



May 17, 2006

## Books fail Nicholson's approval

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BROOKSVILLE — Silence fell during the school district's board meeting Tuesday night as member Sandra Nicholson read from a state-recommended book available for school libraries.

The narrative stunned school board members because of its gutter language.

"Hold still, you s---head!" board member Sandra Nicholson read, only she didn't delete the obscenities. "Where's the money, you m---f---?"

Then, Nicholson apologized for reading excerpts of Robert McCammon's, "Boy's Life," — a book that could have ended up in Nature Coast Technical High School's library, had not the school board voted to keep it off the shelves for now during a vote later in the meeting.

The McCammon book was one of 44 titles being considered by board members for the new high school.

"I'm sorry," Nicholson said. "But I'm not sorry to stand up for what I believe in. We have teachers in our classroom that complain about the words and language our students use and we say you shouldn't use this kind of language. And then we recommend they read these books."

At first, Nicholson asked librarian Mary Dysart to read the highlighted excerpt from the book after Dysart requested board approval for the purchase. Once Dysart saw the highlighted sheet, she refused to read the excerpts aloud.

"Because I had the audacity to question anything in print that is put in front of our students, I was told I'd be opening a can of worms," Nicholson said about the purchase of 10 of the 44 book titles.

Originally, the board was asked to vote on the purchase of 2,500 books at a May 2 school board meeting. Nicholson asked to delay the vote until Tuesday, May 16, because she wanted to research the books.

McCammon's book and nine others didn't meet Nicholson's approval for students. Her colleagues appeared surprised by language in the book.

It took the board an hour to resolve what to do about the \$73,000 book purchase.

"I know there can be colorful language and certainly what you read in here tonight was distasteful," said board chair Jim Malcolm.

"I can't personally ban a book from a shelf of our libraries."

Nature Coast principal Margaret Schoelles offered to read each of the books that Nicholson was concerned about.

"Not every book is right for every person and the mantle of responsibility you bear is great," Schoelles said.

Board members approved the list of books and omitted the 10 books that drew Nicholson's criticism. Those 10 books, Malcolm said, will be reviewed by a separate committee to determine if they are suitable for the school's library.

"If they are removed," said school board attorney Paul Carland, "remove them in accordance with the challenged media process."

The 10 books under scrutiny are: "Are You in the House Alone?" by Richard Peck; "Rainbow Boys" by Alex Sanchez; "Rats Saw God," by Rob Thomas; "Sex Kittens and Horn Dawgs Fall in Love," by Maryrose Woods; "The Bean Trees," by Barbara Kingsolver; "The Bean Trees (Teachers Edition);" "The Clan of the Cave Bear," by Jean Auel; "The King Must Die," by Mary Renault; "The Power of One" by Bryce Courtenay and "Boy's Life" by Robert McCammon.

Nicholson said she was surprised and pleased about the unanimous vote to omit the 10 books.

"That's a start in the right direction," Nicholson said about the unanimous vote to omit the books.

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