

Black River Falls Public Library

Meeting of the Library Board

February 20, 2024

Members present: Mitch Wester, Tracy Gilbertson, Grady Gutknecht, Melanie Floyd, Sarah Peloquin, Gaylord Oppgaard, Mandy Youngthunder, and Kristin Franks. Justin Dougherty was absent. Director Cara Hart was also in attendance.

Mitch called the meeting to order at 4:00.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Sarah and a second by Kristin. Carried. Vouchers were approved with a motion by Sarah and a second by Mandy. Carried.

Patrons were present for Public Comments. Jerry Kitowski introduced himself. He came to talk about the February 17th Royal Tea Storytime. He was concerned about a controversial book that was included (referencing "My Princess Boy" by Cheryl Kilodavis) and that the program stated that children only were invited. He wanted to know why it was children only. Bobbi Kitowski introduced herself as representing MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers). She shared the same concerns as Jerry Kitowski. As a representative of the MOPS steering committee, she expressed disappointment and wants transparency about Storytime book choices. Members of MOPS would like to know ahead of time what books will be read. Youth Services Coordinator Melody Gesicki spoke to explain that the children only request was so that the kids and Jackson County Court were able to interact independent of distractions. The readers were respected older teenagers from the community and the program was not for preschoolers, but children aged 5-10. Library Director Cara Hart apologized for the lack of transparency and said that book lists for events will be now be posted ahead of time. Jerry Kitowski spoke again to ask if there will be controversial books in the future and wonders why only non-controversial books aren't chosen? Two other patrons spoke, wanting to clarify that the book lists will be posted in advance and asking where to find them. Cara said they will be posted at the library and on the website.

Grady reported that families have expressed concerns to her about people using the library to get food and sleep and their unkempt appearances, wearing hoodies with the hood up. Cara responded that we can't discriminate based on how someone looks or whether they are housed – we can react to behavior only. We don't have a no sleeping policy, but if we did it would have to apply to everyone including small children and the elderly. We are also a warming and cooling station for the community. Gaylord wondered if the families couldn't use something like this as a learning opportunity and Mitch commented that an unhoused person that frequently uses the library has helped us with setting up tables for the book sale.

Director Cara Hart's report was reviewed along with reports provided by Historian Mary Woods, Youth Services Coordinator Melody Gesicki and Library Services Coordinator Vicki Fisher.

Cara's report included that the library's hotspots are in demand, and we will be getting a third, plus our 2024 Community Read as begun with "Driftless Gold" by Sue Berg.