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Ben Toenjes

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Another response to 'Casually Defending the Constitution'

Dear Editor,

As a resident of Orland Park, I am writing to respond to an editorial from the Feb. 20, 2014 edition of *The Orland Park Prairie* entitled "Casually Defending the Constitution." After reading your opinion piece, it became evident to me that you lack certain knowledge of facts about this situation. In order to help you form an educated opinion, I'd like offer some information regarding recent actions of the same people you claim defend the Constitution.

As you state in your editorial the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution was written to, in part, protect unpopular thought. However, there has been a sustained effort by members of the Orland Park Public Library Board of Trustees to silence criticisms of their policies, specifically [if] they are unpopular with the board.

On Feb. 18, 2014 the OPPL, in an apparent response to receiving negative comments on their Facebook page, disabled the public ratings to censor those who would otherwise have a means of sharing differing views (positive or negative) about the Library's vote against internet filters.

During public comments at the Jan. 20 board meeting, the board abruptly decided to stop hearing statements they had heard before, including silencing at least one concerned citizen who had never spoken before. People with prepared agendas were left unable to speak. As you know, the ability to voice your opinion to an elected body is an important right protected by law. This action was wrong and a means to restrict free speech.

Additionally, at the interim Feb. 12, 2014 board meeting, a new open meeting policy was instituted attempting to restrict speech for all future meetings. This policy change, as well as the meeting itself, are currently under investigation by the Attorney General's office.

On Nov. 4, 2013 critics were handing out fliers on public property regarding disagreements with OPPL policies. Police were called. The premise was that it was against library policy (and therefore somehow illegal?) to hand out fliers on library property. The police explained to the library director that no law was being broken and left without further action. This was, again, the library acting against the First Amendment.

What has happened to the idea of open public discourse, especially regarding an entity funded by the people? What is happening at the OPPL constitutes a perversion of power that has become oppressive to free speech.

Brian Toenjes

Orland Park resident

- See more at: <http://www.opprairie.com/letters-editor-1#sthash.Y5wkQKUG.dpuf>