

DRAFT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Sebastopol Library Advisory Board

August 9, 2023, 4:30 p.m.

Location: Sebastopol Regional Library 7140 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol 95472

PUBLIC COMMENT

Attendees: Kee Nethery, Walt Frazer, Mary Shiff, Tong Lai Ginn, Dena Bliss, Helena Whistler, Stephanie Elliot, Fred Engbarth (Commissioner), Sue Fujita (Friends of Sebastopol Library), Stephen Zollman (City Council Liaison), Barbara Maes (Library Administration), Jason Duran (Acting Branch Manager)

1. Kee Nethery called to the meeting to order at 4:30 pm
2. Introductions
3. Agenda was approved.
4. Announcements: None
5. Public Comment on non-agendized items. Public comment is limited to three (3) minutes per topic, unless otherwise noted: none.
6. Discussion Items:
 - a. Statement on Treatment of the Sebastopol Branch Manager

Walt Frazer prefaced the proceedings by saying that Sebastopol Branch Manager, Mathew Rose, gave his permission to discuss anything he had relayed to board members. A discussion ensued about who to address the statement to and whether it should be directly addressed to Library Director, Erika Thibault. Frazer suggested that the Library Commission be addressed. Dena Bliss expressed concern that the LAB had not been informed of the branch manager's suspension and that LAB and board have been very unhappy. Stephanie Elliot said that the [disciplinary process of the MOU] policy as implemented was not compassionate, was disruptive, and failed to inform the community. Frazer stated that confidentiality is intended to protect the employee not the administration. He said that confidentiality was required of all library personnel, that a proper process was not followed, and that secrecy was used as a weapon. A member of the public, Greg Beale, spoke. He relayed information from his conversations with Mathew. Beale said that the history between Mathew Rose and the library [Administration] goes way back, that advocating for the library has been a struggle for Rose, due to Library Administration reluctance. The recurring theme is that opinions go down [from Administration] and not up [from library branches]. Beale outlined disciplinary actions and alleged harassment of Rose. Beale expressed concerns about the work culture at Sonoma County Library and that he believes that Rose's suspension was an unprofessional, kneejerk reaction

taken under false pretenses. Member of the public, Suiyin, said she was sad to hear about the Sebastopol Branch Manager's suspension and felt it was abrupt, unprofessional, and without warning. She wrote a letter to Sebastopol City Council. Tong Lai Ginn said the conflict is about transparency versus privacy, that that privacy can be used to protect the Library Administration, who made mistakes. He said the balance between transparency and privacy is unequal and asked how can the LAB advise with zero transparency. Helena Whistler suggested that the purpose of the statement should be to resolve matters respectfully, express the impact of the library administration's actions on the community, and suggest different ways to respond to similar situations instead of a not very well thought-out process. Fred Engbarth explained that discussing matters in legal terms can have an undesired effect on discourse, disempowering their effort. He said the LAB's power comes from representing the community. Engbarth suggested that it was better for the statement to express community impacts and feelings than to prescribe action. He suggested mediation as an alternative to conflict. Bliss said the LAB was kept ignorant of what was going on. She the library administration should undo the harm they have caused and consider the impacts of their actions on the vote for library funding. Kee recapped the concerns expressed including lack of transparency and harm to the community. Board selected a subcommittee composed of Tong Lai Ginn, Walt Frazer, and Dena Bliss, to compose the LAB's statement. Board voted to hold another special meeting on August 15, 2023 at 4:30.

7. Agenda Items for Next Meeting: August 15, 2023, 4:30 pm, at Sebastopol Regional Library, 7140 Bodega Ave, Sebastopol, CA, 95472
 - a. Statement on Treatment of the Sebastopol Branch Manager
8. Additional Public Comment: none.
9. Adjourn: 5:50pm