

Library Cats Presence Written into the Books

Oregon city allows cat to stay, despite new ban.

Faced with community protest, officials in a small Oregon city decided on Jan. 12 not to ban Agatha Christie from the local library.

Agie, short for Agatha Christie, is the towns library cat. She was spared from a new decree by the Willamina City Council that all animals, except guide dogs, should not be allowed in public buildings, according to news reports. The council grandfathered in the Calico cat after numerous residents rallied to support her.

However, two hamsters kept in the childrens section Hamlet and Othello did not fare as well. They will be sent to new homes, and the library will not be able to bring in a replacement once Agies expended all of her nine lives.

The council surprised librarians and library patrons in early December when it decided to impose the new ban, citing complaints about allergies and liability concerns, according to the McMinnville News-Register. A library cat in nearby Stayton was forced out in summer 2005, after that citys insurance carrier suggested that it was a health problem.

But officials in Willamina were satisfied after an insurance representative told them that Agie is covered under their policy, and librarian Melissa Hansen promised to address possible allergy problems. The News-Register reported that a sign is now posted on the buildings front door that states: Caution, cat on premises. Let us know if you have allergies.

According to Hansen, Agie came to the library as a stray kitten eight years ago. Hansen already had cats in her home, so she sought approval from the council at the time to keep Agie at the library.

I've always felt cats and books go together, Hansen said.

Posted: Jan. 18, 2006, 3 p.m. EST