

Sanibel Public Library District  
Public Comments  
7.28.2022

Item 5. Public Comment – Public Comment was invited by Commissioner Congress:

Name not provided: Asked Commissioner Congress to summarize the situation. Commissioner Congress provided that the Minutes from June 30, 2022 will be available on the Sanibel Public Library's website.

Reverend Doctor Sally Haynes: Extended sympathy to the Director and thanks to the Board. She discussed her background in ministry. Reverend Doctor Haynes relayed a story of a call she received asking if she meant it when she said that God loved everybody during her sermon. This person told her that he thought God hated him because he was gay. Being gay is not a choice. We have a choice in this situation. Reverend Doctor Haynes said that she loves the mission of this library and wants to allow staff to keep doing their jobs so well.

Sandy Greco: is a former ER physician and so often saw these situations. She loves and approves of what Sally (Reverend Doctor Sally Haynes) just said. Feels that books can be in the children's area and the parents can check them out. Really value what this library offers. Staff has been exemplary. Believes that there is freedom for everything not just for what I want but for everyone.

Holly McEntyre: is not sure what the panic is about. She shared from her past that her parents were atheist or agnostic, but she read many Christian books and did not act out against her parents. For her, the influence of family went into what she became as an adult. The importance of the library is to sustain this, stand against censorship, okay to have a display about PRIDE. She is opposed to censorship. She loves this library. It is a part of Sanibel and she supports the library.

Jude Sincoskie: announced that she is running for the Sanibel Public Library District Board. A lot has been said about her and other parents. She conveyed an event – on a Monday afternoon after school she came to the library and another mother came and met her. It was close to 5:00, they told the kids, daughter and son who is close to 5 years old, to pick out books. Her son who likes fiction picked out a book, her daughter who likes stories. She said she was asking the Children's librarian about a book on blue-footed boobies, which is her favorite bird and they walked by a book display at her daughter's height. Her daughter saw a book with a baby and a rainbow on the cover and chose "When Aiden became a Brother", she told them to put the book back on the shelf, child started crying – "why can't I get it".

Matt Gaudreau – There is some mischaracterization about the people who came up to talk and he would like to clear the air. He feels that the issue is about parental rights and the choice of parents to choose the appropriate time that the parent feels the need to talk about this topic with their child. He takes his kids to the library and his 8 year old loves exploring. He does not want this topic brought up right now. He does not want to ban or remove books from the library, but feels that both sides should have a discussion and reach an agreement.

Laura Gales – Full time Sanibel resident with 2 young children, 1 in the Sanibel school, 1 at CECI. She spoke at the last meeting and feels the books belong accessible to children in the children's section – she spoke on how some children did not see themselves related anywhere in books and lived their lives

afraid to be who they are. Gender dysmorphia is the distress which is caused from incongruence between gender they are born with and gender assigned.

Tom Cunningham – supports the Board of Commissioners as it presently stands and will support them in the upcoming election.

Name not heard – has read some editorials – education and information uncritically is not education. Books allow the child to have an open mind when exposed to topics so they can accept things. As Matt (Gaudreau) said – books should not be banned. Said these books should be reference books. Parent needs to read the book with the child to explain things like PRIDE. This should not be a political point of view or a line of indoctrination.

Elissa Karasin Samet - Is concerned about indoctrination. Has a very different belief about who God is. A parent's role is to create a safe space where a child can ask about everything the child experiences and to be available to have these conversations. The parent should be this space.

Dr. Stan Gordon – extends his appreciation to the Board for their service and extends sympathy to Ms. Mohundro at this difficult time. This is a really complex issue. A most perplexing issue is identity. The very simple issue as brought by Jude, Matt and Families for Freedom is they have a simple request – to maintain their responsibilities as parents in guiding their children. If the child does not have a voice they can be very confused. Access is not a debate about LGBTQ or transgender. Simply give parents the right to choose for their children or grandchildren, and the ability to say is this appropriate for their age?

Vicki Fuchs – Sanibel Resident with 3 children and 9 grandchildren. Library is where you have books to read. Education is not a crime. Children need to learn. She went to the Library with her children and now grandchildren and reads with them. Education is extremely important. Books are available to look at, to learn about things that you do not catch, something that is not contagious such as skin color or eyes. Keep education important.

No Name Given – What is the status of the books in question? Commissioner Congress stated that no action has been taken as of yet.

Donna Howdeshell – Sanibel resident – said that at the last meeting several people spoke in favor of relocating the books. She heard also that the topic is not contagious and said that “it is very contagious” and it is a valid concern that a child grabbed a book. A parent asked books to be relocated and there is no process for moving a book; the form only says “remove a book”. Spoke of placement of these books in a special display and wants to see this in policies or procedures.

Robin Cook – President of League of Women Voters and feels that politics has no place in this meeting. There is a candidates forum on November 12<sup>th</sup> and she has invited all candidates for this official public event which will be held at the Community House.

Susan Ruberry – was raised in Alexandria, VA, a very diverse community and she had the opportunity to learn. Parents are not the only people your child is talking to. They are talking to other children, and to others and if not equipped with knowledge can be exposed to people different from them, with different views. As a parent, equip them as young children, teach them what you can.

Mayor Holly Smith – Mayor of Sanibel – Citizen of Sanibel since 1997. Received an email on June 7, 2022 from a “concerned parent” regarding the subject. Mayor Smith suggests that Board listen to concerns, look at the best policy going forward . Knows that the Board will follow the process. “We, as the Community of Sanibel, we lead”. Mayor Smith thanked the Board for what they are doing.

Alison Ward – she checked on the status of books 2 days again and checked out 5 books and loved them. And benefitted from them. She encourages any of you to check out the books. They are marvelous. She has read “Jack not Jackie” and found it to be a wonderful book with a message that you love the baby no matter what it is, a boy or a girl. It is normal to fear what we do not understand. We need to show love and respect and support without judgment. Talk to children about these subjects. The books belong in the library. I applaud the library. Families should discuss these books with their children.

Arlene Dillon – The task at hand is to find a remedy. Ms. Dillon read from SPLD Policy 09-2010, paragraph 4 – *The Library does not serve as censor of the reading of any member of the community. The Library does not endorse opinions expressed in the materials that are held in the collection. Neither Library staff nor users may restrict access by others. The Library does not label materials to make value judgments.* There is a space on the Request for Reconsideration form “Requested Remedy” to be completed and the staff member, director and finally (if needed) the Board can act on the request.

Louise Fitzgerald – loves the library, it is a highlight of life here and she often brings visitors. The Board is doing a great job and she is full of unconditional support.

Bill Larson – if a child picks up a book then the child may question his gender or is interested and now is the time for a conversation.

Maryann Bell – Thank you for meeting and for all you do. She grew up in the 50’s and recalls that the Library had a book called “Peyton Place” which they were told not to read, but what was the first thing they did – read the book. Censorship never works.

Ed Holden – Sanibel resident – asked his sons “If I told you, you cannot read a book what is the first thing you would do?” – the response was “read the book”.

Yvonne Hill – if you come for this today, you will come for me tomorrow.