

March 12, 2008

Tulare County Board of Supervisors
2800 West Burrel Avenue
Visalia, CA 93291

Honorable Supervisors,

This letter is written to reassert the position of the City Council of the City of Lindsay regarding its dealings with Tulare County Library personnel. Specifically, the City Council expresses its concern over recent actions by senior management, most notably Mr. Brian Lewis and Ms. Judy Hill. Both Mr. Lewis and Ms. Hill have failed to meet the public trust in their supervisory roles within the County Library system. Their actions have broken and severely damaged the confidence and trust between the City of Lindsay and the Tulare County Library department.

Of foremost concern, the City Council is appalled with the way Mr. Lewis and Ms. Hill have handled the recent events surrounding the arrest of an adult male apprehended viewing child pornography in the Tulare County library located in Lindsay. Below is a summary of misgivings regarding the incident:

- Ms. Brenda Biesterfeld contacted the Lindsay Police Department informing them that she had observed an individual viewing child pornography in the library but was informed by her supervisor that she was not to report the incident to the police. Ms. Biesterfeld was fearful that in talking with the responding officer, she might lose her employment as a librarian. In a follow up conversation with Captain Wilkinson, she reiterated her fear of being terminated specifically stating that in her dealings with Mr. Lewis, he would not support her action of not following her supervisor's instructions that she not contact the police regarding the incidence of child pornography.
- When the Lindsay police confiscated a computer from the library, Ms. Hill contacted Captain Wilkinson and asserted that the city law enforcement representatives had no business interfering in the situation on the grounds that it was being dealt with by the County librarians. Throughout the conversation with Captain Wilkinson, Ms. Hill was abrupt, demanding and demeaning.
- Captain Wilkinson clearly indicated several times during the conversation that the incident was a matter of criminal activity and that a felony had occurred and as such necessitated police involvement. Instead of offering assistance, Ms. Hill demanded to know who had contacted the police and noted that she knew that it was Ms. Biesterfeld who made the report. Captain Wilkinson commented that the person filing the report was irrelevant to the case and that the source was considered anonymous.

- Within twenty minutes after Captain Wilkinson’s conversation with Ms. Hill, Ms. Biesterfeld called Captain Wilkinson explaining that Ms. Hill had called her and chastised her for making the report and relayed that she is to follow orders from the County librarian only and that she does not work for the City of Lindsay.
- Subsequent to the arrest being made public, Ms. Biesterfeld was terminated from her position with the County.
- Over the last two weeks, beginning with the initial viewing and downloading of child pornography by the individual up to the current date, there has never been an offer or any efforts made to assist the City of Lindsay with this very troublesome issue by the County Librarian or his senior staff, most notably Ms. Hill. Ms. Hill’s efforts have been to dispute our jurisdiction over this matter and to concentrate on who told us that child pornography had been viewed at the library, never once offering assistance.

The above mentioned concerns are only a few examples of one occurrence but are representative of a larger problem that is endemic within the library organization and its senior management. Both Mr. Lewis and Ms. Hill have reinforced a culture of control and misrepresentation of events and facts. The repeated efforts of senior library personnel to create this culture of control and misrepresent information have created great dysfunction within the library department and have measurably strained the relationship with the City of Lindsay. The actions of Mr. Lewis and Ms. Hill are intolerable and at this time we request that you address this matter.

Finally, it is important to mention that the Council recognizes that the actions of County librarians Mr. Lewis and Ms. Hill are inconsistent with prior dealings the City of Lindsay has had with the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive Officer, each of whom have been professional, supportive, and encouraging.

The City Council anticipates an immediate response from the County Board of Supervisors regarding this letter and its message and is willing to discuss these concerns in greater detail if necessary.

Sincerely,

Ed Murray, Mayor

Danny Salinas, Councilmember

Pam Kimball, Mayor Pro-Tem

Suzi Picaso, Councilmember

Esteban Velazquez, Councilmember

Cc: Jean Rousseau, County Administrative Officer