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Mayor Asks Orland Library to Consider Internet Filtering on all Computers

Orland Park Mayor Dan McLaughlin wrote a letter cited a Supreme Court opinion that says filtering isn't unconstitutional, but adults can ask for sites to be unblocked.

Posted by [Ben Feldheim](#) (Editor) , November 15, 2013 at 09:25 PM



Mayor Dan McLaughlin. Credit: Patch File Photo

Mayor Dan McLaughlin wrote a letter earlier in the week to Orland Park Public Library Board of Trustees President Nancy Healy, asking that the library board consider a more strict Internet policy.

In the letter dated Nov. 11, McLaughlin referred to the “ongoing controversy over access library patrons have to certain websites.” He then reaffirmed that the library is a separate government entity from the village, but then offers his opinion as a citizen and “community leader.”

McLaughlin writes that he understands libraries’ role in regard to free speech, and the need to defend it, but parents also have an obligation to protect children from “obscene or illegal material that would prove to be harmful to them.”

While he acknowledges that the library has “strong safeguards in place to protect children,” McLaughlin recommended looking to the [U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on the Children’s Internet Protection Act in 2003](#) for guidance.

The act forbids libraries from receiving federal funding for Internet access if they don’t install filters to block obscene or pornographic images, and prevent minors from accessing harmful

material. The court ruled that CIPA did not violate First Amendment rights by insisting on the standard when funding is issued. But arguments were also made in the case that filtering technology is imprecise and can block sites and information that are not considered obscene, harmful or pornographic.

The court's ruling also included that librarians should unblock sites at the request of an adult patron should he or she want to access a site that is blocked due to the filtering shortcomings.

McLaughlin suggests in his letter that the Orland Park Public Library adopt a similar policy and filter all computers, but allow for unblocking on a case-by-case basis.

"I personally don't have a problem with the mayor going through the proper channels and giving the board his opinion," Healy said about the letter. "We're asking anyone to give their opinions, so long as it is delivered in a proper manner. And the proper manner would be to send it to the library."

Healy said if email is unresponsive while the library changes its servers, residents and non-residents alike can mail in letters addressed to the library, but directed to board members, and they will receive them. She also recommended that people call the library as well to share thoughts.

"We haven't yet heard enough opinions from residents," Healy said.

The library board's next meeting is Monday at 7 p.m. at the Orland Park Public Library, 14921 S. Ravinia Ave.