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Meeting on Gay-Themed Books Postponed; Library Board Asks That Complaint Be Further Clarified

By DAVE RANK Daily News Staff

A meeting to discuss a citizen complaint on the inclusion of gay-themed books at the West Bend Community Memorial Library is being postponed, the library director said Thursday, until the complainants clarify which books they object to.

On Feb. 12, **Ginny and Jim Maziarka** of West Bend filed a formal request for reconsideration of library materials complaint, objecting to all books in the [Out of the Closet category listed in the Young Adult section of the library's Web site](#).

A March 3 meeting of the Library Board at which the complaint was to be discussed was postponed at the request of the West Bend Fire Department because more people were in the City Hall's Common Council Chamber than its 265-person capacity.

That meeting had been rescheduled from the library to City Hall in an effort to accommodate an anticipated larger crowd.

The library was looking for a larger facility to hold the meeting.

In an exchange of e-mails Thursday and Friday also sent to the Daily News, **Library Director Michael Tyree**, following consultation with **City Attorney Mary Schanning**, informed the Maziarkas that public statements they made since filing their original complaint indicated they wanted certain books banned, not the entire category.

Because of that, Tyree wrote, the Maziarkas "will need to file individual requests about specific books that they object to and state reasons for their objection. These complaints will go through the normal reconsideration process which involves two meetings with library staff before their requests can go before the (Library) Board."

"Essentially, what is being requested is that the Maziarkas clarify their complaint and work through the existing process regarding any specific books which they object to," Tyree told the Daily News.

In their responding e-mail Friday morning, the Maziarkas called Tyree's decision "the library board's attempts to unilaterally withdraw our appeal without our permission and duck the issue that has now garnered much public attention so as to maneuver the issue out of the public eye and scrutiny with

delay and the use of more private meetings with staff.”

“They know what is in these books and they know they will be shamed by any public airing of it,” Ginny Maziarka wrote to the Daily News.

“We would like to clarify that our original request stands,” the Maziarkas wrote to Tyree.

The Maziarkas said they initially sent a letter protesting the inclusion of “homosexual materials in the library as well as on the (library’s) web site.” They complied when Tyree told them they needed to fill out the formal request for reconsideration of library materials and discuss it with **Young Adult librarian Kristin Pekoll** before the Library Board could act on it. They then followed library procedures and talked to Tyree, after which the complaint was added to the Library Board agenda.

The letter and the formal complaint should be sufficient to trigger a hearing, the Maziarkas wrote in their e-mail. “We have been through this process once now and we have not withdrawn anything. All we have done is respond to your requests for clarification and more specifics, which we have done carefully and thoroughly.

“We insist on our appeal rights as we feel your withdrawal of our complaint is in gross error. We wish to proceed with the staff decisions that have already been fully discussed.”

The Maziarkas wrote that they feel “there is no point in breaking up the request into sub requests” and starting the process all over.

Tyree said the Maziarkas’ original complaint objected to all books in the Out of the Closet category and not to specific books.

“Since the cancellation of the March 3, 2009 meeting, Mr. and Mrs. Maziarka have stated to the media, in blogs and to the City Attorney via email that they do not want to ban all of the books in the ‘Out of the Closet’ category. The City Attorney interprets this to mean that their original complaint has been withdrawn. The Attorney’s analysis of what has been in the media, in their blogs and what the Maziarkas e-mailed to her is that they are now objecting to specific books within the genre.”

Library Board meeting is normally are held on the first Tuesday of the month but that will not happen next month. Tuesday, April 7 is the spring general election.

Tyree said he is still working on putting together a meeting in front of the Library Board.