

Minutes of the special meeting of the Newport Library Board  
Tuesday March 31, 2009

Attending: Chip Norman, Sharon Beardsley, Carol Fisher, Curt Fewkes, Ted Smith (Library Director), Gary Firestone (Newport City Attorney), Nolan Carter, Library employees Sheryl Eldridge, Jennifer Keirans and Jeff Ingram (note-taker).

1. Meeting called to order at 10:02 am.
2. Previous meeting's minutes were approved as written.
3. Request for reconsideration of library material:

Beardsley welcomed Nolan Carter who asked that the board remove the DVD, *Queer Duck*, from the library collection. Carter began by asking the board if they considered the material pornographic. Firestone reminded the board they were not required to answer but could if they chose. Fewkes said no. Beardsley said she didn't care for the film but did not find it pornographic. Carter read several definitions of synonyms for pornography and challenged the board to state that the film was not pornographic. Carter also stated that the ALA Freedom to Read statement did not cover freedom to view. Fisher pointed out that the first paragraph speaks of "content" and Smith handed out the ALA Freedom To View statement. Carter said he had not seen this document before; he'd hoped it would have been in the packet he'd received earlier from the library in preparation for the meeting. Smith said he believed the word "read" covered the whole range of library materials.

For the record, Smith noted that the DVD was purchased in 2006 and since then, it has circulated 69 times. Carter questioned the morality of the material. He acknowledged that some films, such as *The Crying Game*, fit in with community standards even though they deal with objectionable material. *Queer Duck*, he said does not. Carter asked what policy was used to purchase library material. Smith answered that the library tries to collect material on a wide range of topics and perspectives for educational, entertainment and informational purposes. Smith also said that the library purchases material that might not otherwise be available from local sources. Carter said he thought that giving minors access to pornographic material is illegal. Firestone noted that Oregon courts give broad protections and pornography doesn't usually enter into legal decisions.

Carter asked if the board worried about protecting children from objectionable material. Smith said that the library expects parents to take responsibility for materials their children check out. Smith also stated that in his experience as a librarian, he's encountered a wide variety of opinions from parents on what they considered appropriate for their own children. Carter asked if any child can check out any material, adult or otherwise, from the library. Smith answered yes. Carter asked if the library had a moral responsibility to protect children. Norman responded that it was not up to the library board or employees to decide. Smith added that the library encourages parents to be

involved in their kids' choice of material. Carter asked if parents knew "what was going on" with the library's open access to materials policy. Firestone asked if parents were required to sign a consent form on their child's library card application. Smith said yes.

Carter asked the board if they were aware of "subliminal embedment," where messages were sub-consciously targeted at children. Carter believes such messages may be in *Queer Duck* and that democracy was not founded on debauchery.

Firestone noted that the city of Newport had a duty to protect its employees from harassment based on a number of criteria, including sexual orientation, and he asked that Carter refrain from using derogatory terms. Carter responded that he was quoting some of these terms from the film. Firestone asked Carter to state them as quotes. Fewkes said he thought the major theme of the film was that it was okay to be gay. Carter said that videos are not like Louis Lamour novels. He said that videos "don't give you a choice." Like cigarettes, he said, they should be controlled. Carter re-iterated the point he thought there might be legal remedies and that he would contact newspapers and the police if objectionable material was not put in a special collection available only after parental approval. Beardsley stated that the library can't take the place of parents. Fisher re-stated the board's stand against censorship and for parental responsibility. Carter said that parents are often working and aren't available.

Beardsley asked if there were any more comments before the board voted. Fewkes told Carter that he understood this issue was an important one for him and that he appreciated his concern. Beardsley noted that patrons do have a choice in the materials they watch or read and if material is objectionable, patrons can choose not to read or view it. Norman made a motion to retain the material, which was seconded by Fisher. The board voted unanimously to retain the material.

The meeting adjourned at 11am.