



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Community Development

350 East Dahlia Avenue • Palmer, AK 99645

Phone (907) 861-8578 • Fax (907) 861-8635

E-mail: recreational.services@matsugov.us

<http://www.matsugov.us>

MEMO

Date: September 9, 2024

To: Library Citizens Advisory Committee

From: Jillian Morrissey, Community Development Director

RE: Final Decision on the Library Material *Identical* by Ellen Hopkins

I want to thank all the Library Citizens' Advisory Committee for their service and their recommendations.

I have reviewed the meeting recording, your comments, your score cards and the votes on the book *Identical*. I would like to make you aware of the factors that I used to determine my final decision:

1. The MSB Community Development department received updated information on the Mat-Su Borough School District's administration decision on where to reshelve *Identical* at school libraries. On 8/21/24, the School District stated that *Identical* was reshelved only in Grades 9-12 libraries. This is different information than what was previously reported and relayed in the Staff Report that we gave to the LCAC. This is relevant as it shows that the MSBSD Administration reviewed similar advisory votes and chose to retain the book in the Young Adult section of their libraries.
2. The purpose of the creation of the LCAC by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was to "incorporate citizens in the review process, providing a better understanding of the attitudes and opinions held in the community...".
3. In the Library Collection Development Policy, the Young Adult Collection purpose is "to provide material for young adults 16 & over in a variety of formats. To meet the recreational and informational interests as well as to support their formal educational curriculum".
4. The purpose of the Score Cards is for individual members of the LCAC to provide direct feedback to me on their evaluation of the library material being reviewed. Unfortunately, most committee members did not answer many of the questions asked. Not one score card had all the questions answered. Most committee members left the first section, Evaluation criteria questions, blank. The Staff Report provided on the library material being reviewed is a resource for you, not a replacement for your individual answers. My request is that each member fills out the entirety of the Score Card moving forward.

5. For the review under the section for Suitability for Minors, all seven LCAC members answered, 'yes' to question 1, "Does the material depict the following act or simulated conduct?" and question 2, "Would the average individual, applying contemporary community standards, find that the material, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest in sex for persons under 16 years of age?".

Six LCAC members answered, 'yes' to question 3, "Would a reasonable person find that the material, *taken as a whole*, lacks serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value for persons under 16 years of age?".

Five members answered, 'yes' to question 4, "Does the material depict actual or simulated conduct in a way that is patently offensive to the prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable for persons under 16 years of age?". One member who voted 'no' on question 4 stated that she did not believe it was her place to make that determination for the community, and she added 2 pages of comments to her score card.

6. Five members voted to 'remove the book from the library' and two to 'reshelve to the Adult section'. Additionally, a committee member that voted to 'remove the book from the library' also provided written commentary that "If at the end of the day, it's kept in the public library it should be kept in the adult section".

These factors including our Administrative Policy show that the book, *Identical* shall remain in Matanuska-Susitna Libraries of their origination and will be reshelve to the Adult Collection. I do not believe it is appropriate to remove the book from the library when the concern from the LCAC is mainly the appropriateness of the material for children.

My decision respects parental choice to apply for a library card with their child, parental responsibility for the library material choices of the child and provide the freedom for patrons to choose library materials of their interest. I would like to add that parents and guardians can view their children's checked out books at any time by logging into their account online or inquiring at the library. Additionally, the joint Alaska Library Network is working on a refresh of their app this fall and it will include the ability of parents to 'tether' their account to their child's. Parents will be able to review all library material checked out to the minor from the convenience of their mobile app.