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A closer look at the changing OPPL board



Eric Skalac, Assistant Editor

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Aside from potential write-in candidates, Joanna Leafblad and Christian Barcelona are expected to be the next Orland Park Public Library board members, following the disallowing of two other candidates who incorrectly filed their paperwork to run for the seats.

They are to join Nancy Healy, Denis Ryan, Diane Jennings, Catherine Lebert and Julie Ann Craig on the board.

Board member Beth Gierach was appointed to the board in February after former board President Carole Hillman resigned, and she is not running for a new term, accounting for one of the uncontested seats. She did not have any recommendations for the new board but said she “hopes the policy changes that were made in the last year remain in place, in terms of computer access.”

Some library patrons have criticized the library for not filtering content on computers designed for adult use.

"I feel strongly [that] not placing filters on the adult computers was the right thing to do," she said.

Outgoing trustee Dan Drew said putting Internet filters in place was one of his main causes when he joined the board earlier this year, after former Trustee Mary Ann Ahl resigned. Though he was outvoted when the board took up the issue, he said that is not why he is not pursuing a new term.

"It deserves a lot of time, and there's a lot that goes into this," he said. "You know the library's a great place, but once you really dive into it, it needs a lot of work. And I'm by no means retired and have the time to do that. It wasn't fair of me to continue that. ... I have four young kids at home."

Drew said the board faces continuous challenges, from issues with the library's roof to maintenance to keeping taxes low.

"[Library Director] Mary [Weimar] and her team are doing a great job, but they also need the support of the board ... to try to help out with some of those areas," he said.

As far as advice for the new board members?

"If they have common sense, I think they should be fine," Drew said.

Candidate Joanna Leafblad — who initiated the process of having two candidates removed based on flaws in their candidate applications — said she is a longtime Orland Park resident who thinks the library is a wonderful tool for the community. She said she and her children visit the library often and she "likes how the whole structure of the library promotes cultural activity and learning."

"I thought it would be really nice to be able to contribute to the community by keeping that going," she said.

As far as the issue of Internet filtering, she said she can see the arguments on both sides but that she does not believe the library has been negligent.

"I just think it's something we should be aware of," she said. "And if people abuse the privileges the library provides, we have to consider what actions should be taken, if any."

The Prairie will be speak to candidate Christian Barcelona in next week's issue. 🔍 | ☰

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