

Ex-library director to seek board seat

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LANSING — The former director of the Lansing library, who resigned after citing harassment by library board members, said Friday she will run for a seat on the library board in April.

Joanne Jensen said that if elected she plans to focus on the need to repair the "badly deteriorated library, and to make sure the older (library) staff get fair treatment."

Jensen said that during her 24-year tenure as library director she tried to convince the library board of the need to repair the building, at 2750 Indiana Ave., but "every time I called for repairs, I was continually vetoed."

Jensen resigned last April, citing harassment and insults by board members who she said did "everything possible to make my job difficult."

Board members denied those charges last April.

"I spent a great deal of time in that building," Jensen said Jensen, who lives across the street from the library. She said she felt it was her duty to work to try to improve its condition and that is why she decided to run for the seat on the board.

Jensen listed a number of things she said need repair, including resurfacing the parking lot; repairing the south wall of the children's department; installing new carpeting and fixing the roof, which continues to leak despite an \$80,000 roofing job.

"They have ignored all these problems," she said of the board members. "They have this beautiful, expansive building but they have just tried to gloss over (the problems) by painting all the walls beige."

After giving her litany of complaints, Jensen said, "I'm not doing this out of vindictiveness, but out of a sense of fairness and fair play."

Board members Gwen Molenaar and Bill Lathrop and board President Dave Tanis

were not available for comment Friday.

Jensen said she also was concerned that older staff members at the library were not being treated fairly. She said employees told her they were being "brow beaten" by Janice Bojda, library director.

"The older employees are being forced to sit through three-hour staff meetings with her and can ask questions only if they raise their hands," Jensen said. "The older women there look like they've been through hell."

Bojda acknowledged that she has been holding lengthy meetings with her department heads. "There are a lot of changes going on in the library. With the new directions our library is taking, I have to hold a lot of meetings; they can't read my mind," she said.

Bojda, who was named library director in September, said she was "a very talkative person" and that, in time, she hoped staff members would feel more free to interact with her during meetings.

Jensen, who said her knowledge of what goes on at the library comes from well-placed sources, also charged that Bojda was not qualified for the job as director and has called former colleagues at another library to ask for advice about how to run things at the Lansing library.

Bojda said she calls former colleagues at the Indian Prairie Public Library in Willowbrook, as well as colleagues at other libraries.

"This is a common practice among librarians. If you have a problem, like vagrants hanging around the library after hours, you may call another librarian to see how they handled the same problem," Bojda said. "Jensen also used to consult with other librarians. This is something I learned from looking at one of her monthly reports to the library trustees."

Jensen also charged that Bojda plans to hire more part-time employees in the future so she will not have to pay them benefits.

Bojda said she plans to hire more part-timers to save money and to have a more flexible staff, but has no plans to force any current employees out.



Jensen