

How should Bend's school district teach controversial subjects?

What books students are asked to read in school can put parents on edge. The Bend-La Pine Schools is reviewing its policy on teaching controversial subjects in part because of a book. Language arts teachers at Cascade Middle School have had students read "Ghost Boys" by Jewell Parker Rhodes.

The book begins with Jerome dead. He's a 12-year-old Black boy shot by a policeman in Chicago. By mistake. He had a toy gun. Jerome follows the aftermath of his death as a ghost. He meets the ghost of Emmett Till, a Black boy killed in 1955, and more ghost boys. We'd argue the hope of the book is that skin color won't matter. "Only friendship. Kindness. Understanding," as it says. It's a compelling book, brimming with relevance.

Some parents in Bend protested its choice. It's gotten attention elsewhere, as well. The book "is propaganda that pushes an inaccurate and absurd stereotype of police officers in America." That is from a letter from Paul Kempinski, the district director for Florida State Fraternal Order of Police District 5, to the Broward County School Board. The Broward County School Board temporarily pulled the book earlier this year.

The book does not attempt to give deep insights into police officers making fast and sometimes fatal decisions. The ghosts in the book are more substantial than any effort to reveal more about the police officer who shot Jerome. So if there is no attempt in a class to think critically

about what the book says and what it doesn't say and to question some of the facts stated, well then that would not be a very good teacher.

We'd still argue the book is more nuanced than Kempinski and others give it credit for. Read the book before passing judgment based on our summary or anything you can find about it posted online. (If you don't want to buy it, it's available at the public library.)

Without question "Ghost Boys" explores sensitive, controversial subjects. It will make students think. With good leadership in the classroom, reading it could be a powerful educational exercise.

Some parents may vehemently disagree. That's why the district is reviewing its policy. It wants a clear procedure to describe how such supplemental materials are selected. It wants a clear policy to describe how parents can opt out their child and how an alternative will be incorporated for them.

If you have thoughts about how Bend-La Pine Schools should structure its policies about teaching controversial subjects, you may want to talk to a teacher or principal first. You can also email the school board at school-board@bend.k12.or.us.

Library voters should get what they voted for

Voters should get what they vote for when they pass a bond. So when voters passed the Deschutes Public Library System's \$195 million bond in November what did they believe they would get?

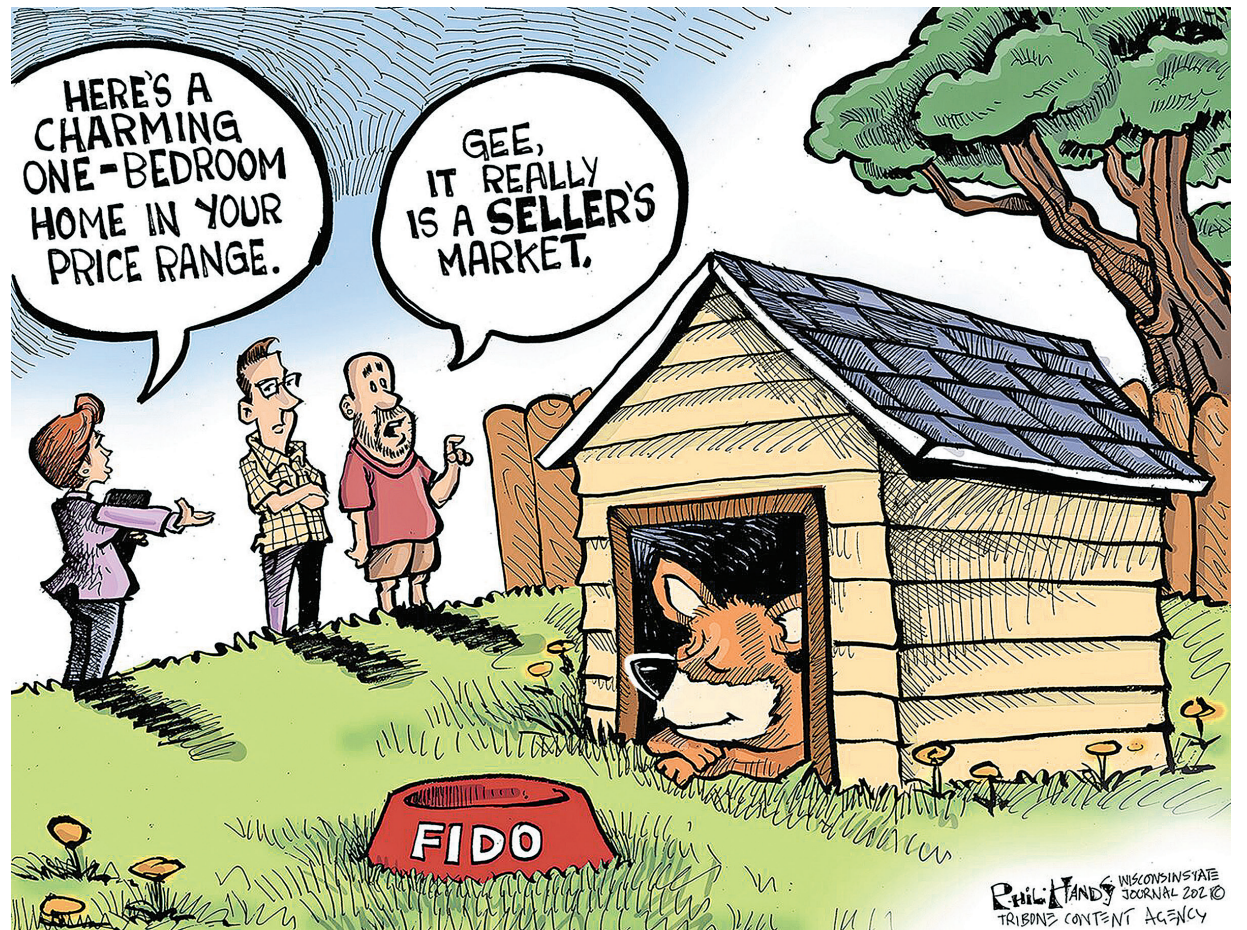
The question is an important one. There's an effort to have the library board revisit its expansion plans. The board has planned to use the bulk of the money to build a new central library on land it purchased on the north end of town, near the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office on U.S. Highway 20. The Redmond library also would be doubled in size, and other libraries get upgrades and improvements.

Anne Ness, who was recently elected to the board, and some other community members want a more regional approach. People have called for less emphasis on a big, central library. More money spent to build up the community libraries. More certainty about the future of the East Bend library. And we have

heard the suggestion that the new central library should be located more toward the core of Bend, not on the outskirts.

Before the November election, the library did spread the word that its intent was to build the big new central library at the location on Highway 20. That was not spelled out in the Voters Pamphlet. Staff of the library and the library board did tell people that. It was reported in local media in The Bulletin and elsewhere. Library board members wrote about it in a guest column in The Bulletin before the November election. The news articles and guest columns were also consistent with the board's vision of a big central library, expansion at Redmond and modernization and improvements elsewhere.

The library board has some latitude. But if the board's expansion plan shifts significantly, the danger is some voters may feel the board is breaking its promise.



Proposed library location in Bend will make a bad problem worse

BY MICHEL BAYARD

As the president of the Hunnell United Neighbors, I've dealt with transportation issues in Bend's north corridor for 17 years. The HUNS' geographic focus includes areas that surround U.S. Highway 97, U.S. Highway 20, Cooley Road and Robal Road. To say the least, the area is heavily congested. Gridlock increases in the summer when out-of-area visitors pour into town. They populate Bend's highways with "recreational vehicles." Most visitors enter and leave Bend using Highway 97 or Highway 20. Both highways are also freight corridors characterized by heavy "tractor trailer" traffic.

The Deschutes Public Library plans to build a central library in the same area where some of Bend's worst congestion exists. The library board voted to pay \$1.35 million for 12.75 acres of land owned by Gumpert Family Limited Partnership on the east side of Highway 20 at Robal Road. If they succeed with their plans to build a 115,000-square-foot central library there, it will make a bad traffic situation far worse.

For more than a decade, ODOT has tried to limit "traffic choking" (idling vehicles unable to advance due to clogged highways). Yet, congestion continues to accelerate. Further, Costco and Fred Meyer hope to build superstores directly across Highway

GUEST COLUMN

20 from the Deschutes Public Library's proposed central library site on land owned by Gumpert Family Limited Partnership. Increased gridlock is virtually assured.

Per the Deschutes Public Library's Director Todd Dunkelberg, their board chose the land near the Cascade Village Shopping Center, "because it's easy to get to from almost everywhere in Deschutes County. It's right off the highway, so it's easily accessible from Redmond, Sisters, La Pine," he said. But, the central library isn't easily accessible from La Pine; residents who live there face a 50-mile round trip (or more) to access it.

How much "due diligence" did the library board perform before paying \$1.35 million cash to purchase the land? What alternatives were explored? Was the board aware that Fred Meyer and Costco are hoping to build supercenters directly across from the central library's site?

Bend's Urban Growth Boundary expansion map was finalized in 2016. Bend's south end will expand by 1,117 acres. The "Triangle" (area north of the junction of Highway 97 and Highway 20) and land in the vicinity of O.B. Riley Road (to the west of Highway 20) will expand by only 335 acres. The East Side Library is located in a

leased building. Why not build a central library on Bend's east side?

The central library is not only planned for the wrong quadrant of Bend. It will also serve as a performing arts center, which is clearly beyond the mission of a public library. If the community wants a performing arts center, shouldn't we vote to approve one?

The central library concept was established prior to the pandemic. Since then, many patrons appreciate the ease of accessing materials online. That service should be developed further and more funds devoted to acquire digital materials. Unspent funds from the Deschutes Public Library's 2019 bond should be used to expand and improve Deschutes County's local libraries.

As it is, the library district is rushing to award a nearly \$200 million contract to an architect/builder of the central library. The vote is slated for July 14, the very day that the library board's newest member, Anne Ness, will be sworn in. Ness has had no time to become familiar with the project, yet she defeated the board's current president Martha Lawler by 10 percentage points. That fact, alone, should cause the board to pause and reassess its plans to spend precious public funds on a project that will be sited in what is arguably the most traffic congested part of Bend.

■ Michel Bayard is president of Hunnell United Neighbors Association.

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words and must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
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Fax: 541-385-5804

As my father aged, the words began to flow

BY DEBORAH TANNEN

Special to The Washington Post
When I was a child, the strongest presence I felt in our house in Brooklyn was my father's absence. It clung to his possessions and places, like the drop-leaf desk at which he worked when he was home, and the cellar where he had built the desk. Only my father used the cellar, with his massive table saw, tools hanging in neat rows and shelves holding baby food jars with nails and screws sorted by size.

To me, my father was as tall as the Empire State Building and knew as much as the encyclopedia. I loved the feel of his huge, callused hand, a big, safe house around my little one. But he was rarely home. Most days, eve-

nings and even many weekends, he was at work or at the Brownsville-East New York Liberal Party headquarters, where he was an officer.

The sense that I couldn't reach my father stayed with me into adulthood. I often dreamed that I saw him across a room or on a train platform but couldn't get to him.

After he retired at 70, my father had more time, but he always ceded conversation to my mother. When I visited, she and I would become engrossed in talk — and he would retreat to his desk to pay bills or write

letters. If he answered when I called home, he'd say as soon as he heard my voice, "I'll tell Mother you're on the phone." He'd stay on while she picked up an extension, but before long, I'd realize he'd stopped speaking.

"Where's Daddy?" I'd ask.

"He hung up."
But there was one situation in which my father would stay on the phone: if I happened to call when my mother was out, and I got him talking about his past. I once asked why. "Maybe because it's pent-up words," he said. "I like to reminisce. I can't reminisce with Mother because she doesn't like it. She complains, 'You only want to talk about people who are dead.'"

The dead people my father liked to talk about were from his childhood in Warsaw, where he was born in 1908 and lived for 12 years before coming to the United States. Until he was 7, he lived, together with his mother and sister (his father had died when he was very young), in a household headed by his grandfather, a white-bearded, ultra-Orthodox Hasid who arose each morning at 5 to study a large Talmud.

My father never tired of describing his grandparents: their large, gaslit apartment, the way his grandfather held sugar cubes in his mouth while sipping tea from a glass. He never tired of talking about the Hasidic neighborhood, the crowded streets lined with stores, the beggars who came into the courtyard along with vendors offering to sharpen knives.

And I never tired of listening. I soon decided I could bring back to life World War I Hasidic Warsaw by including it in a book about my father's life. This gave me license to spend hours talking to him — conversations that were not recreation, but research.

My father, in his early 90s, is in the hospital after surgery for an infected gallbladder. I walk with him down the hall, accompanied by an IV pole on wheels. In an alcove with chairs, we sit and continue the conversation we've

been having all afternoon. Though it breaks my heart to see him so weak, I treasure the hours — the days — the hospital gives us to talk.

When we talked about his past, my father was as pleased that I wanted to listen as I was that he wanted to talk. I think most fathers are pleased when their children want to hear what no one else can tell them — what the world was like for them when they were growing up. My father died in 2006. In his last years, I knew that the man who looked to me like my father looked to the world like an old man. But when we talked, I'd forget he was old. And I'd bask in what had seemed impossible when I was young: my father's undivided, unlimited attention.

■ Deborah Tannen is a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University and the author, most recently, of "Finding My Father," from which this essay is adapted.



Tannen

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.