

ALAMANCE COUNTY APPROVES WARNING LABEL FOR BOOKS WITH SENSITIVE CONTENT

Stickers will be implemented based on criteria such as sexually explicit content, violence, substance abuse

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Elon News Network

Some books in Alamance County libraries may be marked with a bright, yellow sticker in the near future as the Alamance County Commissioners approved a content warning labeling policy.

These “parental guidance” stickers, which were approved April 21, will only apply to a book if a patron fills out a form, expressing their reasoning for why it isn’t fit for young readers. From there, a board of high-ranking library staff members will review the patron’s request based on criteria such as sexually explicit content, depictions of substance abuse, references to suicide, underage drinking, graphic violence and profanity. This committee will be made up of the Library Management Team and the Racial Equity Team. The committee will make the final decision on whether the book receives the sticker or not. If a sticker is not decided upon, the patron can appeal

the decision. However, an approved sticker cannot be appealed, according to meeting minutes from the Jan. 31 Alamance Library Committee meeting. The stickers will be placed on the spine of the books.

The stickers, which were initially suggested to look like a rainbow before that idea was discarded, are meant to look like a caution sign with yellow and white on it. The Alamance Library Committee originally considered including LGBTQ+ content in the sensitive material that the stickers applied to, according to the minutes from a Nov. 12 meeting. This sparked some controversy and outcry from some community members. However, County Commissioner Pamela Tyler Thompson said including LGBTQ+ in the sticker policy is no longer the case.

“The point was all about books for the right age for violence and sexual content,” Tyler Thompson wrote in an email to Elon News Network. “That was our vote ... sticker or label concerning violence and sexual content for the right set of eyes.”

Tyler Thompson, who is also a liaison to the library committee, said this has been brewing for a while. She said it started about a year ago because of parents’ concerns about certain books being in libraries

across Alamance County. It evolved into the library committee coming up with the idea of these stickers. The committee called a special meeting on Jan. 31 to discuss the issue. Bonnie Whitaker, a member of the committee, did not respond to Elon News Network’s multiple requests for comment.

With about 50 community members in attendance, 20 of them got up and expressed their opinion on the topic in the public comments portion of the meeting with more than half of them saying that they disagreed with the idea of the stickers. Thompson said she was glad to see so many people at the meeting willing to talk because it shows that people care about this issue.

Noelle Vaught, an Elon University junior from Graham who attended the meeting, disagrees with the idea of stickers.

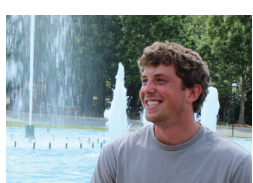
“I don’t think it’s the place of the county government to be able to label certain things as sensitive if people find it objectionable,” Vaught said. “If a parent really wanted to monitor what their children were checking out from the library, what they were reading, they could simply get that information by reading the sleeve of the book.”

See LIBRARY | pg. 5



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

The “Teen Spot!” section of the May Memorial Library as seen May 3 in downtown Burlington.



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PAGE 2 NEWS



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PAGE 6 NEWS



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PAGE 8 SPORTS