Uniti. Our estimated annual cost for all branches is \$87,900. This year \$70,320 will be paid via E-Rate.

Staff performed Storytime and offered outreach to Kinder Haus Montessori, Kidz Klubhouse, St. Margaret Mary’s, Bonne Ecole Library Club, Abita Elementary, and the Alton Elementary Expo. Staff attended the Special Needs Expo at the St. Tammany Coroner’s Office, American Legion Post 16 Rededication and open house, and the St. Tammany Commission on Families meeting. Staff met with the St. Tammany Parish GIS District about partnering on programs and a possible

grant opportunity. Staff promoted the Summer Reading Challenge on the Check It Out show (St. Tammany Parish Government Access Channel), and on The Lake and The Highway radio stations. Global Accessibility Day Open House was held at the Madisonville Branch on May 18th to showcase the TAPit learning station. The TAPit station was gifted to the library by the St. Tammany Library Foundation. The Summer Reading Challenge kick-off parties were held at the Slidell Library with over 450 attendees and at the Madisonville Library with over 400 attendees.

The Abita Springs, Slidell, and South Slidell Branches launched "Get Down and Clean Up" programs sponsored by Keep Louisiana Beautiful. Patrons are able to use their library card to check out a clean-up kit, which includes a safety vest, grabbers, a trash bag, and instructions on how to conduct a cleanup.

Staff attended the following training, conferences, meetings, and webinars: Stewards of Children Child Sexual Abuse Awareness, Prevention, and Reporting training at Children's Advocacy Hope House, Innovative Users Group training for Polaris, Teen Readers' Choice Spring Committee meeting, Illinois State Genealogical Society Board Meeting (virtual), Strategic Planning implementation training, NewsBank webinar, Leading with Confidence: Best Practices for New and Emerging Library Managers, Leaders, and Supervisors webinar, Disability Accommodations in Libraries webinar, Empowering Communities with Creativity: Craft and Hobby webinar, and Dashboards for Fundraising Success with iWave webinar.

We have received 19 public records requests since the beginning of November 2022. Eight are currently outstanding. Our new file clerk is training on the various library systems needed to pull requested records. To date, the library has received 209 statements of concern on 167 titles since August 2022. The most recent statement of concern was submitted on May 15, 2023. The library recently received 176 statements of concern with fake names and addresses; however, our policy states that in order to submit a statement of concern, the submitter must be a resident of St. Tammany parish. These statements are not included in our statements of concern and titles total.

T. DiMaggio reviewed a spreadsheet that shows the approximate cost of processing a Statement of Concern title. The time does not include reading the book. T. DiMaggio clarified that the cost estimate is for a single title, not a single statement. She stated that this is a conservative estimate, as an average of salaries was used for the calculations. The total cost estimate for one title is \$408.76 for a total of 233 minutes of time spent (3.88 hours).

K. LaRocca reviewed the April 2023 and the year-to-date service statistics.

D. Rules and Regulations Update – Section 205 Materials Display

T. DiMaggio reviewed proposed changes to Section 205 Materials Display based on feedback received from the Board. T. DiMaggio referenced the original policy and revised Drafts A and B. The revision clarifies who is responsible for creating displays in the branch, the purpose of

displays created by library staff, and guidelines for staff to use when creating displays. The differences in the two drafts are that Draft A includes the word “collections” in the list of what library displays shall feature.

Public Comment:

Joyce Haun – Slidell, LA. Stated she loves the library, spoke of summer reading, spoke of bringing her children and grandchildren to the library. Stated the library helps kids grow their imagination. Asked for sexually explicit books to be placed behind the counter.

Charlotte Miller – Mandeville, LA. Stated she does not want taxpayer dollars spent on displays or decorations for any group or organization.

Melissa Copeland – Mandeville, LA. Stated that having the materials in question available to children is asking them to discern for themselves decisions at an early age. Spoke of gender confusion, obscene graphics, sexual passages, sexual molestation, rape, and asked how children will know the difference between what is safe and unsafe. Asked for the materials not be made available for display.

Gary Lacoste – Abita Springs, LA. Stated that nothing sexual, political, or racial should be displayed. Asked the Board and librarians to consider non-controversial displays.

David Campbell – Folsom, LA. Stated that he is 86 years old and is gay. Shared his experience of coming out at the age of 80. Spoke of books he has written, professional accomplishments, stated he will be a speaker at the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Upstairs Lounge fire, and is a sponsor of the LGBTQ+ Archives Project of the Historic New Orleans Collection.

Iris Gallatin – Covington, LA. Stated that displays in the children’s area should not have sexual content. Spoke of the silent majority whose views are in opposition to those attending the board meetings. Spoke of raising children with traditional values and preventing them from being exposed to books that conflict with those values. Thanked the Board for the resolution placing certain material behind the circulation desk.

Patricia Farris – Covington, LA. Requested all public displays to be what the general public considers non-controversial. Suggested promoting library programs and services such as summer reading, the TapIt, Ozobots, and guest speakers. Suggested promoting other tax funded departments in St. Tammany Parish.

Discussion: B. McHugh stated the policy is well thought out and is designed to further the mission and goals of the library. He stated that Draft A is the most inclusive of the two options and staff should have the option of including collections in the display.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to approve Draft A of the revised policy for Section 205 Materials Display. It was seconded by A. Parr. Roll call vote:

Airey: *Abstained* Butler: *Yes* McHugh: *Yes* Parr: *Yes* Reneau: *Absent* Shaw: *No* Taylor: *Yes*

Motion carried.

E. Statement of Concern Decision – *Milk and Honey*

K. LaRocca presented the statement of concern for *Milk and Honey* by Rupri Kaur. 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."

The reason given is: "Content violates the state obscenity statutes 2021 Louisiana Laws Revised Statutes Title 14 - Criminal Law §91.11. This book contains illustrations depicting non-sexual nudity; sexual activities including sexual assault."

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher's summary, number of copies STPL owns, circulation statistics, comparable library system statistics, and reviews. A total of 2,618 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The book is shelved in the Adult Non-fiction collection at STPL with call number 811.6 Kau.

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 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 violate the statute. The committee did not find any violations of the statute.

Options for the Board: Return the book to Adult non-fiction, restrict it behind the circulation desk, or remove it from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book should be returned to Adult Non-fiction. C. Phillips was sent a letter explaining the committee's recommendation and notification that this title would be on the agenda for Board review at this meeting.

The second statement of concern for the title *Milk and Honey* was submitted by Fran Smith, representing the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project. The recommended action

by F. Smith is to: “remove all books from the public library that has this content in it. Stop pandering to perverts. Provide descent [sic] reading material for our children in a safe and loving enviroment [sic].”

The reason given is: “The whole book!”

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

Options for the Board: Return the book to its original location in Adult Non-fiction, restrict it behind the circulation desk, or remove it from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book should remain in the collection and is appropriate in Adult Non-fiction. F. Smith was sent a letter explaining the committee’s recommendation and notification that this title would be on the agenda for Board review at this meeting.

Public Comment:

Connie Phillips and Fran Smith, the patrons who submitted the Statements of Concern for *Milk and Honey*, were offered five minutes for public comment. Neither were in attendance and neither appeared for public comment.

Rachel Rhodes – Mandeville, LA. Spoke in defense of *Milk and Honey*. Stated it is a #1 New York best seller. Stated that Rupri Kaur writes from personal experiences growing up in India. Spoke of poems in the book that touch on the topics of abuse, relationships, heartbreak, and healing. Asked for the title to remain on the shelf.

Kevin Marino – Stated that the challenged books being discussed should be returned to their original locations on the shelves. Stated that books restricted behind the circulation desk are a violation of 1st Amendment rights. Referenced case law that describes the restrictions as an egregious form of discrimination.

Hilary Albarado – Folsom, LA. Stated that St. Tammany Parish is overall conservative. Stated that residents want restrictions where children cannot be hurt emotionally or physically. Stated that the books open up the opportunity for groomers to abuse people. Read an excerpt of *Milk and Honey* aloud.

Roxanne Newman – Stated that the book is an account of the author’s life as told through her poetry and that the references to sexual abuse in the book are not made to advocate sexual abuse. Stated that the author’s experiences may help others. Stated that a child would not be interested in this book. Asked for the title to be returned to the shelves.

Cynthia Weatherly – Covington, LA. Provided the Board with copies of a letter from Rupri Kaur, the author of *Milk and Honey*, and read the letter aloud. The letter is included in the public

comment record of this meeting. C. Weatherly stated that children are taken advantage of when they do not know what sexual abuse is and that it is not normal. Stated that restricting access to books is the same as banning books.

Daphne Misuraca – Mandeville, LA. Stated that *Milk and Honey* is a very dark book and should be kept behind the circulation desk. Stated that it could cause more harm than healing to a young person dealing with sexual molestation.

Jamie Segura – Stated that she has spent weeks in Baton Rouge trying to persuade legislators to do what is right for children, which has not been successful. Stated that if these books were obscene the Attorney General would have arrested someone. Parents should be involved in choosing books appropriate for their children. Referenced the fact that the person challenging most of the books did not attend the meeting.

Virginia Fortson – Mandeville, LA. Spoke of helping a young man in his 20s who was gay, was molested at the age of eight, and was afraid to tell his parents about either of those facts. Stated she feared he would kill himself before coming to terms with all of it. Stated that restricting these types of books does not help those who are going through a similar situation.

Discussion: B. McHugh stated the first few pages of the book did get his attention, but he continued reading. He noted the four parts of the book and stated he thought it was beautiful. B. McHugh referenced the author's comment about the book helping young people recognize that they are being sexually abused and stated that contradicts the notion that the book can be used to groom someone.

J. Airey commented that if one were to look for all of the challenged books on the shelves they would not find at least 30 of them, as many are either only available online or the library does not own a copy. J. Airey agreed that the beginning of the book is shocking, but as the book progresses he can see how a younger person can appreciate the author's perspective. Stated that the book is not for children and is appropriately shelved in the adult section.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to affirm the committee's recommendation that *Milk and Honey* shall remain shelved in Adult Non-fiction.

Airey: Yes Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: Absent Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

F. Statement of Concern Decision – *Pink, Blue, and You!*

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *Pink, Blue, and You!* by Elise Gravel. 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 to: "Move to adult section of the library which would require a person of the age of majority and or parent to check out book."

The patron cited excerpts and page numbers from a different book in response to question number six on the statement, which asks for the complainant's reasons for their recommendation.

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher's summary, number of copies STPL owns, circulation statistics, comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, *School Library Journal*, and *Booklist*. A total of 634 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Juvenile Non-fiction section at STPL with J 305.3 Gra 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 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.

Options for the Board: Return the book to its original location in Juvenile Non-fiction, move it to Adult Non-fiction, restrict it behind the circulation desk, or remove it from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book should remain in the collection and is appropriately shelved in Juvenile Non-fiction. C. Phillips was sent a letter explaining the committee's recommendation and notification that this title would be on the agenda for Board review at this meeting.

Public Comment:

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

Barbara Mamoulides – Stated that the book should remain in the children's section, as it is age appropriate. Noted that the excerpts in the statement of concern are from a different book. Stated that *Pink, Blue, and You!* teaches children that we are not the same. Stated that parents are responsible for what their children read.

Roxanne Newman – Read a statement aloud from the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans. The statement is included in the public comment record of this meeting.

Lisa Rustmeyer – Stated that *Pink, Blue, and You!* is about love and acceptance, encourages critical thinking, and the illustrations are not sexual. Spoke of gender dysphoria, depression, anxiety, and suicide. Spoke of transgender population statistics.

Gary Lacoste – Stated he agrees with the Board's decision for *Milk and Honey*. Stated his concern is to be sure that books are shelved appropriately. Asked for clarification on what Juvenile Non-fiction is in relation to picture books. K. LaRocca clarified that it is a picture book format and was shelved in the Juvenile Non-fiction section.

Iris Gallatin – Asked for the book to be kept behind the circulation desk. Stated that the American College of Pediatricians says that gender ideology is harmful to children and that conditioning them into believing that chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal is child abuse.

Patricia Farris – Stated she thought that Juvenile Non-fiction meant 12 and up. Stated that some of the material is too mature for a five-year-old to have access to. Stated she does not think that relocating is banning or violating 1st Amendment rights.

Laura Dinapolis – Thanked the library and welcomed the new board members. Stated she did not find anything harmful to minors in the book. Spoke of the new tiered card system. Asked the Board not to move the book to a restricted section.

Discussion: B. Taylor stated that *Pink, Blue, and You!* does not violate R.S. 14:91.11 and should remain in Juvenile Non-fiction. J. Airey stated that the book does not contain sexually explicit content or obscenity. Stated that it touches on the use of pronouns, which can be seen by some as a political issue, but as a whole is fairly innocuous. Suggested it would be appropriately shelved with books for ages 10 and up. K. LaRocca explained each classification section in relation to shelving locations. *Pink, Blue, and You!* is in the Sociology section of the Juvenile Non-fiction.

B. McHugh stated that the book's cover is meant to be a poster that says "Be who you want to be." He stated that is the theme of the book. Stated that it is an appropriate book for the shelf location.

Vote: B. McHugh moved to affirm the committee's recommendation that *Pink, Blue, and You!* shall remain in the collection and shelved in Juvenile Non-fiction. It was seconded by A. Parr. Roll call vote:

Airey: No Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: Absent Shaw: No Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

G. Statement of Concern Decision – *Sex Is a Funny Word*

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *Sex Is a Funny Word* by Cory Silverberg. 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 to “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.”

The reason given is: Complainant cites Louisiana Criminal Law Revised Statute 14:91.11.

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher’s summary, number of copies STPL owns, circulation statistics, comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, *School Library Journal*, and *Common Sense Media*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. A total of 1,379 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Juvenile Non-fiction section at STPL with J 613.9071 Sil 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 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.

Options for the Board: Leave the book shelved behind the circulation desk with other graphic novel format materials that contain sexual content, return it to its original location in Juvenile Non-fiction, move it to Adult Non-fiction, or remove it from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book should remain in the collection and although it is appropriate in its original location in Juvenile Non-Fiction, it should continue to be housed behind the circulation desk as it meets the criteria for restriction of a graphic novel based on the Board resolution passed on February 28, 2023. A copy of the resolution was provided to the Board for reference. C. Phillips was sent a letter explaining the committee’s recommendation and notification that this title would be on the agenda for Board review at this meeting.

The second statement of concern for the title *Sex Is a Funny Word* was submitted by Jacki Schneider. The recommended action by J. Schneider is: “I suggest that a separate board be formed comprised of parents and teachers to review these books prior to purchase.”

The reason given is: “It’s [sic] contents are pornographic.”

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

The committee found that an additional board to oversee book purchasing is not necessary and would be redundant. Books and other materials are purchased by trained professionals using a variety of tools. The public has input with the Request a Purchase program. The staff who are responsible for selecting are themselves members of the St. Tammany community. The Parish Council and Parish President appoint the Library Board of Control, made up of members of the community including parents and educators. The Library Board evaluates statements of concern. The committee's opinion is that the book does not violate La R.S. 14:91.11 and is not pornography.

Options for the Board: Same as above.

Committee Recommendation: Same as above. J. Schneider was sent a letter explaining the committee's recommendation and notification that this title would be on the agenda for Board review at this meeting.

The third statement of concern for the title *Sex Is a Funny Word* was submitted by Fran Smith. The recommended action by F. Smith is: "remove it from the library. it is pornography [sic]."

The reason given is: "It has no value to help a young person grow into a responsible adult. It takes away young children's innocence."

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

The committee's opinion is that the book does not violate La R.S. 14:91.11 and is not pornography. It has educational value for children at puberty age, as it discusses hygiene and correct medical terms for body parts. It also discusses the emotional and social aspects of first relationships, concepts not often discussed in books for this target age audience.

Options for the Board: Same as above.

Committee Recommendation: Same as above. F. Smith was sent a letter explaining the committee's recommendation and notification that this title would be on the agenda for Board review at this meeting.

Public Comment:

Connie Phillips, Jacki Schneider, and Fran Smith, the patrons who submitted the Statements of Concern for *Sex Is a Funny Word*, were offered five minutes for public comment. None of the patrons were in attendance and they did not appear for public comment.

Lawrence De Quay – Slidell, LA. Read two favorable reviews aloud. Stated that the book is not written specifically for people with diverse identities, but for all young people. Stated that the book would have helped him teach his daughters about their bodies and the difference between healthy and unhealthy interpersonal relationships. Spoke of his brother who is gay.

Lisa Rustemeyer – Stated that *Sex Is a Funny Word* is recommended for children ages 8-10 and feels that is appropriate, as it prepares them for the upcoming changes to their bodies. Stated that the pictures are anatomical and are presented in a clinical approach, not in an obscene or pornographic way.

Cynthia Weatherly – Provided the Board with copies of a letter from Cory Silverberg, the author of *Sex Is a Funny Word*, and read the letter aloud. The letter is included in the public comment record of this meeting.

Rebecca Bohm – Mandeville, LA. Stated that the book is a great resource to have and should be returned to the shelves. Stated that children do not usually gravitate to the children's non-fiction section of the library. Noted that the American College of Pediatricians is considered a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Discussion: A. Parr asked if there could be cards on the shelf in place of the books that are behind the desk, which would let a parent know the item is available for checkout. K. LaRocca explained that the catalog shows the circulation desk as the shelf location, so the patron would know where to ask for the item. She stated that pull cards or fake books are useful tools that can be used to provide better accessibility to the collection items. T. DiMaggio stated that she and B. Geiger have discussed this option and will be looking into ways to accomplish that.

There was discussion about metrics and statistics on age brackets in each tiered card option. A. Shaw stated that it is important to get the books reviewed and shelved appropriately as soon as possible. B. Taylor stated that *Sex Is a Funny Word* does not violate La R.S. 14:91.11 and is currently shelved behind the desk because it is considered a graphic novel.

B. McHugh commented that he understands the committee's recommendation was based on the basis of the resolution and he appreciates their conscientiousness in doing so. Stated he does not think the book meets the criteria to be restricted behind the desk.

Vote: J. Airey moved to affirm the committee's recommendation to keep *Sex Is Funny Word* shelved behind the circulation desk under the terms of the resolution passed on February 28, 2023. Motion failed due to lack of a second.

B. McHugh moved to overrule the committee's recommendation and return the book *Sex Is a Funny Word* to the Juvenile Non-fiction section. It was seconded by C. Butler. Roll call vote:

Airey: No Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: Absent Shaw: No Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

H. Statement of Concern Decision – *Who Has What?*

K. LaRocca presented the Statement of Concern for the book *Who Has What?* 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: "This book requires adult supervision. It is for a very small child. Parents want to introduce these concepts. We do not want them lying around willy nilly when we are at the library to read about trains, planes and automobiles. This book may be a good teaching tool should someone want to request it but it should be available for adults to check out if they want to read it for their child and not just stuck off somewhere in the children's section. Your ALA policy again in conflict with the values of this parish."

The reason given is: "This is a book for very small children and should be made available upon request instead of just randomly shelved in the little kids section for all the world to see."

K. LaRocca reviewed the book résumé which includes the publisher's summary, number of copies STPL owns, circulation statistics, comparable library system statistics, reviews by *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, *Horn Book Magazine*, and *Horn Book Guide to Children*. Also noted are awards and lists featuring this title. A total of 913 public libraries across the nation own copies of the book. The title is shelved in the Juvenile Non-fiction section at STPL with J 612.6 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. The committee noted that the book is informational with all body parts labeled and is meant for parents to use to have a conversation with their child. The presentation of the material is consistent with the guidelines for 2-5-year old children outlined in "Healthy Sexual Development" published by the Darkness to Light organization. The book uses the correct medical terms for reproductive body parts and does not use slang words.

Options for the Board: Return it to its original location in Juvenile Non-fiction, move it to Adult Non-fiction, restrict it behind the circulation desk, or remove it from the library.

Committee Recommendation: Book should remain in the collection and is appropriate in its original location in Juvenile Non-Fiction. C. Phillips was sent a letter explaining the committee's recommendation and notification that this title would be on the agenda for Board review at this meeting.

Public Comment:

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

Rachel Rhodes – Stated that *Who Has What?* is an educational book that discusses the parts of the body in age-appropriate vocabulary. Stated it is important to have the book on the shelf as an educational tool for parents.

Roxanne Newman – Stated that there is nothing wrong with the book. Stated it is factual with illustrations that are not highly detailed. Noted that there are no depictions of sex in the book. Stated it is a great book for parents to read with their children to teach them the vocabulary necessary to recognize sexual abuse.

Jamie Segura – Stated that these books are age-appropriate and need to be returned to the shelves. Spoke of complainants not attending the meetings, not quoting the correct books, and frivolous book challenges. Asked when will the Board stop the circus of the book challenges. Stated that this is an abuse of the system and is an attempt to eradicate LGBTQIA material from the library.

Discussion: B. Taylor stated her opinion that the book should be returned back to Juvenile Non-fiction.

Vote: A. Shaw moved to affirm the committee’s recommendation to return *Who Has What?* to the Juvenile Non-Fiction section. It was seconded by B. McHugh. Roll call vote:

Airey: Yes Butler: Yes McHugh: Yes Parr: Yes Reneau: *Absent* Shaw: Yes Taylor: Yes

Motion carried.

3. OLD BUSINESS

A. Strategic Planning Committee Update

K. LaRocca reported that action planning training was held in April over Zoom. Consultants Carson Block and Susan Kent presented to 32 staff members and recorded the session so that all staff members can participate. The committee hopes to have the first working group meetings over the next month.

B. Rules and Regulations Committee Update

K. LaRocca reported that the committee met on May 4th and May 16th to work on Section 205: Materials Display. The next committee meeting date is to be determined and will be posted on the website.

C. Library Foundation Update

The Foundation hosted its 6th annual Distinguished Speaker Series at the Beau Chene Country Club on April 26, 2023, featuring Emilie Rhys as its distinguished speaker. The Foundation estimates to have made approximately \$11,000 from the event.

The Foundation board met in May and discussed plans to expand its general membership through social media avenues in the Fall. The Board has also begun planning for the 7th annual Distinguished Speaker Series.

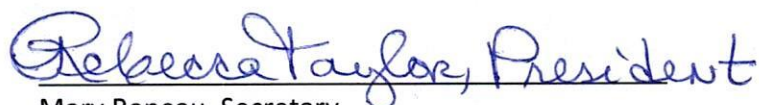
At the May meeting, The President of the Foundation received the invoice for the Ozobots that were approved by the Foundation Board in the Fall of 2022. The Foundation looks forward to working with the Library to identify additional projects it can fund to aid our community libraries.

D. Friends of the Library Updates

There was no update from the Friends of the Library.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by A. Shaw and seconded by C. Butler. All were in favor. The motion carried.


Mary Reneau, Secretary