



May 7, 2025

Dear

This letter is in response to the completed Request for Reconsideration form for “THE BEAUTIFUL SOMETHING ELSE” by ASH VAN OTTERLOO in the Cromaine District Library (CDL) collection. I understand that a group of individuals helped you fill out these forms. We discussed at our second meeting that while each person filling out the forms selected that they represent themselves as an “individual” rather than “organization” because you are not a formal group, but a group of like-minded friends with similar concerns. You indicated that you may speak for the group and that I may communicate directly with you.

The concern about this title noted on the form was “sexualization and exploitation of children.”

When we met you explained to me that your main goal is to protect children from the subject matter of these particular books, which you broadly defined as containing viewpoints that, in your opinion, “will lead children to confusion about gender.” I explained to you that per library policy, only a parent may restrict what their own children read, and that public bodies may not restrict access to books based on the book’s viewpoint. You indicated that your personal views about gender confusion should take precedence over the rights of other parents in the community with whom you disagree.

After completing a staff review, I have concluded that this title was acquired in accordance with the library’s Materials Selection Policy #3010, which was provided when we discussed your concern in March 2025. This title was first available to community members in October 2023 and has circulated 3 times. It is published by Scholastic. It is shelved in the Tween collection because it is a book written for children ages 9-13.

School Library Journal (slj.com), a professional review source used by librarians when selecting titles, reviewed the title on June 1, 2023:

Gr 3-7—An empowering identity story about standing your ground and not being afraid to speak your truth. Sparrow’s mom, Abigail, is injured in a car wreck, forcing Sparrow, 12, to live with an aunt they never met. Aunt Mags, a trans woman, uses their childhood home Windy Hill as a haven for like-minded individuals seeking acceptance and self-expression. Sparrow finds a home here and begins a journey of self-discovery that allows them to become who they truly are, a queer, non-binary person. Otterloo covers a multitude of topics: intergenerational trauma, anxiety, mental health, honest communication, and the dangers of self medicating; also included are web resources on the gender spectrum. This book is testament to drama class as a hopeful pathway to finding your crew and the importance of women in science. Sparrow is a unique character who makes thoughtful observations, questions the status quo, all while possessing a remarkable knowledge of the natural world.

VERDICT: *A perfect way to infuse fiction with science...*

CDL’s Policy #3010, Section V part B. notes that “*Responsibility for the reading material of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection shall not be inhibited solely by the possibility that books may inadvertently come into the possession of children. The Library respects each individual parent’s right to supervise his/her children’s choice of reading materials. However, the Library does not*

have the right to act in loco parentis (in place of the parent). Therefore, a parent who chooses to restrict the materials his/her children select must accompany those children when they use the collection to impose those restrictions.

C. The Library Director is responsible for overseeing where the books are shelved and catalogued. However, the Library Board recommends that any materials that are appropriate for adults or older teens but may be considered harmful to minors, as defined by the Library Privacy Act, are shelved within the adult collection.

Review has deemed this content does not fit the definition of “*harmful to minors*” in [MCL722.674 sec.4](#). Therefore, “THE BEAUTIFUL SOMETHING ELSE” will be retained in the Tween collection.

Policy #3010 provides a protocol to appeal of this decision in Section IX Part F: written appeal of the Library Director’s decision may be made by the Requester to the Chair of the Library Board within ten (10) business days after the written decision is made by the Library Director. The appeal must include the specific Library Material being appealed and the reason that the Requester would like the decision reversed. Please direct an appeal to:

William Bolin
President, Cromaine District Library Board of Trustees
PO Box 308
3688 N. Hartland Rd.
Hartland, MI 48353

The Library Board will review any documentation it deems necessary to decide within sixty (60) days of receipt of the appeal. The Library Board may issue an additional extension if necessary in order to fully evaluate the material.

CDL’s Board of Trustees delegates collection development responsibilities to the library director. A staff of librarians with advanced degrees and professional credentials make collection development decisions for CDL. Ultimately, however, the responsibility of what a child reads rests with parents and guardians. Public libraries cannot be expected to interfere with parental obligations and responsibilities when it comes to deciding what a minor may read, listen to, or view. It is the right of parent/guardian to determine what materials are available for their children to read.

The Cromaine District Library serves 30,000 people in Hartland Township and portions of Brighton, Deerfield, Genoa, Oceola and Tyrone Townships. Library patrons come from a wide variety of religious, political, ethnic, and social backgrounds. Members of our community are well educated and possess a broad range of interests. Not every item the library offers will be enjoyed by every reader, listener, or viewer, but there is something for everyone at the public library. I respect your personal taste in materials and encourage you to ask CDL librarians to recommend titles that more closely match your interests.

Best,

Sarah Neidert
Director, Cromaine District Library