On Wed, Dec 13, 2023 at 11:45 PM David Brunco <david.brunco@pghfreethought.org> wrote:

* I was able to find and watch the Dec 11 board meeting.  Superintendent Dr Miller spoke briefly about the committee to review books at the 43rd minute.  
  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVV0zCB3CDA>
* The public speakers were overwhelmingly against book banning.   I think this is helpful and it would be good if you can speak again in the Jan meeting.  Perhaps the PFC can help you with your 3 min statement.
* The most controversial thing I perceived in the meeting was the sudden / rushed RFP for new legal counsel. It was implied that the new members of the board were unhappy with current counsel (which goes back 4 decades), because presumably it urged caution from legal risk to move forward with aggressive book banning. This is just speculation.  Miller spoke about legal counsel at 1:31.

On Tue, Nov 14, 2023 at 10:11 AM David Brunco <david.brunco@pghfreethought.org> wrote:

Folks,

Anna and I attended the board meeting from start to finish. A few comments.

\* Current Pine-Richland policy on libraries is known as Policy 109.1 Library Resources

<https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/prsd/Board.nsf/files/CXEK8A50888F/$file/Policy%20109.1%20Library%20Resources.pdf>

Only a small portion of the document deals with reconsideration (= removal = banning) of books....

"**Reconsideration of Library Materials:** A district-developed form should be utilized when submitting a concern or complaint related to the materials in the library. The materials will stay in circulation until the complaint is reviewed by a committee comprised of community and staff members. The committee will submit their recommendation to the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent may direct that questionable materials be placed on a limited access shelf pending a final determination. The Superintendent’s decision on whether to keep or remove the material from circulation shall be final."

From his statements in the meeting, it clear that Superintendent Miller is well-educated, thoughtful, and a lover of books.

\* There are 9 board members that serve 4 year terms with elections for alternate seats happening every 2 years on odd (not off) election years.  4 of the 9 were not up for reelection and will continue until 2025.  Both parties ran a full slate of candidates. Of the 5 positions up for election, 1 was won by a republican book banner (Casciani), 3 new republican book banners were elected, and 1 democrat was elected (who won by a single vote over incumber President DiTullio). Not all republicans are book banners, but I was told by several local democrats that the winning republican candidates won campaigning to support book bans.

<https://www.pinerichland.org/Page/9763>

<https://results.enr.clarityelections.com/PA/Allegheny/118632/web.317647/#/summary?category=C_3>

\* The issue of book banning was discussed as item 10.02 between 2:06:28 and 2:10:36 in the video.  The motion to approve revisions to Policy 109.1 as presented" was tabled, with follow up planned by the newly elected board.  All board members voted to table. This maintains the current policy for now. The president did mention that changes will take time and expressed concerns on the need to abide by state and federal law and policies and general legal concerns.  Presumably all substantive discussion occurred in a private meeting; no one on the board publicly expressed or even hinted at an opinion.

Video of the Pine Richland School Board meeting.  [November 13, 2023 (pinerichland.org)](https://www.pinerichland.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=6118&ViewID=94B66785-F3F0-41A8-8414-1E55691D3E9E&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=42880&PageID=5517)

\* A letter from the FFRF was requested by Steve K and sent to the board. I wonder if this, in part, motivated the discussion of legal concerns in the board meeting.   I think it may be worthwhile to have a new letter drafted that will be sent after the new board takes office.

\* In the KDKA piece, a participant was interviewed who said that only 2 speakers supported the book bans.  In actuality, more expressed support for removing books, but they tended to be more subtle in their language rather than coming out explicitly as book banners. I would estimate that both the speakers and crowd were about 80% against the ban of the selected books and 20% advocating banning books. The arguments against banning were often strong, principled, and eloquent.  As far as I could tell, the board appeared courteous and to be listening during the public comment.  Speakers were allowed 3 minutes, but at 3 minutes, President DiTulliio politely encouraged speakers to wrap up their final comments rather than cut them off. The president did urge the crowd to be silent while speakers were presenting for reasons of courtesy and timeliness. The audience was allowed to support and clap speakers after they were done presenting.  I would think that people, including board members, would be moved by the arguments of the speakers.  Unfortunately, effective the next board meeting, 3 of the 4 new members will be republican book banners and I am not sure if any were present to hear the public comments.

I think I will do the next Freethought Freeform session on this topic of School Board book banning in Pine Richland and concerns on it spreading in our stomping grounds.

Regards,  
David

On Tue, Nov 14, 2023 at 7:52 AM W. S. (Bill) Kaszycki <[unkabeard@verizon.net](mailto:unkabeard@verizon.net)> wrote:

KDKA reported on it (Jennifer Borrasso) on the 11:00 news last night. She commented that only two attendees were in favor of book banning and the rest opposed.