



October 15, 2019

Location

Administrative Services 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98225. (Note: “Library” refers to the Whatcom County Library System—WCLS.)

In Attendance

Trustees: Marvin Waschke, Chair; June Hahn, Vice Chair; Lori Jump, Board Secretary; Brad Cornwell and Erika Nuerenberg. Absent: none

Staff: Christine Perkins, Executive Director; Michael Cox, Deputy Director; Jackie Saul, Director of Finance and Administration; Mary Vermillion, Community Relations Manager; Lisa Gresham, Collection Services Manager; Geoff Fitzpatrick, IT Services Manager; Christina Read, Human Resources Manager; Eileen Shaw, Everson/Sumas Branch Manager; Laurie Dawson, Everson/Sumas PSA; Erin Suda, Deming PSA ; Deborah Morgan, Sumas Page; Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant. Absent: Thom Barthelmess, Youth Services Manager.

Guests: Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager and FoBBL; Doralee Booth, FoBBL; Chuck Kinzer, FoBBL; Brian Bell, FoBBL; Pat Kingshott, FoBL; Carol Macmillan, FoBL; Sandra Bogen, FoBL; Dick Little, WCLF; Paul Steere, WCLF; Peter Young, WCLF; Oliver Lazenby, *The Northern Light*.

Call to Order

Marvin determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Open Public Comment

No public comment.

Service Anniversary Recognition

The trustees recognized Laurie Dawson, PSA at the Everson and Sumas branches, for her 10-year service anniversary. Eileen Shaw, Branch Manager at Everson and Sumas, introduced Laurie and presented her with a service anniversary gift. Eileen stated that Laurie started her journey with WCLS in Lynden, but the bulk of her time has been spent in Everson and Sumas. On Wednesdays, you can find Laurie enthraling preschoolers in the morning and teens and young adult gamers in the afternoon.

Christine added closing remarks on Laurie’s deep knowledge of tea and tea ceremonies, which she shares at public presentations throughout the library system.

Staff & Committee Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted the accomplishments of All Staff Learning Day. Marv further remarked on the success of the “Trustees, Foundation, and Friends” learning sessions. Christine also noted that, at the Whatcom County Council meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 22, County Executive Jack Louws will read a proclamation honoring Whatcom County Library System’s 75th anniversary. She then called attention to a proposed 2020 WCLS Board Meeting Schedule. No immediate conflicts were noted.

Staff & Committee Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael noted that WCLS negotiated a contract with the team of King Architecture and Johnston Architects and has conducted focus group meetings with the City of Blaine stakeholders, the Blaine Library Design Committee and Friends of the Blaine Library, and with WCLS staff. The first three community engagement meetings are scheduled for Tuesday evenings on 11/12/19, 12/10/19 and 01/14/20. They will be held at the Blaine Senior Center from 5:30-7:00 p.m.

WCLS hosted a number of programs related to health and wellness in the month of September. Michael recently had the opportunity to hear local author Leif Whittaker speak. Leif was very engaging with the crowd, including the youth there. With the new Book Barn at the Island library, the Friends of the Island Library have been able to move their sensitive archive documents from the meeting room into the Book Barn. We are contemplating a Library Express to improve library services there.

Staff & Committee Reports: Youth Services Manager

With Thom absent, Christine stepped in to review his written report and highlighted the success of the postcards and mailboxes at the branches, part of the “Greetings from Whatcom County Library System” project. This project provides engagement opportunities with (primarily) younger patrons, encouraging conversations with their favorite authors. A postcard from one youngster to Nicola Winstanley, the author of *Cinnamon Baby*, stated, “I really like the cinnamon raisin part. We bake so much.” Christine made note of the photo of Thom in his shark onesie for Pajama Storytime. Our Youth Services team is offering a limited number of evening Storytimes as a special outing for families.

Staff & Committee Reports: Services Committee and Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael pointed out the positive trend in circulation and noted that a percentage of this increase may be attributable to holds. This trend in holds is evident in the 48% increase in circulation at NDX, a Library Express location, where patrons generally look up titles online, electing to hold them and then come to pick them up at their convenience. It was also noted that Point Roberts’ door counts are down and circulation is up with their new Library Express, echoing this trend. In reviewing the report on new borrower’s registered via ConnectEd accounts, the correlation between sign ups, checkouts and lifetime checkouts was questioned, and Michael was asked if metrics were available to evaluate the program on a school-by-school basis. Michael reported that Carmi Parker, ILS Administrator, is working on pulling statistics for that. Statistics had been compiled last year and will be again this year. Work is in progress to generate a monthly report to extract ConnectEd information from other New Borrowers information. Michael clarified that, when a student checks out material via a ConnectEd account, the checkout is included in WCLS circulation counts. Youth Services staff are visiting ConnectEd schools and engaging with students there. In reviewing programs and attendance, it was noted that teens’ and children’s programs were soaring while the numbers for adults were comparatively flat.

Staff & Committee Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report, highlighting the success of programs such as Whatcom READS, including the new featured book *To the Bright Edge of the World* by Eowyn Ivey. The Whatcom READS website displays the beautiful graphics by local designer Julie DeFoer of Good Eye Design. Eowyn will be in Whatcom County March 5-7, 2020, for five author events. Thanks to the Whatcom County Library Foundation and the Friends of the Library for funding this popular annual event. Mary noted that WCLS had cover stories in the *Cascadia Weekly* with artist Matika Wilbur's Project 562 and mountaineer Leif Whittaker's Read & Share events. She thanked Debby Farmer, Blaine Manager, for her many years of service on the Community Relations committee and welcomed Sarah Koehler, Ferndale and Mobile Services Manager, who will now be joining the committee as Debby departs. We are evaluating our relationship with Red Rukk, our marketing consultants, and are determining our needs for 2020, including utilizing talent from WCLS staff. There was a discussion regarding the possible placement of Whatcom READS selection posters in the Bellingham Barnes and Noble store. The Library Liftoff space is still on display at Gate D in Bellingham Airport, where travelers can use the free internet access available anywhere in the airport to download free eBooks and eAudiobooks to their personal mobile devices while waiting at the airport.

Staff & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

Brad provided an update on finding a replacement for Trustee June Hahn, whose term ends January 31, 2020. Brad noted that there is one applicant that the Board of Trustees will likely meet with soon, and the process of finding a suitable replacement for June is ongoing. The Board of Trustees would like to approve a new Trustee recommendation at the November or December Board meeting, so that they can present their recommendation to the Whatcom County Council in December or early January to ensure the new Trustee's placement on the WCLS Board of Trustees in January 2020.

Erika confirmed that she will be calling in for the November 19 Board meeting and that she will be back in Whatcom County for meetings thereafter.

Staff & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Marvin advised the group that the WCLF has been meeting regularly and has expressed great interest in the Blaine and Birch Bay library building projects. Many thanks to the WCLF for hosting the Library Champions event on November 9, 2019 at Pioneer Pavilion in Ferndale. Cat Wallace and Dick Little renewed their commitments on the WCLF Board, and Trish Navarre will be vacating her position. With her departure, there will be two potential vacancies upcoming on the Foundation Board.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the September 17, 2019 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following expenditures and an authorization to reissue an un-cleared paycheck:

General Fund:

- September 1 - 15, 2019 Payroll: Nos. 1020449779 - 1020449791, (Voucher Nos. 541267 - 541415) Totaling \$190,483.52 and September 16-33, 2019 Payroll: Nos. 1020606124 - 1020606136, (Voucher Nos. 541420 - 541565) Totaling \$197,493.24
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$166,771.90; \$38,182.95 of this is for employee funded contributions to health insurance premiums, health savings accounts, PERS, and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claims 2019-25G: Warrant Nos. 1092258-1092273 Totaling \$18,922.94

- Claims 2016-26G: Warrant Nos. 1093100-1093151 Totaling \$111,309.04

Capital Fund:

- Claims 2019-15C: Warrant Nos. 1093152-109315 Totaling \$2,435.92

Authorization to Void Warrants:

- Resolution 10/15/19-14 to reissue paycheck 1018410195

Erika moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded; approved. Unanimous board approval.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed the Finance Committee reports, calling attention to revenue from property taxes, noting that we are at about 60% of the budgeted amount for the year, with increased revenues being realized in October and November, following the 10/31/19 payment deadline for the second installment of the 2019 annual payments. We made it through the anticipated third quarter revenue trough without having to access our cash reserves. Investment income to date is almost at the annual budgeted amount for the year, although projections remain conservative. Total operating revenue is at 60% of budget, with September actual expenses under the projected amounts, even with the increase in actual wages and benefits expenditures compared to the prior year.

Jackie presented the early draft of 2020 Budget Projections, highlighting the noted assumptions of a 1% increase to the 2019 levy and 15% increase to property tax revenue from new construction, for a total projected property tax revenue increase of \$293,000, although this rate of new construction growth may not continue. Removal of revenue from library fines, a 14.5% increase in health insurance premiums and a Collections Material budget at 13% of operating expenses were also included in the assumptions taken into account for these budget projections.

An overview of levies followed, along with an explanation of the projected 2020 levy rate at \$0.41544. Concerns were expressed about the contracting economy and possible changes to assessment methodology with an upcoming new assessor, and the potential effects on these factors might have on assessed property values and resulting levy rates.

Reviewing the fund balance over time, Jackie noted that margins on the fund balance have been steadily decreasing, while expenses are increasing and outpacing revenue, so the fund balance is leveling off. Operating expenses are expected to go up with the building and operation of the new branches, too. Taking the aforementioned into consideration, the fund balance is projected to start decreasing in 2020.

In a detailed review of 2018, projected 2019 and projected 2020 effects on the fund balance, conservative investment interest income was planned and it was noted that the sale of the bookmobile will not be a recurring revenue item. For expenditures, we have budgeted for substitute employees' time, a rate increase for retirement benefits that took effect mid-year 2019, and an increase in health insurance benefits, yielding an overall 4.5% increase in personnel expenditures. While less was spent in 2019 than budgeted in some areas, there are continuing expenses in 2020 related to ownership of library facilities. It is necessary to budget for unforeseen expenses, such as the North Fork septic and well maintenance this year, which was required to be in compliance with new 2019 county regulations regarding septic systems.

Addressing the fund balance summary, Jackie focused on reserved and unreserved fund balances, reiterating that we have exercised conservative budgeting in past and expect to see increased personnel expenses in the future.

Jackie will share a Preliminary 2020 Budget at the November Board meeting. At the December meeting, the Trustees will vote on the approval of the final 2020 budget.

Board Education: 75th Anniversary Slideshow

Erin Suda, Deming PSA, Deborah Morgan, Sumas Page, and Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator, presented a slideshow documenting the History Harvest process of gathering the past 75 years of WCLS history. The project was funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services via the Washington State Library and the Washington State Office of the Secretary of State. Other Team members in the project include: Michael Cox, Deputy Director; Ann McAllen, Adult Programming Coordinator; the Library Branch Managers; and Cynthia French, Amy Jones and Suzanne Carney in Community Relations.

Erin, Deborah and Neil have been working on cataloging a collection of over 1,400 digitized photos and videos, documenting the local aspects of Washington Rural Heritage and tracking our history with current technology. The process included locating and reviewing thousands of photos and historical documents at the branches, with some branches having many and others having none. In the latter case, they had to be creative to find other sources of historical material, acquiring permissions, reviewing copyrights, researching names and birth/death information and amassing a lot of documentation along the way. The staff at the Washington State Library have been quite helpful throughout this research and cataloging process. Deborah hauled an Epson scanner from location to location, scanning photos for long-term storage, and Erin did the final selecting. Neil filmed interviews of individuals that were involved with the library system over the past seventy-five years, collecting their stories and adding a video element to the project. The WCLS branch material can be viewed on the WCLS and Washington Rural Heritage websites. They expect to have 17 individual Whatcom county collections completed by November 7, with 31 interviews embedded in the photo collection.

The result of their efforts is informative and entertaining. Erin, Deborah and Neil all expressed that it has been a real joy to preserve these memories and have been considering ways to make it easier for future history gatherers. Neil is also developing presentations customized for each branch. Be sure to catch these presentations, as well as his humorous video highlight reel, which will be available at the branches during the 75th anniversary celebrations happening system-wide on November 7.

Break

Marvin adjourned for a break from 10:30-10:35 a.m.

Blaine and Birch Bay Library Building Project Update

At the beginning of the update, it was restated for newly arriving guests that the first three Blaine Library community engagement meetings are scheduled for the Tuesdays of 11/12/19, 12/10/19 and 01/14/20 and will be held at the Blaine Senior Center from 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Michael reported that the Birch Bay library building committee is aware of the requirement for the State Department of Archaeological and Historic Preservation to review the site and the historical importance of the existing house on the property. After the review, decisions will be made regarding the disposition of the structure. The current design for the new structure will mimic the features of the old structure in order to maintain historic elements.

Guests representing interests in the Birch Bay Library shared their thoughts with the Board. With the state grant funding deadline in sight, there is a pressing need to develop a plan and timeline to ensure secure funding for Birch Bay. It must be determined when it is feasible and appropriate to divert our energy into getting architectural drawings and construction documents, such as applications and permits. Michael advised guests and the Board that more specific dollar amounts related to the Blaine project and a timeline will be presented at the March 2020 Board of Trustees meeting.

At the September 2019 Board of Trustees meeting, the Board decided not to pursue polling in the Blaine and Birch Bay area as it would not be possible to generate a statistically representative sample. Since then, staff have been working to pull together data to help the Board hone in on a strategy for success, which were shared with the Board. It was posed to the Board to define the main objective and/or priority in pursuing different funding options. Is the main objective to simultaneously pursue funding for two new libraries, one in Blaine and one in Birch Bay? Or is the more urgent goal being able to access the State Department of Commerce funds for the Birch Bay Library before the deadline?

The Board chair stated that his overarching goal is continued services to the entire county, and both libraries are definitely part of that goal. The trustees were agreed in their commitment to building both libraries and coupling the project funding, noting that more information would be needed before decoupling funding to both projects. Birch Bay got a bit of a jumpstart on the clock with the state grant, which forces a tighter timeline. It was noted that the closer the timing on a construction project, the more the costs are known and the lower the costs, while the further out the timing is from a project, there are more unknowns and higher costs.

A question was raised regarding timing constraints on the state grant funding making it necessary to decouple the projects. The Board does not wish the two library building projects to conflict with each other and restated their commitment to building both libraries. More discussion was had including wanting the state grant to be part of the solution, the best way to raise funds, the limited time for private fundraising if we want to retain the \$2 million state grant, and the necessity of public fundraising.

Members of the Board noted that a Library Capital Facilities Area (LCFA) may be the optimal mechanism to deliver the project, with built-in assurances for services delivered. Additionally, a LCFA gauges public support for the projects and indicates funding available in the area. With the deadline pressure of the state grant funding for Birch Bay and the increasing need for a new library in Blaine, timing is imperative. The logistics of establishing a LCFA district were discussed, as tax assessor's maps, levy rates, population growth projections and voter turnout records were reviewed. There was further discussion on getting the LCFA measure(s) on the ballot in August and/or November 2020 versus any time later.

Aspects of a combined LCFA versus two separate LCFAs were discussed. With a larger area incorporated in the LCFA district, a combined LCFA accounts for population and library usage crossover. Impacts on projected levy rates were also examined. It was noted that, for a combined LCFA to go on the ballot, the city council for the City of Blaine must first vote to accept the LCFA. Subsequently, the Whatcom County council, which oversees the unincorporated areas, will also have to vote to accept a LCFA.

The Board chair solicited input on the matter from guests in attendance and inquired about community support for the projects, as well as doubts regarding them. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of hard numbers for the Blaine project at this time, with guests wanting more specific figures on the building costs associated with each planned library. One guest viewpoint was that there was a higher likelihood that both libraries could be built if the fundraising is done together and doubts that it can be done separately. Another guest was concerned that, if the funding for building both libraries didn't get passed together, nothing will be done for either.

Marvin responded that, if a single (combined) LCFA fails the first time, there is the option to run it again, to run two separate LCFAs or to pursue private funding. The key is to continue to evaluate strategies, taking the path most likely to succeed, while planning to have an alternative course(s) of action to pursue. This plan includes budget, timeline, proposals, consultants, Friends of the Library, the Foundation, the System, and the WCLS Board.

The Chair proposed and motioned for the adoption of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Board empower the Executive Director to research and develop a LCFA that encompasses the Blaine School District, less Point Roberts, to build two libraries.

The motion was seconded.

The Chair requested that the motion on the floor be withdrawn. The second was also withdrawn. The motion was withdrawn unanimously.

The Chair proposed the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Board empower the Executive Director to research and develop a LCFA that encompasses the Blaine School District, less Point Roberts, to build two libraries. After consultation with the Finance subcommittee, her findings will be presented at the December 2019 Board Meeting.

Brad motioned for the adoption of the resolution as read. Seconded. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

Chair made a motion that the Board meet from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on December 17, 2019. Seconded. Passed Unanimously.

Executive Session to discuss 2020 Bargaining Unit Full Contract Negotiations

At 11:53 a.m., the Board Chair moved the meeting to Executive Session, as per RCW 42.30.110(1)(g), to discuss 2020 Bargaining Unit Full Contract Negotiations. Marvin stated that the session would end at 12:00 p.m.

At 12:00 p.m., Marvin extended the Executive Session to 12:03 p.m.

At 12:03 p.m., Marvin reconvened Open Session and stated that the Board will vote on the 2020-2024 Bargaining Unit Full Contract at the November 19, 2019 Board of Trustees meeting, after it has been ratified by the Washington State Council of County and City Employees, Local Number 1581.

Executive Session to discuss Executive Director's Annual Review

At 12:04 p.m., the Board Chair moved the meeting to Executive Session, as per RCW 42.30.110(1)(g), to discuss the Executive Director's Annual Performance Review. Marvin stated that the session would end at 12:30 p.m.

At 12:30 p.m., Marvin extended the Executive Session to 12:35 p.m.

At 12:35 p.m. Lori Jump departed the meeting, and Marvin extended the Executive Session to 12:37 p.m.

At 12:37 p.m., Marvin extended the Executive Session to 12:47 p.m.

At 12:47 p.m., Marvin extended the Executive Session to 12:57 p.m.

At 12:57 p.m., Marvin extended the Executive Session to 1:02 p.m.

At 1:02 p.m., Marvin reconvened Open Session and advised that the Board will officially complete the Executive Director's annual review at the November 19, 2019 meeting.

Announcements and Adjourn

No further announcements.

Marvin adjourned the meeting at 1:03 p.m.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be at Administrative Services on November 19, 2019 at 9:00 a.m.

Address: 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226

Signed by Lori Jump

Lori Jump, WCLS Trustee

November 19, 2019

Date

Signed by Ruth Nail

Ruth Nail, WCLS