

Over objections, Jaros named to library board

ANNEMARIE MANNION
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A resident who tried and failed in 1999 to have a book removed from a high school curriculum has been appointed to the Downers Grove Public Library board of trustees.

The village council voted 5-2 Aug. 18 to approve the nomination of Arthur Jaros Jr. to the six-member board. Jaros was one of 20 people whose appointments to various village boards and commissions were approved.

Jaros' nomination for the unpaid post drew scrutiny, with more than 150 emails from residents about it.

Citing the number of emails he had received about Jaros' nomination, commissioner Bob Barnett tried to delay the vote on the appointments. He said he wanted more time to read all the emails.

"We've gotten emails from more than 150 residents, which is absolutely unprecedented, (That is 150 people) who've decided to chime in," Barnett said.

His effort to put off the vote failed in a 5-2 vote.

Prior to the vote, residents at the board meeting spoke both for and against Jaros' appointment.

"It's too bad people are intolerant of people who express a Christian view point. It's the new intolerance," said one resident.

Another, James Turner, asked the board not to name Jaros to the library board.

"I'd encourage you to consider the slippery slope we very well may be going down if you name this man to the board," Turner said.

Though he acknowledged he had not read all of the emails, Mayor Martin Tully said he didn't want to delay the vote on the appointments because he had set a goal of having them made before terms conclude at the end of August.

He attributed the large number of emails received by village officials to an email blast sent by a resident opposed to the Jaros appointment.

"It wasn't a grass roots thing that's bubbled up the way we've seen with other

things," said Tully, who also characterized the opposition to Jaros as politically motivated.

Commissioner Greg Hose disagreed that the email blast was political or that sending it was in some way troubling.

"What that is is a step in community activism. We've all engaged in that," he said.

The person who raised concerns about the Jaros' appointment is Kathleen DiCola, a member of the library board of trustees for nearly 20 years, whose term expires Aug. 31.

DiCola stated she objects to naming Jaros to the library board because he tried to remove a book from a high school curriculum at Downers Grove South.

Sixteen years ago Jaros objected to the book "Blue Star Rapture" by James Bennet being used as a supplementary text for freshman English. According to a Tribune article from 1999, Jaros and another District 99 resident, Douglas C. Carr, objected to language that, in their opinion, was dirty, offensive and insensi-

tive. They said the book should be edited or, preferably, removed.

At that time, Jaros, and other parents, also called the book "vile" and sought its removal because "it violates conservative DuPage County community standards and is poor educational material in the absolute sense and in the comparative sense," the Tribune article states.

The book tells the story of T.J. and his sometimes profane friend Tyrone, who like basketball and girls. The story mixes sports, religion, and issues like honesty, loyalty and self-respect.

Julia K. Beckman, a member of the board of Downers Grove Community School District 99 who was on the board in 1999 when the flap over "Blue Star Rapture" occurred, said board members read the book and voted unanimously not to remove it from the curriculum.

"All seven board members, who had a variety of religious and educational opinions, read the book and unanimously decided that it

was not offensive and should remain. We could not let one religious view dictate educational choices," she wrote in the email.

She added that the board decided it was not their job to interfere with curriculum.

"It is not the role of board members to micromanage educational and curriculum choices of highly trained professional teaching staff," she said.

The book, she noted, was not required reading for students.

It was on a supplementary list that students could choose from.

Tully said he does not think because Jaros sought to have a book removed from a school curriculum should keep him from serving on the library board. He said the appointment will not degrade residents' rights to freedom of speech, to read or to express their views.

"I am confident those (freedoms) are not in jeopardy here in Downers Grove," he said.

Prior to his appointment, Jaros said there are some instances in which materials should not be distributed by library. He said the U.S. Supreme Court provides a definition of obscenity and that Illinois patterns its law on that. If named to the library board, Jaros said he would abide by state laws.

"It means we can't have our public library facilities used for the commission of obscenity," he said. "That's unthinkable."

He said it "is conceivable that some material might not be suitable for a public library."

Before voting against the appointment, Hose said he had talked with Jaros about his actions in 1999 and still is troubled by them.

"Past is prologue... I just can't get past that," Hose said.

Tully encouraged residents to keep tabs on the library board.

"I'd encourage everyone to put aside their fears and see how the library board conducts themselves," he said.