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Ginny Maziarka

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Formal complaint against West Bend Library - Large crowd expected

Concerned with the presence and appropriateness of some materials at the West Bend Community Memorial Library, West Bend residents Ginny and Jim Maziarka are taking action.

The Maziarkas have filed a formal, written complaint with the library. The complaint has been placed on the March agenda and will be heard by the members of the Library Board when they convene for their monthly meeting on Tuesday night.

Due to a large crowd that is expected to attend the proceedings, the meeting has been moved from the library board room to the City Council Chambers at City Hall.

"We find the books for youth on homosexuality to be biased, gay-affirming, promotional and romanticized," the Maziarkas said in an e-mail sent to the Daily News. "We believe our library should be offering appropriate, wholesome literature to our youth instead of pursuing the illegitimate goals of transforming the views of other people's children on the contentious issue of homosexuality."

The Maziarkas said they are requesting the library take the following steps:

Provide an equal balance of faith-based and ex-"gay" books that oppose a pro-homosexual ideology in both the YA Zone (Youth Adult Zone) and throughout the Library. The library's Web site currently features a link to a YA Zone page and shows a list of fiction and non-fiction book titles about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues which are intended for reading by "young adults" in grades six through 12.

Library Director Michael Tyree said the Maziarkas have asked the Web page be removed or become password protected in order to prevent access without parental knowledge.

That the book recommendation list under the name, "Out of the Closet," which they say brings a pro-homosexual connotation to the list, be renamed and include an equal balance of faith-based and ex-"gay" books that oppose a prohomosexual ideology.

The removal of the following books: "The Perks of Being a Wallflower" and "The Geography Club" for their explicit graphic sexual nature.

Their contention is that each book is offensive because of heterosexual oral sex and homosexual sex acts which are detailed in explicit/pornographic language.

"We expect our public library to protect children and empower parents to decide what their children can read," the Maziarkas said.

As part of the process for making formal complaints to the Library, the Maziarkas met face-to-face with Youth Adult Librarian Kristin Pekoll and Library Assistant Director Sue Cantrell last Monday, and Tyree Wednesday to discuss their concerns.

"I thought they had definite concerns," Tyree said. "I thought they presented them in a good way. We listened (to them) and they listened (to us)."

Tyree and the Marziarkas have their opinions on how books are purchased and placed at the library. Tyree said books are purchased through a bibliographer who relies on his or her training background and databases which serve as resources for book reviews that cover a wide range of genres.

"We just don't buy books that are based upon hearing that it is a great book," he said. Tyree defended the process the library uses to purchase books and the collection of titles that are available to the public.

“These books that they (the Maziarkas) are saying were pornography or leading teens down the primrose path toward sexuality or early sexuality are published by reputable publishers and not fly-by-night publishers,” he said. “The publishers themselves would have been prosecuted by the federal government if it was pornography for publishing these (titles that are) slanted toward that age range.”

The Maziarkas said while the library claims to use library review materials to make their book selections, they added that “we feel these media are liberal and do not provide a purely objective viewpoint.”

“We are in this community. We (feel we) know what is good. We don’t need review magazines to tell us.”

During last week’s meetings, the Maziarkas did provide the library with a list of book titles they felt were suitable for placement. According to Tyree, all but one of the 12 titles on the list are adult books.

He went on to note that Pekoll researched how many libraries in the three-county library system and throughout the state carry the suggested titles and found some are available. Yet when asked whether or not the library will seek out to “balance” its current selection of book titles, Tyree said that decision will depend on the outcome of Tuesday night’s board meeting.

“I can not call that shot because I report to a group of nine library board members,” he said. “It’s not my determination what our board members are going to do. It’s the board members that will make the determination.

“I think we do have a balanced collection. But Mr. and Mrs. Maziarka did not find that we had any books that showed there are ways out of homosexuality.”

Tyree has received support and complaints through e-mails, phone messages and notes left at his desk regarding the issue.

“I think what we are seeing here are many members of the community sharing their opinions,” he said.

He was up front when asked if the matter will be resolved following Tuesday's meeting.

“I have no idea which way this is going to be resolved,” he said.

West Bend Mayor Kristine Deiss acknowledged her belief in freedom of speech and freedom of the press because it affords everyone the right to speak out, and that she is pleased the formal process is moving forward.

“I have faith in the process,” she said. “I don’t feel it’s my place to dictate what the Library Board does. They are experts at what they do.”

This was a wimpy response from our mayor. She was equally as wimpy when we talked to her earlier. She did not want to take responsibility with the library board, or investigate in any way. Keep in mind, the mayor APPOINTS the library board.