

Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting

June 30, 2022

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Congress at 9:03 A.M.
2. **ROLL CALL:** Commissioners Present:
 - Melanie Congress, Chair
 - Nicole McHale, Vice Chair
 - Sandy Zahorchak, Treasurer
 - Linda Uhler, Secretary
 - Roy Gibson
 - Susie Holly
 - Barbara RubenA physical quorum is confirmed.
Staff Present: Margaret Mohundro, Executive Director
Cathy Cameron, Clerk
3. **SETTING OF AGENDA:** The Agenda was set as presented.
4. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Chair Melanie Congress invited public comment on the Youth Collection. Public Comment was heard before the Board.
5. **SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Commissioner Uhler presented the Minutes from May 26, 2022, which were approved as presented.
6. **DISCUSSION – YOUTH COLLECTION:** Discussion ensued: Commissioner McHale shared that it is important listen to everything as a Board and let the public know that the Board and Staff are inclusive, sometimes policies are not reviewed until there is an issue. Commissioner Uhler made reference to the Sanibel City Plan as read by Commissioner Gibson citing “live in harmony” and that both sides of an issue were heard today, sharing that the community spirit has not changed in 44 years. Commissioner Holly commented that a lot was said, and was pleased that emotions were checked at the door; the Board will move forward to address the issue. Commissioner Zahorchak appreciated everyone coming and speaking on the different viewpoints and shares the view that the policy will be reviewed as a Board, stressing that policy should not be too narrow or restrictive. Commissioner Congress commented that the Collection and Development policy and procedures can be reviewed by the Board, also that there is a process in place, something other than a post on social media, the Request for Reconsideration form, which goes to staff, then to the Director and then, if not resolved, to the Board; Executive Director Mohundro discussed that the Collection and Development Policy, as approved by the Board in 2010, is current and withstands the test of time as a broad framework for Staff, supporting strategic initiatives, Director Mohundro went on to explain that there are procedures in place for reconsideration to establish a trail before it gets to the Board. Ms. Mohundro explained that the process for Request for Reconsideration is for Staff to review the Request for Reconsideration and respond, if the patron is not satisfied with the outcome, the form will be given to the Executive Director for a decision, if the patron is still not satisfied, the decision will go before the Board. Director Mohundro added that she has some possible resolutions to the Youth Collection issue and will meet with the Board individually to discuss these, adding that “process is important” and that miscommunication may have caused a lot of this stating that if she “had been involved from the beginning the situation would not have gotten this far”. Director Mohundro

said “But I thank you and I am glad you came today”. She thanked everyone for their support of the library commenting that the Sanibel Public Library has been at or near the top per capita for libraries because of the support and input from the public. Director Mohundro assured people that there is a process in place to address concerns about book placement and that library policies are reviewed by the Board and vetted by the Library’s attorney, adding that there is open access to all so that parents or caregivers can discuss topics with children, the Library does not make value judgments but encourages reading, knowledge, and information access to all; Commissioner Zahorchak inquired if anyone had submitted a Request for Reconsideration regarding the books cited and Director Mohundro advised that none were received. Commissioner McHale asked that the Request for Reconsideration form wording be reviewed by the Board at the next meeting; Commissioner Congress suggested that the Board also look at the Collection and Development procedures; Commissioner Gibson suggested that the Board is in the process of reviewing all policies including related policies such as social media and internet use – he said that the Board heard a lot of good input today, and commented that he has reviewed collection and development policies from other libraries and the Sanibel Public Library’s policy is very similar; Executive Director Mohundro added that procedures are in place and that the Collection and Development supports strategic initiatives which support the policy.

Library book displays were discussed: Director Mohundro shared that the displays are set up according to popular “monthly” topics, such as 4th of July, National Pickle Day, etc. and that the displays are meant to showcase these popular topics and to encourage patrons to check out books.

- 7. TREASURER’S REPORT:** May financial reports were recapped by Commissioner Zahorchak: Income is approximately \$517k higher than last year; Overall financials are running close to budget; vacation accruals indicate that Staff is due to use vacation.

BUDGET DATE DISCUSSION: Budget Dates were set as follows:
Tentative Budget Hearing: Tuesday, September 6, 2022 at 5:01 P.M.
Final Budget Hearing: Thursday, September 22, 2022 at 5:01 P.M.

BOARD DISCUSSION: Commissioner Gibson inquired as to the postage rates for interlibrary items and Executive Director Mohundro said that the Library does pay for postage using the Library Rate for some items while others do get sent via UPS and Fed Ex. Commissioner Gibson would like to see statistics on the visitor counts in the Director Reports; Commissioner Gibson asked if there is a policy or procedure for library programs and Director Mohundro explained that there is an internal policy and that Library Outreach Programs are included in the budget line “Outreach”, which includes the monthly e-blast, FaceBook page, TikTok, Instagram posts, etc.

- 8. DIRECTOR’S REPORT:** Executive Director Mohundro reported on Library Highlights to the Board: Technology area is adding Mobile Hot Spots through vendor TechSoup at a reduced rate, the hot spots provide internet access in areas where there is difficult access; the building will undergo roof repair in a couple of areas; Virtual Authors is online; Virtual Intern Tara McCauley from University of Washington has offered 100 hours to assist with the Virtual Authors project with marketing, contacts and experience; Sanibel Public Library Tech It Out Tik Tok video had 40k+views.
- 9. FOUNDATION UPDATE:** Commissioner Uhler reported that the Foundation is funding in part the Virtual Authors; eGrants to Enhance, Enrich and Educate forms have been given to Staff for

**Sanibel Public Library District
BOC Meeting June 30, 2022**

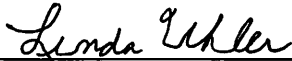
their input and ideas – requests will be reviewed by the Foundation for consideration of grant funding.

10. ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner Congress adjourned the meeting at 11:50 A.M.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Thursday, July 28, 2022 @ 9:00 A.M.

Thursday, August 25, 2022 @ 9:00 A.M.



Linda Uhler, Secretary

/cac

**Sanibel Public Library
Board of Commissioners Meeting
June 30, 2022
Public Comments: Notes**

Chair Melanie Congress invited public comment on the Youth Collection. Public Comment was heard before the Board.

Chelsea Sweiss – Is upset and voiced concern on sexual topics prominently displayed in the children’s area to raise awareness to children on these topics; does the Library have a social media policy?; LBGTO books should not be displayed in children’s area; children’s area should be free from bias and be neutral.

Alison Ward – Said she is a strong supporter of the Library and the Library should be neutral and free from bias as the speaker before her mentioned; feels that the Library has used due diligence in their selection of books.

Miles Sweiss – Stated he is the husband of Chelsey Sweiss and the issue is clear – the issue is not to ban books, but wants the Library to have more responsibility books with these topics; 1) move these books to parenting section; 2) adopt a more formal book collection policy for patrons 3) adopt a social media policy 4) adopt a policy of equal and opposite books for books on display.

Wendy M. Humphrey – Is a 37-year patron of the Library; any child in the Library is accompanied by an adult and the adult should be looking at books the child is looking at; child is free to choose books; these books should be available for them to read - if the child is confused, the parents or adults are there to look at the books they are reading and explain; Ms. Humphrey does not find the books offensive; books broaden the child’s mind; congratulates the Library on Book Bingo and the “banned book” display which includes books like “Catcher in the Rye” and “The Color Purple”; this should not be about banning books, but about love and acceptance.

Howard Lorsch – Is proud of the Library; about 25 years ago he had to explain to his two children about friends of theirs who were a same sex couple and only wished that he had books available on this subject to help his explanation then; he is glad to have these books available.

Margot Long – Voiced a question to the people who want the books to be in a separate area – What is the fear that underlies the concern about access to books? in reality, there are different types of families, children sense differences and are looking for information – these books removed may be preventing children who may benefit from the books. Library should allow access to books.

Laura Gales – Grateful that books are available in the Library – her children are exposed to non-binary and LGBTQ in life and the books are important so they learn to understand better; she stays with her children in the Library and as a parent, limits access; Library staff are supportive and kind people; she trusts the children’s librarian whole heartedly and trusts in her and she is speaking for others on this.

Pam Salvo – needs to clarify the issue – it is not pro or anti- gay or trans or how anybody feels, the issue has to do with the First Amendment – is it appropriate material for the children’s section?

Where are parental rights: how does Library determine how displays should be put up?; June is Christianity Month and she saw nothing about this in the Library; she does not want books removed, she wants books put in a different place as they are inappropriate in the children's area.

Deborah Butler – The Library has a wonderful Board of Commissioners and a terrific mission statement which includes "...provides a wide variety of reading, listening and viewing materials"; it is ultimately the parents' responsibility to determine what is not appropriate for their child, not to decide what materials are displayed in the Library; "I have always thought that angels live in the library".

Bunny Ospa – The concern is the determination of what is appropriate – if it is appropriate to some, it may not be to other; she is glad to hear that nobody wants to ban books.

Cindy Timm – Full time resident for 14 years; a retired librarian in both public and private schools; volunteer at the Sanibel Public Library for ten years; Libraries have always been in the middle of controversy; the parent is ultimately the person who decides what the child reads; there have always been book challenges - Judy Blume, Harry Potter, etc.; this issue can be worked out, communication is the key; books can be tagged as "parental guidance required", but not pulled off shelves.

Margie Peters – Has heard a lot of intelligent comments today; has not heard anyone who has an agenda; we should actively parent, use discretion and trust the process.

Tom Cunningham – Loves the Library; Library is a critical public resource; should not be subjected to segregation of books because of a small vocal minority; practice parental freedom; segregating books sends a message, it is a campaign to victimize the Library (board of commissioners).

Carole Fallon – Hiding books is a step backwards; parents should read and explain to children; there are so many mixed families today, families are not just a mom, a dad, children and a dog.

Jude Sincoskie - This is not just a gay issue – this is a specific gender specific dysphoric issue about what is in the children's section; just because a book is written for children 3-8 years old, it should not be prominently displayed; parents should be there, but, as a parent it is hard and we would like support about how books are displayed.

Garry Weiss – Thank you Sanibel Public Library, professional children's librarian – when we take grandchildren to the Library, as grandparents we are responsible to select the books for the grandchildren; books in question should continue to be in the children's area and displayed; segregating books reeks of saying maybe something is wrong with the books, it is equated to a porn section of video stores in past years; book banning – it is wonderful that this was not brought up; keep professionals in charge of the book selection.

Julie Weaver – Everyone in the room wants to feel loved, safe, valued; 80% of books portray a white family with a mom, dad, kids, and a dog – non-LBGQTQ families' children who see this lifestyle want their self-worth reinforced; regardless of what a family looks like, all families share

love; parents should stress how similar we all; we are not born with bigotry or intolerance – this is taught.

Taylor Heilpern-Baxter – Ten years ago “I” read an article about a transgender 4 year-old, was fascinated by how common this is – how can a conservative, religious family have a transgender child; there is a need to address this and support them; if these books are put in place where only adults can access them, the child could have a problem; let’s be their voice’ encourage and educate yourselves.

Arlene Dillon – Sanibel resident for 17 years; commends the Library board and staff; subject matter should not put a stigma on the Library; on the placement of books in a separate place – there is process and procedure which were not followed; instead of following procedure, persons went to a news source; communication is key to resolving the issue.

Kelly Young – patron for 11 years; thanked staff – a life line to the community especially through Covid; loves the adult summer reading program; commend the children’s librarian for her patience, knowledge, kindness; people live vicariously through books.

Shawn Allison – a 9 year resident; finds the children’s section really valuable and the children’s librarian incredible, patient; according to the Trevor Project, suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ young people, 45% of GLBTQ youth have considered suicide – this number grows to 50% for transgender and non-binary youth; we may not necessarily realize the value these books can contribute to the community; what acceptance can be for a kid facing LGBTQ questions, thoughts, concerns; books can offer information and acceptance even for a bully in the making; access is quite literally a matter of life and death.

Melissa Congress – The Library board spent numerous hours on this topic; the books in question have been checked out and are unattainable to anyone else who wants to check them out or review them; books are for learning and experience, for meeting on socially different views; when you see Ms. Deanna, go up and thank her.

Ena Weisblatt – Feels that more voices are needed; not trying to ban books; has a 4-year old and a 2-1/2 year old; it should be left up to the parent to introduce these topics to children; it is not fair to have the books open to everyone; want to be in charge of my children’s needs.

Allison Gaudreau – Asks specifically that books about sexuality not be readily available in the young children’s section.

/cac

SPLD BOC MEETING 06-30-22

PRE PUBLIC COMMENT – STATEMENT FROM MELANIE CONGRESS, BOARD CHAIR

The library staff and board members have received many e-mails and letters from concerned parents and patrons regarding the display of gender-identity subject books in the youth section. It is my understanding the books were displayed in recognition of LGBTQ month, and featured as a collection face forward, shelved at a young child's height. Most of the comments received addressed more concern over how the books were accessed and displayed. as opposed to whether they were included in the collection.

I think it's safe to say that the library is in uncharted territory when it comes to navigating this controversial issue. The comments received are on both sides of the spectrum, leaving for me, a confluence of tensions over what is proper? Parental rights or Freedom of Information? No matter your position on this issue, I think many will agree that this is a highly sensitive topic deserving of the Board's attention, review of policy, and certainly of the Executive Director's and staff's attention to management policies.

I have met personally with some of you as well, and I can assure you that I take your concerns seriously. However, I do so with the understanding that American libraries exist and function within the context of a body of laws derived from the Constitution and First Amendment. Libraries are a place for learning, exploration and access to resources to support its patron's interests and endeavors. To paraphrase the Sanibel Library's mission, its goal is to provide a strong collection that reflects the interests of its users, and that will meet the intellectual requirements of a wide variety of residents. It is recognized that some materials chosen may be offensive, shocking or boring to some – but meaningful and significant to others.

The question for me is how to apply the Policies and Mission regarding **collection to our very youngest patrons.**

As a point of information, I want to share with the Public, and as a reminder to my fellow Board members, our role as Board of Commissioners of the Sanibel Public Library District. All members of the Board share in a joint and collective authority which exists and can only be exercised when the group is in session – also known as "IN THE SUNSHINE". As a governing body, we are entrusted with establishing policy. These are **broad** parameters within which the Board, management and staff will operate. Board policies are tested to ensure that they, among other things, are necessary, consistent with the Library's mission, compliant with local, federal and state law, meet best library practices, and are **broad enough** to cover a subject

completely. The Board delegates to the Executive Director the responsibility for policy interpretation to the Public and staff – through **Management** policies.

I encourage The Board to keep its role vs that of the Executive Director at top of mind as we proceed with our meeting today.

The Sanibel Public Library is here to serve you, the Public. It is currently celebrating 60 years, and consistently ranks @ or near #1 of Top Libraries in the State. An achievement made possible by your tremendous support and that of its staff. It has adapted and changed throughout the years to meet the needs and desires of the community and will continue to do so.

I truly believe there is a remedy available to address the concerns of parents regarding the gender-identity books displayed in the youth section. The solutions may likely be ongoing, given that this is the first opportunity the Board has had to meet on the issue. My personal goal as a board member today is to continue to listen, understand, and move in a direction that guides us towards good policy. Emotions may run high today, and I urge everyone in this room to treat each other with civility, mutual respect, and consideration for all points of view.

Sanibel Vision Statement

Background

To provide a sense of direction for the future, this Vision Statement is a confirmation of the community's shared values and goals, to guide future decisions.

Sanctuary

Sanibel is and shall remain a barrier island sanctuary, one in which a diverse population lives in harmony with the island's wildlife and natural habitats. The Sanibel community must be vigilant in the protection and enhancement of its sanctuary characteristics.

The City of Sanibel will resist pressures to accommodate increased development and redevelopment that is inconsistent with the Sanibel Plan, including this Vision Statement.

The City of Sanibel will guard against and, where advisable, oppose human activities in other jurisdictions that might harm the island's sensitive habitats, including the island's surrounding aquatic ecosystems.

Community

Sanibel is and shall remain a small town community whose members choose to live in harmony with one another and with nature; creating a human settlement distinguished by its diversity, beauty, uniqueness, character and stewardship.

Diversity

The City of Sanibel cherishes its cultural, social ecological, and economic diversity, and will endeavor to maintain it.

Beauty

The City of Sanibel will foster quality, harmony and beauty in all forms of human alteration of the environment. The community aesthetic is defined as a casual style; one which is adapted to a relaxed island quality of life and respectful of local history, weather, culture and natural systems.

Uniqueness

The City of Sanibel chooses to remain unique through a development pattern which reflects the predominance of natural conditions and characteristics over human intrusions. All forms of development and redevelopment will preserve the community's unique small town identity.

Character

The City of Sanibel chooses to preserve its rural character in its setting within an urbanizing county. "Auto-urban" development influences will be avoided. The commercialization of natural resources will be limited and strictly controlled.

Stewardship

In keeping with the foregoing principles, the City of Sanibel affirms a land ethic that recognizes landholding-both public and private-as a form of stewardship, involving responsibilities to the human and natural communities of the island and its surroundings, and to future generations.

Attraction

The Sanibel Community recognizes that its attractiveness to visitors is due to the island's quality as sanctuary and as community. The City of Sanibel will welcome visitors who are drawn by, and are respectful of, these qualities; it will resist pressures to accommodate visitor attractions and activities that compromise these qualities.

Hierarchy of Values

This three-part statement of the community's vision of its future is hierarchy; one in which the dominant principle is Sanibel's sanctuary quality. Sanibel shall be developed as a community only to the extent to which it retains and embraces this quality of sanctuary. Sanibel will serve as attraction only to the extent to which it retains its desired qualities as sanctuary and community.

5429 Shearwater Drive
Sanibel, FL 33957
24 July 2022

Dear Ms. Mohundro, Members of the Board
of Commissioners, and staff members
of the Sanibel Public Library,

Thank you for the excellent work
you do to provide library materials and
services to the entire Sanibel community.

I regret that you have been
challenged by people who want to
restrict access to materials and that
you have been put in the position of
having to defend the library's mission.

I admire your openness to - and
your desire to understand - the requests
to impede access to materials and your
interest in listening to all opinions.

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I sincerely hope that in the end you will affirm your commitment to the importance of providing to all of your patrons easy access to materials that may be of interest to them.

I hope you will also make clear your view that you fully support parents' rights to limit what their own children read, ^{and that} those rights cannot impinge on the rights of other parents who welcome access to disputed materials.

Thank you again for your leadership during this demanding time.

Respectfully,

Margot Long

Dear Library Board,

I am a pediatrician who has lived on Sanibel for 14 years and has raised my three children here. I write in support of the library board and staff in keeping age-appropriate LGBTQ+ themed books available in the children's section. I am familiar with several of the books in question. These books need to be readily available to all children and families just as they are in libraries throughout the country. Every child is unique, and every child deserves to have access to books that make them feel valued and understood. They need to be given a window to see a world in which they belong.

For those parents questioning whether they want their child having access to LGBTQ+ topics, I suggest this: Every child and family will benefit from seeing these age-appropriate children's stories which includes people who are different from themselves. Even if out of a parent's comfort zone, this helps them gain an understanding and acceptance of for example the two dads in the family next door, the girl at school who has short hair and dresses like a boy, or the non-binary teen down the street. The more education we all have, the more understanding and acceptance we gain. Even as a pediatrician I still have a lot to learn about gender nonconformity, so I listen to my patients and their parents, I ask questions, I read as much as I can, and I am learning and understanding more and more with time.

What I do know is that many of these children feel very alone, and when they are ostracized they feel a deep pervasive sadness. It is well-known in the medical community that transgender youth have a high rate of suicidal thoughts and actions.¹ In 2021, 60% of LGBTQ children reported their own family was not affirming, and nearly half of all LGBTQ kids seriously considered suicide.² The library is a resource for ALL, and should always remain a safe space where these children can easily find stories, right next to all of their other favorite stories, that support them and show them that they are not alone.

Sincerely,
Dana D. Crater, MD

¹ Austin A, Craig SL, D'Souza S, McInroy LB. Suicidality Among Transgender Youth: Elucidating the Role of Interpersonal Risk Factors. *J Interpers Violence*. 2022 Mar;37(5-6):NP2696-NP2718. doi: 10.1177/0886260520915554. Epub 2020 Apr 29. Erratum in: *J Interpers Violence*. 2020 Jul 29;886260520946128. PMID: 32345113.

²<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/blog/the-trevor-projects-annual-national-survey-reveals-upward-trend-in-suicidal-thoughts-among-lgbtq-youth-with-large-disparities-for-transgender-youth-and-lgbtq-youth-of-color/>