



PCLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES

6:00 PM December 11, 2025

Central Clemson Library

PRESIDING: Ms. Lori Osborn, Chair – At Large

Dr. Alfred Wheeler – District 1 (Clemson)

Ms. Nancy Miller – District 2 (Six Mile/Central)

Mr. Danny Parton – District 3 (Pickens)

Ms. Alesa Pinkerton – District 4 (Liberty)

Dr. Henry Wilson – District 5 (Easley)

Ms. Susan Childers – District 6 (Dacusville)

1. Public Comment

Comments are limited to three (3) minutes per participant and 30 minutes total.

1. **Mae Anderson**

She is with the group Students Against Book Banning. She spoke about the book *Like a Love Story* by Abdi Nazemian and how the AIDS epidemic that is discussed in this book is an underrepresented piece of history. This story is a powerful reminder of the state of what happens when lives are discounted due to hate. These stories are critical for queer teens, for their families and for anyone seeking understanding and empathy. *Like a Love Story* is a novel about being a teenager that was written for teenagers.

2. **Johnelle Raines**

She states that the proviso is clear on what a minor should not have easy access to. According to South Carolina law, the definition of prurient interest is “shameful or morbid interest in nudity, sex, or excretion, and is reflective of an arousal of lewd and lascivious desires and thoughts.” She read aloud one of the lewd passages from the book. She asks to obey the law and move this book to the adult section.

3. **Denise Davidson**

She is pleased to see an update to the by-laws on the agenda. The book that is being reviewed is a young adult book. Young adults are 18 to 25. She states that her comments are geared toward book placement, not book banning. She feels this book violates the proviso, so the board can comply with the law or not.

4. **Debi Sole**

She stated that the small pieces that she read of the book *Like a Love Story* made her physically sick. She asked if the book was only about dudes having sex with dudes. She spoke about the author and the reasons why he started writing young adult books. She mentioned that he wanted to write to teens because it is a time between childhood and becoming an adult. She stated that the author and others like him have an agenda and she hopes this book is moved to the adult section.

5. **Cathy Travers**

She stated that she never read a love story like the book *Like a Love Story*. She feels it is disgusting and over the top for a minor. She hopes minors don't even understand what these words mean. She felt like the book was attacking having a relationship with a girl and cutting down certain things in our society that are normal and are healthy. She doesn't think minors need to read a book that shines a light on their dark corners without a psychiatrist or someone helping them through it.

6. **Brittany Fowler**

She states that the library is one of our greatest shared resources where every member of this community can have access to information. She values the fact that the library serves the entire community, not just

one group, not just one set of beliefs, not just one perspective, but everyone. She believes that it is important for the board to consider how their decisions impact the full spectrum of people that they serve. She stated that moving books is censorship, it is restricting access to information for ideological reasons. She stated that she trusts the expertise of the library professionals to make thoughtful placement decisions.

7. Meredith Burr

She stated that she is an active library user, loves library programs and helpful librarians. She has always encouraged her children to read and wants them to have access to a range of books so they can learn stories about all kinds of people living through all kinds of times. She spoke about the YA awards that *Like a Love Story* has won, so it is appropriate for the book to stay in the YA section of the library. She stated that libraries are for everyone and that a book on a shelf is not a threat, if you don't want to read it you can bypass it on the shelf. She asked that the board not restrict access to an important story for teens that do want access to it, please leave *Like a Love Story* in the YA section.

2. By-Laws Update

Ms. Osborn reads what the existing By-Laws Article VI states: "Nominations for Board offices of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer shall be made at the March Meeting of the Board. Elections of these officers shall occur at the May meeting of the Board and their term will begin in January."

Ms. Osborn reads the proposed changes to By-Laws Article VI: "Each December, before the Chairman's term concludes, the Chairman of the current year shall call a special meeting to be held in January, prior to that month's regularly scheduled Board meeting. The purpose of this special meeting is to nominate and elect Board officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer) whose terms shall run from January to December for the upcoming year. Nominations may be made by any Board member. Nominations with subsequent elections will be conducted sequentially in the following order: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer. A Board member may be nominated for more than one office."

Mr. Parton makes a motion to accept the changes to the By-Laws Article VI. Dr. Wheeler seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

3. Update to 2026 Holiday Schedule – addition of Veteran's Day

The Director stated that council passed a new handbook with the addition of Veteran's Day to the county's scheduled holidays to be closed. We have added Veteran's Day to the library's holiday schedule.

Dr. Wheeler made a motion to add Veteran's Day to the library's holiday schedule to be closed. Dr. Wilson seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

4. Reconsideration appeal *Like a Love Story* by Abdi Nazemian

Ms. Osborn asked if everyone on the board read the book. Dr. Wilson, Ms. Miller, and Ms. Pinkerton all stated that they did not read the book, and per policy, they would not participate in the vote.

Dr. Wheeler made a motion to retain the book *Like a Love Story* by Abdi Nazemian in the young adult section of the library system. Ms. Osborn seconded the motion.

Dr Wheeler stated: "The petitioner on this request objects to Nazemian's book on the basis of inappropriate graphic sexual descriptions that would incite prurient interests in minors and as such violates Proviso 27.1, citing specific pages on which these can be found. The petitioner suggests that additional resources to support these claims are Federal laws on exposing minors to obscene material. In the expanded comments, the petitioner cites selected entries from Common Sense Media, one of which criticizes the sexual content. Further, the petitioner identifies school districts that have banned the book or are challenging it. Proviso 27.1 does refer to removing books from the YA section that have prurient material in them, and the book does in fact have explicit references to sex and a few brief explicit scenes. The proviso does not give guidance as to what should be judged as prurient, leaving us with the legal definition: a morbid interest in nudity, sex, or excretion and is reflective of an arousal of lewd and lascivious desires and thoughts. It would be difficult to characterize the scenes as morbid, as they are not protracted representing encounters that fit naturally in the overall plot of the book and represent behaviors that are not rare among teen populations. For this reason, they would not likely arouse thoughts and desires that teens do not already have. To suggest otherwise is

disingenuous. It should also be pointed out that the cited references and scenes are not the centerpiece of the book. This is evidenced by the petitioner's own references, as the first page cited is 271 in a 413 page book, and one of the Common Sense quotes by the petitioner is largely a positive review. In fact, reading the full text of the Common Sense review reveals that it is overwhelmingly positive. This brings us to the petitioner's reference to the "law" regarding obscene material. Law and precedence are clear, even in the case of minors, that a book must be considered on the whole as not having literary or artistic merit. This is not the case for this book. In fact, sex is treated in all its complexity, with levels of restraint and a pervasive emphasis on safe sex. The protagonists for the most part engage in sexual behavior in loving relationships. The young people in this book are dealing with many issues that many in any population of teens might be. Heterosexual and homosexual love are presented sensitively, as is the importance of honesty in both romantic and friendship relationships. The prejudices against both immigrants and gays are realistically presented, as the author has direct experience with both. The complexity of relationships with parents, especially as colored by a beloved gay uncle dying of AIDS or a conflicted teen who is struggling with the reality of being gay in a homophobic environment, are not trivialized, with some parents learning to be more accepting and others not. It is a story of teens using their talents for the good and struggling toward commendable goals. This book is also an accurate history lesson about the AIDS epidemic of the late 1980s and the toll it took on segments of our population during a time when society was coming to grips with the cause, transmission and lethality of the disease, especially in the days before effective treatments were available. It also deals with the effectiveness and sometimes necessity of peaceful protest to mitigate indifference or outright prejudice by the church, the pharmaceutical industry and the government. Overall, this book is a heartwarming tale with realistic characters with much to offer young people about acceptance, love, forgiveness and the fact they can make a difference, lessons that are sorely needed in this divisive time. I might add, as for the banning or challenging of these books by school districts, we must hope that public libraries would be a place where all members of the population can find materials that speak to them, not just the alleged demographic majority. Finally, as a reminder, parents can opt to have access to the books their teens check out. In this case, it may be worthwhile to read this book with their teens."

Mr. Parton stated that we should set aside the proviso and look at it from a parents and humanity point of view. His option is that a book can influence a kid's sexual arousal. There are parents that don't want their 13-year-old to come across a book like this. If we are going to support the whole community, make the book available, but for those that do not want their child to stumble across it, put it in a place where the parents know where the book is. He states that in his opinion the book goes against the proviso and he would like to see it moved to the adult section.

Ms. Osborn stated: "The book describes a sweet love story centered on friends and family, highlighting the unconditional love among three young people without any romantic beginnings or judgment. This book is clearly written for the YA group, and I can say with almost certainly that if the story's dynamic would have been about a young male and female, we would not be discussing this book. But then there would be no story, no telling of someone's struggles growing up gay, living in fear that they would be rejected by their parents, the very people that should love them unconditionally regardless of who they chose to love. Whether people want to accept this or not does not matter, there are many teens struggling with these very things today and yes, in Pickens County. This book gives teens hope of finding loving caring friendships and possibly a loving relationship with someone who will value them for who they are.

One emphasis that was brought to light time and again, was the need to practice safe sex whether you are in a homosexual or heterosexual relationship. Regardless of if people want to believe it or not, sexuality needs to be discussed and protection needs to be in the forefront of that discussion not only for unwanted pregnancies, but also sexually transmitted diseases.

This book showed a great deal of compassion, empathy and family love when it came to taking care of the uncle who was dying of AIDS. This was a Love Story in itself the way the sister and niece took care of him to make sure he felt their love so he could pass with dignity and respect.

There is nothing prurient about this book. I believe it should stay in the YA section."

Dr. Wilson mentioned that the proviso specifically states for the book to be prurient, it's tested legal standard of prurient would be the entire book, not just page 218. Ms. Osborn stated that there were actually just two pages that described one sexual act. The Director stated that you must consider the whole book. Ms. Osborn

stated that there were not “dudes having sex with dudes” in the whole book, that is not what the book was about.

Dr. Wilson asked the Director if they move books for educational purposes. The Director stated that yes, they do move books based on what audience the book is written for. Dr. Wilson stated that if you are moving a book for political coercion, that is censorship. If you are stating that the book should be moved because what it is about isn't your moral values, that is where moving it is the same thing as banning it. As library professionals, you have taken like 20 classes on how to curate the books. It is crystal clear that some people want books to be moved because of their own ideological, religious and political beliefs and that is what creates infringement. Dr. Wilson stated that he wanted it in the minutes that 37 minutes into the discussion Denise Davidson and Johnelle Raines left the meeting. Dr. Wilson made the point that parents should not cut their children lose in the library if they are concerned about what books they are going to pick up and read, and when you let other people decide what you can read and what you have access to, you're letting them decide what you think and how you're living. Dr. Wilson stated that in America, we have freedom of speech so that you can disagree and expose yourself to ideas that other places try to control. Dr. Wilson explained that if you don't want your kids to come across this book in the library, stay with your kids. The library is not a playground where you can cut your kids lose, the library staff are not here to supervise your kids.

Ms. Pinkerton asked the Director if she read the entire book before placing it on the shelf or if she went by what the publisher required. The Director responded that staff follow the collection development policy that the board has approved, which is to look at reviews and as much information as we can about the books and then choose accordingly. It would not be possible to read every single book we purchase. Dr. Wilson asked how many books the library buys a year. The Director responded that they purchase over 10,000 books a year. Dr. Wilson stated that you would need 10 full-time employees, reading 10 hours a day, just to read every single book purchased. Dr. Wheeler pointed out that the board is committed to reading up to three books a month, but we got lists of books to reconsider and we couldn't keep up with reading them.

Dr. Wilson asked Mr. Parton if he is okay with violating someone's constitutional right over his own opinion and position. Mr. Parton made a motion to close the meeting. Ms. Osborn declined to close the meeting. Dr. Wilson asked Mr. Parton again if he is okay with violating someone's constitutional right over his own opinion and position. Mr. Parton stated that he is not okay with violating someone's constitutional right over his own opinion and position. Dr. Wilson made the point that by Mr. Parton voting to move this book to the adult section, he is violating someone's constitutional rights even though he states that he would not violate someone's constitutional rights. Mr. Parton asked if anyone has read a book that has inspired or influenced them. Dr. Wilson asked Mr. Parton if there is a book that has been written that would ever make him want to have sex with a man.

Ms. Osborn reiterates Dr. Wheeler's motion on the table, to retain the book *Like a Love Story* by Abdi Nazemian in the young adult section of the library system. Ms. Osborn seconded the motion. Ms. Osborn and Dr. Wheeler are in favor. Mr. Parton is opposed. Dr. Wilson, Ms. Miller, and Ms. Pinkerton abstain from voting due to not having read the book. Motion carried, the book *Like a Love Story* by Abdi Nazemian will remain in the young adult section of the library system.

Ms. Osborn made the following statement: “As this is my last meeting, I would like to say some things that I have not been able to comment on until now. How appropriate that my last meeting would be one where we are voting on a book that was clearly written for the YA audience.

Never in my life have I been exposed to such hatred as my last three years on the Library Board and going to County Council Meetings. While everyone has the freedom of speech, you do not have the freedom to disparage people and their reputations. Many people that have gotten up and spoken used Christianity as their weapon of choice, but I'm here to tell you that my God loves all people regardless as to what sins you as mere mortals perceive have been committed. If you really care about young children, volunteer for Family Advocacy, Rape Crises Centers, Food Kitchens, Homeless Shelters, the list goes on, but the library is not the demon.

In the book that was just reviewed, there is a chapter that talks about high school and it says, “There is no harder place to be queer than high school, a place of bullies and slurs.” and it promises that high school ends and maybe they will be able to live in peace, but at 64 and volunteering on a Public Library Board, no less, that is absolutely not true. Forty-one plus years since this the timeline of this book was written; the bullying and the

slurs are still being heard. At one council meeting a male got up and spoke regarding the library and he spoke with such vileness and hatred, I could not believe it was 2025.

We have listened to a man get up and speak time and again that people need to get back to the classics and he lists them, not realizing that many of the books he is listing have been on the book ban list at one time or another and some are still on the list.

What I would really like to see happen in this community is for people to pay attention, pay attention to yourselves and your children and pay attention to who gets up and spews and then leaves without actually seeing what the library is doing to benefit the community. There are people who use inflammatory language to get people to hop on their bandwagon, people who show a graphic novel time and again that was moved before they even had to ask, but they keep showing it why, because of its shock value. The Library Board has come up with policies and procedures, not to mention the library card application that puts the onus right back where it belongs and that is squarely on the back the parents. This group is supposed to be about less government; however, they want government to oversee what your children read. Believe me, it will not stop with the YA books. Ask yourself how long it will be before they want the government to oversee what you read. It is scorched earth.

In “Like a Love Story”, they took a quote from Judy Garland – “Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.” Be yourself and do your own due diligence and learn the facts, but most of all, try to be kind.”

Dr. Wheeler made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 6:56 pm.

Next Meetings: Thursday January 8, 2026, 6:00 pm Central-Clemson Library
Thursday, January 15, 2026, 6:00 pm at the Hampton Memorial Library