



Just Another Week

By Andrew Dannehy
Book Banning Should Be Done In Public

After a 14-year-old bravely stood before a room full of adults with tears running down her face, explaining that she is an LGBTQ Gale-Etrick-Trempealeau student and that a book in question could really help future LGBTQ students, a school district committee hid when voting to ban the book from the middle school library.

I have not read *Queer Ducks (and other Animals): The Natural World of Animal Sexuality* — the book in question — so I'm not going to go in depth on whether or not it should have been outlawed from the G-E-T Middle School library. If you're looking for that debate, you've come to the wrong place.

This column is about whether or not the banning of the book should be done in public. I believe it should, and that the people who make the decision should have their name attached to their vote. The Wisconsin Department of Justice agrees with me.

I had to argue just to get the meeting to be posted and open properly. I received a tip about the meeting and, after I inquired about it, I was told an agenda didn't have to be posted based on the school district's policy. That policy also said the appointed committee would make a decision regarding the status of the book in closed sessions.

Thankfully, state statutes override school policy. The state statute covering open meeting laws quite clearly indicates that, while the committee was appointed and not elected, it still qualified as a governmental body and governmental bodies must follow open meeting laws. That means, the meeting had to be properly posted with an agenda and that the committee could not discuss or vote on the topic behind closed doors.

After contacting the school attorney, district superintendent Michele Butler complied and thanked me for pressing the issue.

The committee sat and listened to members of the public, almost all of whom supported keeping the book in the school library. That included a 14-year-old student who explained how much the book meant to her as she fought back tears. Despite that, the committee voted — via a secret ballot — to remove the book from the middle school library.

They certainly are entitled to their opinions, but committee members should at least put their names to their votes. Three people voted to remove the book, one person voted to keep it. The public deserves to know where each stood.

Again, that isn't just my opinion. I'm not a lawyer, so I don't like getting into the legal mumbo jumbo, but Wisconsin State Statute 19.88 (1) certainly indicates that they were legally required to put their names on their votes. The statute states: "Unless otherwise specifically provided by statute, no secret ballot may be utilized to determine any election or other decision of a governmental body except the election of the officers of such body in any meeting."

Once again, I brought this to the district's attention and, again, they agreed. At some point, the hearing will be held again. This time, it will be open and everyone will know how committee members voted.

To be clear, I'm not blaming any one individual — other than perhaps the person who wrote the school policy in the first place. Those involved thought they were following the rules, but I wish that someone, somewhere along the way had thought "hey, this doesn't seem right." That somebody had thought that the public deserves more. They are in positions where they answer to the public, but didn't even consider those most impacted by the decision they would make.

We shouldn't need laws to tell us to do what is right. If you're going to vote to remove a resource that one of your students told you could drastically improve the lives of future students, you should put your name on that vote.

From The Early Files



Compiled from: The Arcadia News-Leader, Galesville Republican & Whitehall Times

25 YEARS AGO June 18, 1998

A divided Whitehall city council voted last week to increase police coverage. The aldermen voted four to two to accept a federal Community Oriented Policing Services program grant that has been awarded to the city. The COPS funds would be used to cover part of the cost of adding a fourth full-time officer to the staff of the Whitehall Police Department, which presently has three full-timers and a number of part-timers. Voting in favor of accepting the grant were aldermen Jeff Hauser, Ralph Jacobson, Dan Schreiner and Dick Sosalla. Casting the "no" votes were Steve Brekke and Henry Thompson.

The Trempealeau County Board of Supervisors voted to increase the mileage reimbursement paid to county employees who drive their own vehicles for work-related purposes. The mileage-payment increase, approved by a 14 to seven vote, hikes the reimbursement from 28 to 32.5 cents per mile. The latter figure is the amount allowed by the federal Internal Revenue Service for tax purposes and the resolution approved by the board ties the county reimbursement rate to the IRS figure, which is increased periodically.

Megan Drangstveit,

daughter of Larry and Ellen Drangstveit of Eleva, was crowned the Trempealeau County Dairy ambassador at the annual June Dairy Month "On the Farm" breakfast last Saturday.

Miss Arcadia 1997, Kathryn Slaby, is preparing to make her journey to Oshkosh for the upcoming Miss Wisconsin Pageant. The daughter of Tony and Marlys Slaby, Arcadia, is attending Winona State University and is studying elementary education. She said she is excited about being the only baton twirler at the Miss Wisconsin Pageant.

Cyndi Schultz, an activity aide at Franciscan Skemp Healthcare-Arcadia Campus, has poured her heart out to individuals afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. She, along with a group of dedicated people, have done what they can to help bring awareness to the disease. Those efforts have not gone unnoticed as she was recently named the recipient of the 1997 Professional Award from the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Association Chapter Network.

Area community activist Terry Madden ended weeks of speculation last Wednesday when he announced that he will be running for Wisconsin's 91st State Assembly district seat. Madden, a former aide to Gov. Tommy

Thompson, vowed to make tax relief, quality education and protecting agriculture his key campaign as he runs as a Republican against incumbent Democrat Barbara Gronemus.

Galesville will sell Kinderhook and seven acres of Gale College land to the Gale-Etrick-Trempealeau School District. The \$305,000 sale, in the form of a five-year lease/purchase agreement has the district making payments for five years before taking ownership after a balloon payment in 2003. The school has been leasing the Kinderhook property from the city for two years.

The committee for promoting safe and stable families in Trempealeau County had its first all-county meeting on June 11. Twenty-five people attended the meeting and "every community was represented," said Pat Malone of the University of Wisconsin-Extension Office, which is in charge of leading the effort.

50 YEARS AGO June 21, 1973

The state Department of Natural Resources has charged the Associated Milk Producers, Inc., plant in Blair with discharging del-

eterious substances into the Trempealeau River. One of the co-op's wastewater treatment lagoons failed May 11 and dumped an estimated 14 million gallons of plant wash water into the river.

The Arcadia area apparently felt the brunt of a freakish storm on Monday. Leaden skies brought rain to the city earlier in the morning. But about 10 a.m., with less threatening skies, a violent wind swept through the area, uprooting trees, downing power and telephone lines and causing some property damage.

Ann Falkenberg, Arcadia, was elected district supervisor, District 1, Cedar City, at Badger Girls State on the University of Wisconsin Campus in Madison. The weeklong conference sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary and University Extension, is designed to give the 537 high school girls attending it state practical experience in good government.

Gerald Rall, Galesville, was awarded first prize for his original clay sculpturing at the Galena Art Festival in Galena, Ill. He will be

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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

People of Trempealeau County should appreciate the Galesville city council's decision to proceed with the cost of determining what needs to be done to strengthen the third floor of the Old Main Cultural Center for future use.

Old Main represents the legacy of people determined to bring a university education to people settling the Coulee and Bluffs region of western Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota as early as the 1850's. People operating the Cultural Center at the Old Main building continue within that legacy to "preserve history, promote the arts and inspire ideas through personal and community involvement."

The operation involves at least forty actively engaged volunteers and a large number of performers and artists plus the audiences who support the events. Planning events requires people talking with each other; most events include a time for coffee and conversation as people view the art on display. The operation of the Old Main Cultural Center is an asset to the whole region as people leave their online engagement to participate in planning, hear live music, see the work of regional artists, talk about historic interests, and share ideas about life. One who studies community relationships has said that some communities find it hard to find three people who will talk with each other to get anything done.

Opened as the Main Building of Galesville University in 1863, The Old Main Cultural Center has seen a number of iterations through its 160 years that have contributed to the "educating culture" of our region. Old Main's third floor auditorium has been called "the best place in the world to hear music" because of the intimate space in a stone building. The Steinway grand piano built in 1916 is a draw for performers. The value of the building is in its power to draw people together who want to breath history, hear live music, view art and artifacts and talk with each other about the experience. The Old Main venue is owned by the City of Galesville and the cultural program is operated by a regional board. Determining the cost of preserving the space is an important step in keeping this cultural jewel available for public use.

Rev. Jim Riley,
Galesville

WEEKLY POLL QUESTION

Should the book "Queer Ducks" be banned from school libraries?

YES NO

Vote at www.trempealeauntimes.com or call us at 715-538-4765. Voting closes at 8 a.m. Tuesday morning..

LAST WEEK'S POLL QUESTION RESULTS

Have you been to a movie theater since the COVID-19 pandemic began?

64% YES 36% NO

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