

From: Kathy Kysar <kysarkathy@yahoo.com>

Sent: Friday, August 28, 2026 9:38 AM

To: Legislative Comments <leg.com@matsugov.us>; Andy Mergens <andy.mergens@matsugov.us>; Chad Scott <praizer34@gmail.com>; Marty Kincaid <marty@mtaonline.net>; Karen Crandall <artiste3@mtaonline.net>; Sally Pollen <n3673z@gmail.com>; Julie Endle <jejujube@gmail.com>; Cindy Redmond <cindyredmond69@yahoo.com>; Laura Anderson <leanderson90@gmail.com>

Subject: MSBLB Correspondence

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]

Andy,

Please make sure that this is included in the upcoming September Library Board packet.

Thank you.

I checked *Mad Honey* out of my local public library without knowing much about it. I expected a novel. What I got was a compelling story, an education in beekeeping, and a thoughtful exploration of gender, identity, biology, and what it means to be human. Honestly, that is exactly what I want from my public library.

I was particularly struck by the book because, right now, local book banner Jackie Goforth is trying to have *Let's Talk About It* removed from a public library, claiming the book isn't factual because, according to her, **"there are only two genders."** That's a pretty remarkable thing to declare while standing in opposition to the very purpose of a library: giving people access to information so they can **learn, think, question, and make up their own minds.**

Mad Honey makes the "there are only two genders and that's the end of the discussion" argument look about as scientifically sophisticated as a coloring-book answer to a biology exam. The book explains that numerous animal species naturally change sex or have reproductive systems that don't fit neatly into a rigid male/female binary. Clownfish can change from male to female. Wrasses can go the other direction. Coral can change sex. Some frogs spontaneously change sex in the wild. Bearded dragons can change sex while still in the egg under certain temperatures.

Nature is complicated. Human beings are complicated. Biology is complicated. Pretending otherwise doesn't make the complications disappear.

Another passage uses handedness as an analogy for transgender identity. Most people are right-handed. Some are left-handed. Some can use either hand. We don't tell left-handed people they're making a political choice. We don't demand that they learn to write with the "correct" hand. We eventually figured out that **different doesn't mean wrong.** That seems like a lesson worth remembering.

The book also challenges the simplistic idea that being a woman can be reduced to a checklist of body parts or chromosomes. Women can have hysterectomies. Women can have mastectomies. Chromosomal variations exist. Bodies don't always conform to the neat categories people imagine they do.

My favorite passage describes the ASL sign for transgender as a flower held closed over the heart, then opened toward the sky. What a beautiful metaphor for identity: something inside us that may remain hidden until we feel safe enough to let it bloom.

Here's the irony I can't get past: **A person who wants a book removed because it presents information they disagree with is demonstrating exactly why people need access to books.** You don't protect people from ideas by hiding the books. You protect their freedom to think by **letting them read.**

If *Let's Talk About It* contains information someone believes is inaccurate, then let readers examine the information. Let parents decide whether **their own children** should read it. Let educators discuss it. Let people disagree with it.

A public library should not become a place where one person's religious beliefs, political ideology, or personal discomfort determines what everyone else is allowed to read. That's why I'm glad I read *Mad Honey*. I didn't know what I was going to learn when I checked it out. **That's the point.** If we only allow books that confirm what we already believe, we're not protecting intellectual freedom. We're just building an echo chamber and calling it a library.



Keep the books. Let people read. Let people think

Kathy Kysar

KathyKysar.com

Alaska Chapter Leader, [Authors Against Banned Books](#)

Owner, [Crooked Cabin](#)

I acknowledge and honor that I live on the ancestral lands of the Dena'ina and Ahtna peoples. I recognize and respect the continuing connection, by Alaska Native people and all Indigenous people to the land, waters, and communities. I also honor my own traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy in what is now known as Montana, which includes Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani, of which I am a descendent.

Received

AUG 24 2026

Matanuska Susitna Borough
Excise Tax Office



Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Library Board Member Flagged Library Material Review

Title: Natural Selection	Line # from the list from which the title was pulled: 49
Author: Clare Edge	Collection: YA fiction
Library(ies) requesting this material: Big Lake	Format of the material: Book
Board member who flagged: Mark Spohn	

Does the material demonstrate at least one of the following?

[Please circle all that apply]

1. Relevance to identified community needs
2. Suitable subject, format, and reading level
3. Timely or historically significant content
4. Credibility of author, publisher, or producer
5. Favorable professional reviews
6. Documented patron or staff interest
7. Enhancement of the existing collection
8. Strengthening of a targeted collection area
9. Limited availability through other lending sources
10. Filling gaps in subject coverage
11. Local authorship or illustration
12. Recognized literary or artistic quality
13. Factual accuracy
14. Demonstrated or anticipated demand

Is the material in good condition or appearance? [For donated material]

Was this item requested by a patron?

Is the topic of the material a priority for the collection?

Is the format of the material a priority for the collection?

Is this material superseding an old edition or a better source?

Are there sufficient materials available on the same subject?

Does the material have a reputation and/or significance of the author, publisher or producer?

Other remarks: **NATURAL SELECTION** by Clare Edge (Line 449) is listed as YOUNG ADULT Fiction. According to the author's website, she markets as "...an author and witch who was raised in the Rocky Mountains." This book appears to violate AS 11.61.128, Distribution of Indecent Material to Minors; AS 11.41.452, Enticement of a Minor; and, AS 11.51.130, Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor. Content warnings on the author site state: 1) Underage drinking, 2) Guns, 3) Violence, blood, gore, 4) sexual assault, 5) rape, and 6) murder.



Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Library Board Member Flagged Library Material Review

Title: Young World	Line # from the list from which the title
Author: Chainani, Soman	was pulled: 432
Library(ies) requesting this material: Talkeetna	Collection: YA fiction
Board member who flagged: Mark Spohn	Format of the material: Book

Does the material demonstrate at least one of the following?

[Please circle all that apply]

1. Relevance to identified community needs
2. Suitable subject, format, and reading level
3. Timely or historically significant content
4. Credibility of author, publisher, or producer
5. Favorable professional reviews
6. Documented patron or staff interest
7. Enhancement of the existing collection
8. Strengthening of a targeted collection area
9. Limited availability through other lending sources
10. Filling gaps in subject coverage
11. Local authorship or illustration
12. Recognized literary or artistic quality
13. Factual accuracy
14. Demonstrated or anticipated demand

Is the material in good condition or appearance? [For donated material]

Was this item requested by a patron?

Is the topic of the material a priority for the collection?

Is the format of the material a priority for the collection?

Is this material superseding an old edition or a better source?

Are there sufficient materials available on the same subject?

Does the material have a reputation and/or significance of the author, publisher or producer?

Other remarks: **YOUNG WORLD** by Soman Chainani Edge (Line 432) is listed as YOUNG ADULT Fiction. This book appears to violate AS 11.61.128, Distribution of Indecent Material to Minors; AS 11.41.452, Enticement of a Minor; and, AS 11.51.130, Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor. Several reviewers have brought up that there is a teacher-student relationship romanticized in this book with a ten year age gap, which felt like a teacher grooming a minor.



Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Library Board Member Flagged Library Material Review

Title:	72 Hours of You	Line # from the list from which the title
Author:	Darianne Schramm	was pulled: 205
Library(ies) requesting this material:	Big Lake	Collection: YA fiction
Board member who flagged:	Mark Spohn	Format of the material: Book

Does the material demonstrate at least one of the following?

[Please circle all that apply]

1. Relevance to identified community needs
2. Suitable subject, format, and reading level
3. Timely or historically significant content
4. Credibility of author, publisher, or producer
5. Favorable professional reviews
6. Documented patron or staff interest
7. Enhancement of the existing collection
8. Strengthening of a targeted collection area
9. Limited availability through other lending sources
10. Filling gaps in subject coverage
11. Local authorship or illustration
12. Recognized literary or artistic quality
13. Factual accuracy
14. Demonstrated or anticipated demand

Is the material in good condition or appearance? [For donated material]

Was this item requested by a patron?

Is the topic of the material a priority for the collection?



Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Library Board Member Flagged Library Material Review

Title: Young World	Line # from the list from which the title
Author: Soman Chainani	was pulled: 265
Library(ies) requesting this material: Sutton	Collection: YA fiction
Board member who flagged: Mark Spohn	Format of the material: Book

Does the material demonstrate at least one of the following?

[Please circle all that apply]

1. Relevance to identified community needs
2. Suitable subject, format, and reading level
3. Timely or historically significant content
4. Credibility of author, publisher, or producer
5. Favorable professional reviews
6. Documented patron or staff interest
7. Enhancement of the existing collection
8. Strengthening of a targeted collection area
9. Limited availability through other lending sources
10. Filling gaps in subject coverage
11. Local authorship or illustration
12. Recognized literary or artistic quality
13. Factual accuracy
14. Demonstrated or anticipated demand

Is the material in good condition or appearance? [For donated material]

Was this item requested by a patron?

Is the topic of the material a priority for the collection?

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Listen to this article

7 min

By Russell Clark on Sep 2, 2026

Two longtime Mat-Su librarians leave after decades of service

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH COMMUNITY



(Left) Willow librarian Julie Mitchell and (right) Talkeetna librarian Geri Denkwalter left their long-time roles this summer. (Russell Clark/Mat-Su Sentinel)

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What you need to know:

- Two longtime Mat-Su librarians left their posts in August. Geri Denkewalter retired after 40 years at the Talkeetna Library, while Julie Mitchell left the Willow Library after 16 years there and about 30 years in the profession.
- Both librarians helped make their libraries community gathering places. Denkewalter became a fixture in Talkeetna, while Mitchell helped lead the yearslong effort to build Willow's new library.
- The librarians are leaving under different circumstances. Denkewalter is retiring with plans to remain in Talkeetna, while Mitchell said the job was very rewarding but that personal attacks and threats over library materials made it no longer enjoyable. She is now considering what career might come next.
- Short on time but need the local news scoop? [Get free weekly news in your inbox for Mat-Su, from Mat-Su.](#)

WILLOW and TALKEETNA — Longtime Mat-Su Borough librarians Geri Denkewalter and Julie Mitchell said they believe a library has never been just a place to borrow books.

"It's a community place where everyone is safe and everyone is welcome when they come in," Denkewalter said.

That idea has guided much of their lives — and shaped the libraries of Willow and Talkeetna. Both women left their posts this summer, marking the end of an era at their branches and the start of new bookish adventures for each community, they said.

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40 years at the heart of Talkeetna

Geri Denkewalter moved to Talkeetna in 1977, when the town was a very different place. The first place she visited was the old library building on Second Street. There, she met Betty, who was working as the library assistant and would become her best friend for the next 50 years.

“I just started helping out,” Denkewalter said.

Today, winter in Talkeetna still brings calm as tourists and summer workers go home, but that was even more true in 1977, she said. There were only a handful of winter jobs, she remembered, and sometimes four people seemed to do them all.

Mat-Su Sentinel thanks its sponsors.



“We cooked in the kitchen, we shoveled the roof, we did inventory, we helped out at the post office,” she said.

Denkewalter wore plenty of hats herself, working as an EMT, at the school and alongside her husband in five different air taxi businesses.

But it was her willingness to help in the library that turned into a 40-year career after she moved from volunteer to staff member on July 1, 1986.



For generations of Talkeetna residents, Denkwalter became a familiar presence — helping people find books, solve problems, share stories and, perhaps most importantly, feel welcome. Today, the library property includes Geraldine Circle Trail, a walking path constructed by the Friends of the Library and named by the staff in her honor.

With her retirement official early last month, Denkwalter is taking a friend's advice on how to spend her time: Have a project, learn something new or return to something you once loved, read for an hour every day and follow one more important rule.

"You cannot volunteer for anything for six months," Denkwalter said.

Regardless of how she ends up spending her time, it won't include moving away from Talkeetna, she said.

"This is my community," she said. "I am not going anywhere. This is the center of the universe."

'A dull roar'

Mitchell has never been afraid to make some noise in a library. In a previous role at a library in California, she was honored by a county board of

supervisors with a distinction she wears proudly: “the loudest librarian they knew.”

And when Mitchell arrived at the Willow Library in 2010, she brought that same energy with her.

“We kept it to a dull roar,” Mitchell said. “We still tried to make spaces for people who needed quiet.”

Sixteen years later, Mitchell is preparing to leave the Willow Library, marking the end of a 30-year career capped by what she said was her dream job.

“If I could have written my dream job description, being the Willow librarian would have been it,” she said.

One of Mitchell’s biggest accomplishments was helping Willow get a new library. For nearly eight years, she and others worked through fundraising, development and borough discussions until the community finally got its new building.

But her legacy can also be measured through the people who grew up knowing her. When a 14-year-old learned she was leaving, he asked, “What are we gonna do? You’ve been the librarian our entire life. Many of my childhood memories include you.”

Mitchell laughed. “Dude, you’re only 14. You’re still a child.”

Her career began almost by accident. “When I graduated high school, I had no clue what I wanted to do,” she said. Her father suggested she pick something to tell people. So she did.

“I said I was gonna be a librarian.”

Willow offers a unique posting. Patrons arrive by boat, helicopter, snowmachine, side-by-side and even a cart pulled by a reindeer. Once, a girl

brought her sled dogs to the old library, Mitchell said. The lead dog escaped its tie and followed her inside, with the rest of the team nearly joining it.

For Mitchell, libraries are places where everyone can belong. “Libraries open the world to anybody,” she said.

While working as the area’s librarian has brought a lifetime of joy, it has also been very difficult over the last several years, she said.

Community members with strong opinions about what materials should not be in the library lobbed personal attacks against her professionalism and even made indirect physical threats, she said. One individual told her she “should be taken out and drowned,” she said.

“I’ve realized that things are hard, and I don’t enjoy my job anymore. Life is too short to keep showing up for something that has no redeeming qualities,” she said.

She said she has not reached retirement age, but is not willing to face those kinds of attacks anymore.

“It is really easy to feel isolated when you’re going through something like this,” she said. “I’m not old enough to retire, and right now, the thought of working at another library makes me sick to my stomach. I can’t. It’s just not fun anymore.”

Now she is figuring out what comes next. Maybe museums. Maybe research. For now, she is comfortable not having an answer.

“It’s easier to just say that I’m retiring,” Mitchell said, “but I’m just shifting gears.”

-- *Contact Mat-Su Sentinel at contact@matsusentinel.com*

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1 | OBJECTED MATERIAL BOOK APPEAL – Let's Talk About It

May 26, 2023

Eric Phillips
Mat-Su Community Development Director
Mat-Su Borough Building
350 S Dahlia Ave
Palmer AK 99645

RE: Appeal of decision

Dear Eric;

As the patron who complained to Hugh Leslie, Parks, Recreation and Library Services, about the book LET'S TALK ABOUT IT by Erika Moen and Matthew Nolan^(Exhibit A), this is my written appeal of the decision rendered Thursday, May 18th, 2023 at the Objected Material Meeting. I am appealing the decision for four reasons:

#1 – The hearing committee was composed of four library-affiliated members. Librarians Cassidy Drake of Big Lake and Julie Buzby of Sutton; and Library Board Members Mary Fischer of Talkeetna and Kathy Kysar of Sutton. There was no individual involved in the verdict who does not have a likely bias in this matter.

#2 – There was a statement made by Library Mary Fischer on record and video about what constitutes grooming. These are her exact words (and it sounds as if she refers to children as "it"):

"If this book were handed to each child when it came in or recommended to each child when it came in and there were posters on the wall of the pictures in it, that would be grooming. Putting a book on the shelf is not grooming. It is not pushing anything. It's simply giving a point of view."

The nomenclature "grooming" in the above sentence makes it clear the reference is to sexual grooming of children and not grooming of pets, horses, human cleanliness or hair styling. Establishing what the grooming of children means yields the following information:

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2023 MAY 26 PM2:08:35

REC'D COMMUNITY DEVELO
2023 MAY 26 PM2:08:35

May 26, 2023
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Mat-Su Community Development Director
Mat-Su Borough Building
350 S Dahlia Ave
Palmer AK 99645

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The nomenclature "grooming" in the above sentence makes it clear the reference is to sexual grooming of children and not grooming of pets, horses, human cleanliness or hair styling. Establishing what the grooming of children means yields the following information:

1. "befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, often without the child's consent, and sometimes the child's family, to groom the child into sexual abuse" ^(Wikipedia)

2. "Grooming has become synonymous with sexual abuse" ^(Wikipedia)

First email requesting a meeting sent **June 2, 2026**

(No response)

2nd email request for a meeting email sent **June 11, 2026**

<jivie_58@hotmail.com>

Sent: [Tuesday, June 2, 2026 11:51 AM](#)

To: Julie Mitchell

<julie.mitchell@matsugov.us>

Subject: Library Material
Reconsideration Request

Dear Ms. Mitchell,

I just formally entered a Library Material Reconsideration Request for the book LET'S TALK ABOUT IT by Erika Moen and Matthew Nolan. It has been exactly three years since the final decision regarding this book was written by Eric Phillips, Former Director of Community Affairs of the Mat-Su Borough.

I am requesting that the book be removed from the library . Please let me know when we can meet about

<jivie_58@hotmail.com>

Sent: [Thursday, June 11, 2026 7:10 PM](#)

To: Julie Mitchell

<julie.mitchell@matsugov.us>

Subject: Fw: Library Material
Reconsideration Request

---SECOND REQUEST ---

Dear Ms. Mitchell,

It has been nine days since I requested a meeting with you regarding a Library Material Reconsideration Request for the book LET'S TALK ABOUT IT by Erika Moen and Matthew Nolan currently available through the Willow library. As it is a requirement of the process to meet with the librarian, I am once again requesting a date when we can meet.

Thank you,

Response from librarian on **June 11, 2026**
(CC'd to Andy Mergens)

My email response sent **June 12, 2026**

<julie.mitchell@matsugov.us>

Sent: [Thursday, June 11, 2026 7:39 PM](#)

To: Jackie Ivie

<jivie_58@hotmail.com>

Cc: Andy Mergens

<Andy.Mergens@matsugov.us>

Subject: RE: Library Material
Reconsideration Request

Dear Ms. Goforth,

It is no longer a required step of the Library Material Reconsideration process to meet with the Librarian. My understanding is your request for reconsideration will be addressed at the next scheduled Matanuska Susitna Library Board Meeting which is scheduled for [8/11/2026](#). If you have questions about the current process, please contact Andy Mergens, Parks, Recreation & Library Services Division Manager at [907-861-7883](tel:907-861-7883).

From: Jackie Ivie

<jivie_58@hotmail.com>

Sent: [Friday, June 12, 2026 11:58 AM](#)

To: Julie Mitchell

<julie.mitchell@matsugov.us>

Subject: RE: Library Material
Reconsideration Request

Thank you so much for the courtesy of a reply. I really appreciate it.

I see that the policy now has no mention of a required meeting. I didn't realize that had been changed.

Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience I may have inadvertently caused.

Respectfully,
Jackie Goforth



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Recreation & Library Services

350 East Dahlia Avenue • Palmer, AK 99645

Phone (907) 861-8564 • Fax (907) 861-8635

Recreational.services@matsugov.us

<http://www.matsugov.us>

MEMO

Date: April 14, 2025

From: Jillian Morrissey, Community Development Director

To: Library Advisory Board and the Library Citizens' Advisory Committee

RE: Update on Library Materials Reconsideration and Strategic Planning Initiatives

The Library Citizens' Advisory Committee (LCAC) has reviewed six (6) books since the commencement of their work. As of the reconsideration request submittal, all six books were shelved in the Young Adult collection and have since been reshelfed in the Adult section of the library collections at their respective libraries. These final decisions have been made following comprehensive legal counsel, with careful consideration of the dispositions provided by the citizens' advisory group. While advisory dispositions have not been adopted, the concerns raised by certain members of the LCAC and public testimony have been noted. This memo will address the ongoing efforts to respond to these concerns.

1. Library Strategic Planning Process

The Community Development Department initiated a Library Strategic Planning process in the winter of 2025 to guide improvements in library operations, including policy updates, technology enhancements, and procedural refinements. The department utilized Borough procurement to engage a contractor for this project. Significant public outreach was conducted through in-person open houses and meetings, engaging advisory boards, staff, and key stakeholders. The contractor meticulously documented this outreach and research before concluding their contract.

Moving forward, the Community Development department will lead the analysis of the gathered data and will oversee the drafting of the Plan narrative. To ensure a comprehensive plan, additional data will be collected to inform the final Strategic Plan, which will be completed this summer. As part of this process, a survey was published on April 8th for families with children who hold a Borough library card. This survey, focused on parents and guardians, will provide valuable insights as part of our continued efforts to enhance library services and resources for our community. The survey will close on May 8th.

Providing Outstanding Borough Services to the Matanuska-Susitna Community.

2. **Materials Submitted for Reconsideration**

Currently, there are ten (10) books in the LCAC 'Materials Submitted for Reconsideration' queue, either under review or awaiting review by the body. Four (4) of these books have already been reviewed by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD) LCAC and presented to the MSBSD School Board for final decisions. Below are the titles and their corresponding decisions:

- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison – Returned to the library of origin and reshelfed
- *Verity* by Colleen Hoover – Removed from MSBSD libraries
- *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen – Returned to the library of origin and reshelfed
- *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch* by Gregory Maguire – Returned to the library of origin and reshelfed

The Borough LCAC may choose to take this information under advisement and engage in discourse on this matter on the dais and opt to leverage the work of the MSBSD LCAC to expedite further material reviews.

3. **New Responsibilities Beginning August 12, 2025**

Commencing August 12, 2025, the Borough's Library Advisory Board will be taking on new responsibilities as part of process improvements. This appointed group will begin reviewing batched library collection procurement materials. If any member has reservations regarding specific materials, those items may be flagged for further discussion at a subsequent meeting.

Further details will be provided to the Board by staff as August approaches to ensure a smooth transition and facilitate their work.

We are committed to sharing updates with the public, elected officials, and advisory boards as more information becomes available.

And don't forget—everybody's got a butt!

After the train has left the station (so to speak) and you've had a chance to wash up or douche back there, you can have an assload of fun with a healthy heaping of lube.

Apply broad pressure to the outside of the entrance.

Circle your buttock with your finger, pausing any time a spot feels extra good.

Dip just the tip of your finger inside. Let your anus pull it in when it's ready, instead of forcing it.

Dive deeper with your finger or a butt plug! Just make sure any objects you put up there have a flared base; otherwise, your hungry heinie can gobble it up and the only way to get it back out is a trip to the hospital.

Make sure to wash your hands before touching any of your other body parts, especially the vulva! Or wear latex gloves and toss 'em when you're done.

