

## Oh, the hats you will wear....

*how to tell when you are a trustee and when you are a patron, and why it matters*

It can be tricky to differentiate between life as a trustee and life as a private citizen and library patron. It can also be difficult to determine which set of rules is in play at a given time.

When the Board is in Session, or you are at the library, you should follow that Trustee criteria. If you are at a community event or national conference representing the library, follow the trustee criteria. If you are at HEB and somebody recognizes you as a trustee, or you are wearing a Library TShirt, follow the criteria for a trustee. Basically, if you are recognized and/or perceived as a trustee, behave as a trustee.

If you are downtown at the ballet with your family, eating dinner in Pflugerville and talking to the server, singing karaoke at a retirement party for your parents in Ohio, travelling abroad, or otherwise in the privacy of your own home, follow the guides for patron/citizen. The person you are with probably does NOT see you as a trustee for the district.

There is also a list of behaviors called 'Don't'. Those are the things that a person simply should not do if they are acting in the interest of the library and the district's established priorities and ethics. They're not illegal, they're not objectively wrong, they're just contrary to WBCLD.

If you have a patron / citizen concern that you want to discuss with library management, let me know and I will set aside time specifically to have that conversation. It is a bit complicated, but it can certainly be done. It is especially difficult to act as a patron with staff, since they all know you are a trustee.

### **Politics, elections and voting**

Trustee: Encourage people to register to vote, to vote for you as a trustee, and to vote for or against things that would help or hurt the library district.

Patron/Citizen: Vote for whomever or whatever your conscience guides you to support. Express your own personal political opinions or wear political slogans *outside library property and events*.

Don't: Voice political opinions (including the wearing of buttons / flair) on library property or at events when you could reasonably be recognized as a trustee.

### **Staffing**

Trustee: Support benefits and compensation packages, participate in the Library Director's hiring and annual review, set budgets for training/ wages/ benefits/ etc.

Patron/Citizen: Support the promotion (or discipline) of existing personnel or candidates based on your experience with those people in the library as a patron. Suggest additional positions (more outreach or reference staff) or qualifications (Spanish speaker or teaching experience) for staff.

Don't: Direct staff in the performance of their duties. Reprimand any employee (other than the director). Put forward a candidate with whom you have a personal relationship. Participate in HR decisions for specific persons.

### **Programs & Services**

Trustee: Set program budgets for general categories. Volunteer at programs to support staff. Promote programs in the neighborhood with accurate information.

Patron/Citizen: Suggest to library managers specific programs or services to add, express concerns about programs / services that are being offered.

Don't: Request or expect special treatment or access. Campaign for (or against) specific programs or performers.

### **Advocacy**

Trustee: Promote legislation the library board & management determine to promote district goals. Attend advocacy events with TML, TLA, PLA, TxRtR or other similar TSLAC promoted groups.

Patron/Citizen: Promote what you personally want to put forward.

Don't: Promote a position in contradiction to library goals.

### **Special Topic- Book Banning, Drag Queen Storytimes, Kirk Cameron, hot topic of the hour**

Trustee: Be familiar with ALA statements concerning censorship, the Freedom to Read, Library Bill of Rights and Intellectual Freedom. Support the library and collection development staff in interactions with members of the public who aim to censor protected material.

Patron/Citizen: Select materials and programs for yourself and your family that are appropriate for you and your family. Avoid those you don't enjoy. Suggest for the

collection items you would enjoy that meet the Collection Development Criteria using the patron interface- not a board meeting.

Don't: Suggest removal of materials or services unilaterally based on content protected by ALA statements.

### **Email and Communication**

Trustee: Check your library email regularly- at least every other day, and respond to queries as requested. If you will be unavailable for a period of time, alert the director. Forward any library related communications you receive personally to the library director.

Patron/Citizen: Promote library events and services through your personal social media accounts if you choose.

Don't: Send sensitive information to a personal email address- anything financial, legally protected or HR related. Respond publicly to a library topic from a personal email or social media account.