

EPL Harassment 3/2/24

Melissa Lameka <mlameka@hotmail.com>

Mon 4/8/2024 12:53 PM

To: EPL Board <epboard@elmlib.org>; Mary Beth Harper <MaryBeth.Harper@elmlib.org>
Cc: Scott Levin <scott.levin@elmhurst.org> 3 attachments (1 MB)

AttachmentA.png; Attachment B.jpeg; Attachment C.png;

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-EXTERNAL EMAIL-

To whom it may concern,

I am submitting a complaint about the harassment I received by library staff at the Elmhurst Public Library in regards to a petition signing event that was scheduled for meeting room B on March 2, 2024. Following is the sequence of events of that day and the prior day which led up to the confrontation with Library Director, Mary Beth Harper.

On Thursday, February 29, 2024, I reserved Meeting Room B at the Elmhurst Public Library for a parent education meeting to be held on Saturday, March 2, 2024 between the hours of 11:00 am-2:00 pm. On Friday, March 1, 2024, I received a phone call from Sherry at the EPL to clarify what school or organization would be meeting in the Meeting Room B (Attachment A). Another Elmhurst taxpayer returned the phone call to explain the purpose of the room reservation and at no point in their conversation did Sherry explain that petitions could not be signed within the confines of the room. A Library Room Approval email was sent to me later that day.

On the morning of March 2, 2024, I received a phone call from the EPL director, Mary Beth Harper, asking for me to return her call about a Facebook post she had been alerted to regarding a petition signing event that day (Attachment B). I returned the phone call a few minutes later and Ms. Harper explained that EPL "rules" prohibited petitions being signed in the library and we would have to petition outside 50 feet from the entrance.

I asked her to share the library rules, which I then forwarded to our legal counsel. Upon review of the document sent by Ms. Harper, our lawyer advised that since we would be confined to a room and petition signers would be coming to us rather than us walking around the library soliciting patrons directly, we were allowed to use the facility inside the library for petition signing and were not in violation of the library solicitation rule (**Rule #4: No organization or individual shall be permitted to circulate a petition or solicit signatures from patrons or staff within the Library**).

Upon arriving at the library at 11:00 am, we were followed into Meeting Room B by staff member Sam Cresswell, who reminded us that we were not allowed to sign petitions in the library. We explained that we had been advised by our lawyer that we were in fact allowed to have petitions signed as we would be in a confined room and would not be circulating a petition or soliciting patrons or staff.

About an hour later, Mary Beth Harper arrived and confronted us regarding violating the library solicitation rules. We put our lawyer on the phone who explained the Library Bill of Rights to Mary Beth and the fact that we were not soliciting patrons or circulating a petition.

Ms. Harper stated, "We have lawyers that specialize in library law and there is a different definition of soliciting in the library". During 15 minute confrontation, Ms. Harper threatened to call the police three times.

The conflict that occurred on March 2, 2024 between Elmhurst Public Library staff and Elmhurst taxpayers is extremely troubling and a clear violation of our First Amendment rights. But what is even more troubling is the fact that the catalyst for the objection to our event came from Library Board President Marsha Baker. Through a FOIA we received the following correspondence between EPL Board President Marsha Baker and Library Director Mary Beth Harper from March 1, 2024 to March 2, 2024 (Attachment C).

Marsha Baker reached out to Mary Beth Harper on March 1, 2024 with a screenshot of a Facebook post I had posted in a community forum. She says, "***Just a heads up. This is a member of EPIC and new 'parent's right' group. Scheduled tomorrow 11-2***"

Ms. Harper replies, "***Thanks for letting me know about this. They asked if they could get a petition signed and we actually showed them where they could stand-outside (this is untrue). They are not allowed to do this in the building (this also is untrue). I'll check it out tomorrow and make sure they are not having petitions signed in the Library. Geez!***"

On March 2, 2024 Board President Marsha Baker again reached out to Mary Beth Harper, "***Just FYI, the information about the petitions signing in Meeting Room 8 on the first floor was reposted. I have assured folks that the library staff knows.***" Followed by a link to an article titled, "Former lawmaker seeking parental rights question for Illinois November ballot."

I am requesting the following questions to be answered by Ms. Harper and Ms. Baker immediately:

1. What does "this is a member of EPIC" mean?
2. What new "parents' rights" group is Ms. Baker referring to?
3. When was I or any member of my party shown by library staff where to stand to sign petitions prior to Saturday March 2, 2024?
4. Who are the "folks who have been assured that library staff know about the petition signing" Ms. Baker is referring to?
5. Why were solicitation rules revised just a few days after the March 2nd incident?

After speaking with multiple attorneys, it is clear that what happened on Saturday, March 2, 2024 at the Elmhurst Public Library is a violation of Elmhurst taxpayers First Amendment rights to petition the government for a redress of grievance. Board President Marsha Baker and library staff engaged in a concerted effort to limit and obstruct our civil liberties to practice our constitutionally protected First

Amendment Rights. Ms. Baker's efforts, to use her position of power, to limit our First Amendment rights to raise awareness of the state's attack on parent's rights is troubling and should be grounds for removal from her appointed position as Elmhurst Public Library Board President.

I expect a response to this communication.

Sincerely,
Melissa Lameka

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March 1, 2024 at 8:40 AM

0:00

-0:35



Transcription

"Hi this is Sherry at the Elmhurst Public library and I was just calling about your meeting request for March 2 . Tomorrow you have that it's a parent education meeting what school or organization organization Would you be having meat and just to confirm you have 40 people conference style for the room set up my telephone number at the library is 6 3 0- 2 7 9- 8 6 9 6 extension 3 5 0 thank you..."

Was this transcription useful or not

Roselle, IL

March 2, 2024 at 9:00 AM



0:00

-0:37



Transcription

"Hi Melissa , my name is Mary Beth Harper and I am the Director of the Elmhurst Public library . I'm just calling you regarding a Facebook post that someone alerted me to that your group is at the library today and a meeting room having pet pet . Signed so I just wanted to let you know about our policy and petition signing. You can definitely have it done outside

the library but you cannot have
petition signed inside the library
so please give me a call back as



Just a heads up. This is a member of EPIC and new "parents rights" group. Scheduled tomorrow 11-2.



0 views

0 comments

Member from Lincoln
Member of EPIC and new
"parents rights" group. Scheduled
tomorrow 11-2.
Member from Lincoln
Member of EPIC and new
"parents rights" group. Scheduled
tomorrow 11-2.

<



Marsha

17

I think you all probably know
about this. They asked if
we could get a petition
signed and we actually
showed them where they
could stand - outside. They
are not allowed to do this in
the building. I'll check it out
tomorrow and make sure
they are not having a
petition signed in the
Library. Good!

Thanks. Sorry to bother
you

No, don't be sorry - I'm glad
you alerted me to this.

Secretary 11/1/21

Just FYI, the information
about petitions signing in
meeting room 8 on the first
floor was reposted. I have
assured folks that the
library staff knows.



Former lawmaker seeking
parental rights question
for Illinois' November
ballot

thejournalnow.com

Former lawmaker seeking
parental rights question for
Illinois' November ballot |
Illinois |

thejournalnow.com

+

EPL policy

jessica pliskie <jpliskie@gmail.com>

Thu 3/21/2024 2:10 PM

To:EPL Board <eplboard@elmlib.org>

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-EXTERNAL EMAIL-

I am writing to commend the actions that the EPL staff took to uphold our libraries policies. Thank you for standing your ground and applying the rules equally to all groups. Groups like this often resort to harassment. Please be sure to do all you can to prevent this from happening to our wonderful library team members.

Thank you,

Jessica Pliskie

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Thank you!!!

Caroline Rogers <Carolinefrogers1@comcast.net>

Tue 3/26/2024 3:57 PM

To:EPL Board <eplboard@elmlib.org>

[You don't often get email from carolinefrogers1@comcast.net. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

-EXTERNAL EMAIL-

Wanted to take a minute to thank you for our beautiful library! It's a treasure in our town and the makery is incredible and all employees are amazing! Grateful for our library in this town and beyond grateful for you keeping it free of petitioners!

I raised my kids at the library and now going by myself as a safe place to getaway and to learn!

"Give to the world the best you have and the best will come back to you" 🌸 Caroline Rogers

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Library Usage

lcohalloran@gmail.com <lcohalloran@gmail.com>

Wed 3/27/2024 10:00 AM

To:EPL Board <eplboard@elmlib.org>

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-EXTERNAL EMAIL-

Dear Elmhurst Library Board

I am writing to express my unwavering support for Elmhurst Public library and to convey my sincere concern regarding recent attacks it has faced from right-wing extremists in our town. As a regular patron of the library and a member of this community, I have always found our library to be a wonderful and invaluable resource.

The library serves as a beacon of knowledge, learning, and inclusivity for individuals of all backgrounds and beliefs. It provides access to a wide range of educational materials, community programs, and cultural resources that enrich the lives of countless individuals, including myself. From books and research materials to computer access and community events, the library plays a vital role in fostering literacy, education, and civic engagement within our community.

I am deeply troubled by recent attempts by certain groups to disrupt the peaceful and inclusive environment of our library. The recent petitioning efforts by right-wing extremists can also pose a threat to the safety and well-being of library patrons and staff.

In light of these concerns, I wholeheartedly support the decision of the library board to uphold the library's policies regarding petitioning activities within library premises. By maintaining a neutral and non-partisan stance on political matters, the library ensures that all individuals feel welcome and respected regardless of their political affiliations or beliefs.

I urge the library board to remain steadfast in their commitment to protecting the integrity and mission of our library as a safe and inclusive space for all members of the community. Furthermore, I encourage the board to explore additional measures to safeguard the library against future attempts to undermine its core values and principles.

Once again, I want to express my gratitude for the invaluable contributions that our library makes to our community, and my solidarity with the library staff and board members who work tirelessly to uphold its mission. Together, let us continue to stand in defense of our cherished institution and the values it represents.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa O'Halloran Cirone
Elmhurst Resident
Elmhurst Library Patron

Lisa C. O'Halloran
Developmental Diagnostics
Evaluation Resource Group
Cell/Text: 630-209-1650
Email: LCOhalloran@gmail.com

Thank You

Maria Balice <rmbalice@comcast.net>

Wed 3/27/2024 10:03 AM

To: Mary Beth Harper <MaryBeth.Harper@elmlib.org>; EPL Board <eplboard@elmlib.org>

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-EXTERNAL EMAIL-

Hello Ms. Harper and library board members,

I've been a patron of the Elmhurst Public Library since moving to Elmhurst in 2000 - when the library was still housed in Wilder Mansion.

I'm writing to express my gratitude to you, the board and staff for making our library a welcoming and special place where people can gather to connect, learn and grow.

I fully support the policy to not allow petitioning in the library and thank you for enforcing it!

Best,

Rocca Maria Balice Kresnicka

Maria Balice (she/her/hers)

Public Relations Consultant

312/543-6630

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Thank you

Linda <lcarpenter32@yahoo.com>

Thu 3/28/2024 3:48 PM

To:EPL Board <eplboard@elmlib.org>

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-EXTERNAL EMAIL-

Dear EPL Board, thank you for keeping the library free from political campaigners. In the past some of the candidates have been aggressive. Good move this time around!

Sent from my iPhone

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Thank you Mary Beth and
 the Library Board for Maintaining
 your 1997 petition-signing Policy
 recently. I just read the 3/20/24
 Patch article with Marsha Baker's
 efforts/quotes — ensuring the Elmhurst
 Library serves it's main public
 function. Katie Solor

PIERRE AUGUSTE RENOIR (1841-1919)

Chrysanthemums, c. 1882

Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson Collection

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