

Watchmen Voter Guide for East Bonner County Library

** Click on each candidate's name to see their completed questionnaire **

	Sara Jensen	Stacy L. Rodriguez	Susan L. Shea
<p>1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?</p>	No Response Received	<p>My name is Stacy Rodriguez. I am running for the Bonner County Library Board of Trustees position because I believe, sadly, that the Library has moved away from the primary mission it was intended to serve: to provide a safe environment and the resources to help foster a love of reading and improve literacy, particularly for those who might not otherwise have access to books, internet, audio/visual materials, etc.), in order to educate, engage, and empower our community. Additionally, the Library has recently spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on things that have appear to be beyond the scope of their mission – a new state-of-the-art Mercedes Benz bookmobile (almost \$250,000) and an over \$460,000 raise for library staff, not including benefits (includes a 5.9% cost-of-living allowance and raises medical benefits contributions to \$650/month). Finally, the Library Board seems to have become hostile toward parents who simply want to make sure books that show graphic sexual content are not out on the shelves to be viewed by children – without getting parental consent. In short, my goals in running for this position are to provide a voice for members of the community who are currently silenced or ignored by the Library, to provide fiscal accountability by focusing on the mission (educate, engage, and empower), and to ensure our Library is a place where children are enriched, not groomed.</p>	No Response Received
<p>2. How could the libraries be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.</p>	No Response Received	<p>Libraries could be improved by remembering that their primary obligation to their community is not to be a political player, pushing the boundaries of overly progressive ideas, but instead, to provide free access to materials that encourage learning and improve literacy. There are those within our community who feel their voices are being ignored, so it is imperative for our library to ensure that its programs meet the needs of the entire community, versus promoting the agenda of a minority of the county voters. One of the things I would like to do is to increase hours and locations for our bookmobile (when it becomes available) in outlying or underserved areas of the county, to provide more convenient access for those in our community who can't easily get to the library. This would include having regularly scheduled days assigned to Ponderay, Kootenai, Dover, and Hope, along with any other areas within our boundaries that are not being served, as well as stops at all of our local senior care and assisted living centers. I'm certain our county readers would be thrilled. Additionally, I would expand the Friends of the Sandpoint (and Clark Fork) Library programs expand to include among other things: annual and lifetime subscriptions which provided certain benefits to the subscribers, and increased efforts to improve their used book selections and sales. I would also like to see the large lobby area used for something more compelling than a place for students to sit and look at their phones.</p>	No Response Received
<p>3. What is your philosophy of selecting new books for the library and how do you plan to implement that philosophy?</p>	No Response Received	<p>The process the Library currently uses to select new books is unknown at this time. My philosophy for selecting new books for the library is that the selections need to accommodate the entire community's needs, and not skew too heavily in any particular direction. Our library needs to provide current, relevant, popular literature in multiple genres as well as resource materials in many formats for both students and adults. Multiple newspapers and periodicals should be acquired that reflect the entire communities' needs and preferences.</p>	No Response Received

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4. In the past two years, parents have noted objectionable materials in the public libraries and have requested some of these materials be removed. What type of process would you support to review these requests to determine whether or not materials should be removed or relocated?	No Response Received	For the life of me, I can't understand why any adult would want children to be exposed to images of graphic sexual activity at an early age. The Board and many of the monthly community speakers keep saying words akin to, "it's the parents' job to control the books their children read." However, the reality is that the library is open to unattended minors of any age, and recently reiterated that policy. Since many students come straight from school when their parents are still at work, how is a parent to do this so long as the books are contained within the general array of books on the shelves? I believe that any materials that display obscene graphic visuals, meant to cause sexual arousal or promote sexual activity, should be placed in an "age controlled" section, requiring a parent signature to check out the materials housed there for any child under age 16. I believe the review process should begin at first, with the selection process. It is realistic to believe that the library personnel selecting materials have a pretty good idea which books might cause parental concern. If, after consideration with library staff in charge of selection, staff wants to book select a book they believe, based on their understanding of their community's input, then library staff should make a presentation to the Board (can be written) that reflects a diverse and equitable review of the particular book(s), so the Board of Trustees can make an informed determination of whether the book should be placed in the age-controlled section. If there is a tie on the Board, the Director will break the tie.	No Response Received
5. Do you support "Critical Race Theory," why or why not?	No Response Received	I do not support Critical Race Theory ("CRT"). CRT basically argues that racism is part and parcel of all systems of American society, and that any sort of neutral system is inherently a guise for racial power, so that even things that are objectively good in terms of race, for example ending segregation, so long as they uphold the broader American systems, like capitalism or meritocracy, are just power grabs for whites. Therefore, CRT argues, the systems need to be torn down so that perfect equity can be established; because under CRT, any disparity equals racism. To hold to this theory displays a very myopic and distorted view of America's history and her exceptionalism. Many of CRT's proponents benefit greatly from the very system which they condemn, demonstrating the obvious hypocrisy of their ideology. Perfect opportunity is what America provides. Perfect equity is a socialist hammer.	No Response Received
6. When thinking about book selection, what does diversity mean to you and why?	No Response Received	Diversity, in its most basic form, means "a range of different things." As it relates to books, it means that our library, while performing its mission, can't go overboard in any one direction, especially to appease a particular group, no matter how loud or popular. Obviously, the library should consider its locale during the selection process. Books on hunting, livestock, horseback riding, or hiking the Pacific Northwest might not be something a library in a very urban area would stock very many of, but here in Sandpoint, they're right at home. Likewise, despite their popularity, no one would like to see the library shelves disproportionately filled with romance novels, science fiction, or police procedurals, leaving other readers scant opportunity to find the books they enjoy. The demographics of our county should be reflected as fully as possible in book selection, on our library shelves, and in library displays. A patron at our library should not be able to identify, either from advice given, books, or displays, the political leanings of the library staff. If they can, it demeans the very essence of what a community library should represent.	No Response Received

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7. What does the phrase “free access to ideas” mean to you and why?	No Response Received	Free access to ideas means every adult should be able to find varied and diverse materials and opinions from library resources on all topics of interest to them without someone tipping the scales by limiting or skewing the pool of information available. In this way, adults can do their own research on a topic and then make an informed decision about it. Free access to ideas means something a bit different when it comes to children under 16. They too, should have access to varied and diverse ideas from materials on all topics, except those materials meeting the criteria for graphic displays of obscenity, unless they have their parent’s permission. G.K. Chesterton once said, “[D]on’t be so open-minded that your brains fall out.” If we follow this adage, we should all be able to enjoy books with pictures of Renaissance art, while not worrying that children not yet at the age of consent be exposed to what they ought not see, without their parent’s permission.	No Response Received
8. How would you select those who provide reading time, materials, speakers, and activities for children? Do you believe the community should be involved in these decisions?	No Response Received	I believe that the community is involved in these decisions in that its voters choose the library’s Board of Trustees, who should then be accountable to that community. The library has an obligation to provide the community with myriad ways to give input about what materials, speakers, and activities they would like their children to be involved with. These parents pay taxes to support the library and should have a voice, just as they should in their children’s school. Between the community parents’ input and the Board of Trustees they’ve elected, hopefully any kind of extremely partisan content or activities would be eliminated. Perhaps we could encourage groups that recommend reading materials that balance our community needs. Just as an example, I think it would really neat, and go a long way toward giving them some “skin in the game,” if from September through May, we let the students at our local schools and homeschool groups choose the subject matter and create the displays for the cases in the lobby (subject to the Library guidelines, of course). If each of those displays had to be based on a book or series of books, that would satisfy those triumvirate goals of educating, engaging, and empowering our children, plus help them to feel they are an integral part of the library community.	No Response Received
9. The values of rural Idaho are very different than big cities like Portland, Seattle and San Francisco. How can the library incorporate local community values in new book selection instead of the national values of the American Library Association?	No Response Received	When our Library Director was hired in November of 2021, he told the Bonner Bee in an interview on November 22nd, “I believe the power of a public library has to do with its ability to connect the local community.” He described this as his “core belief” that guided his moves. Now this is a great idea...unless one set of community input and desires is given priority and respect, and the other more conservative community members, while technically being able to “speak” their views, are given short shrift by the Library Board, which often fails to intervene when these folks are derided by speakers with opposing positions. I appreciate that not everyone will be happy with every Board decision, however, by consistently failing to even consider certain community concerns because they are not compatible with the Board’s, is just as oppressive as not hearing them at all...in fact it is worse...it’s a flagrant dismissal of other voices within our community, and the antithesis of our Director’s guiding principles.	No Response Received

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10. How do you feel about removing historical books and classical literature from libraries?	No Response Received	It is beyond foolish to consider removing historical books and classical literature from our libraries. "By classics, I am referring to those works of literature, history, philosophy, art, and music that capture something about the human condition that is so important that they achieve a kind of immortality." As Patrick Whelan continued in his article, Classical Literature is an Inclusive Birthright, "Far from being tools of exclusion, the classics are a great equalizer, a common birthright living not in one person's mind and memory, or even in one's hemisphere's collective mind and memory, but rather existing as an essential part of the whole human story wherever it is encountered."	No Response Received
11. Do you support or oppose bathroom usage based on preferred gender identification? Why or why not?	No Response Received	I support bathroom usage based on one's biological sex because I support women. And yes, I can define what a woman is. I have the unique experience of having been both a prosecutor who tried numerous sexual assault cases, as well as one who tried the notorious Butcher Brown case. In preparation for the Brown case, I interviewed 50 plus transgender-identifying persons. Many were my witnesses, with whom I spent hundreds of hours. I can say without a doubt that no woman wants a biological male, however he may identify, in her restroom.	No Response Received
12. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?	No Response Received	I am a career prosecutor, now retired. After retirement, I continued to teach law enforcement how to write better reports as well as a class I created called From the Crime Scene to the Court Room to help them understand the nuances of the criminal justice system to help them become both better investigators and witnesses. I also began homeschooling my daughter in 3rd grade – she is now a junior. After an extensive cross-country search, our family left San Diego, CA and moved to Sandpoint in 2016. Shortly afterward, I discovered our amazing library, thanked God, and began volunteering as a tutor in Math, English, and Writing. For my daughter's 8th grade year, I taught her and several homeschool classmates their 8th grade curriculum one full day per week at the library, in a space they were gracious enough to supply. I am at the library frequently, and as reading has been my lifeline since I was in grade school, I feel that the library is a natural fit for me. I've been regularly visiting one since I was six. (That's sixty years if you're wondering.) I have also been the Speech Coach for our local NCFCA (National Christian Forensic Communication Association) club for the past three years. Counting teaching, coaching, five years in 4H Horse, and my church, I spend a lot of time with our local kids. I am highly vested in seeing that our library serve them as well.	No Response Received