



November 19, 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 (via telephone starting at 9:26 a.m.). Absent: None

Staff: Christine Perkins, Executive Director; Michael Cox, Deputy Director; Jackie Saul, Director of Finance and Administration; Thom Barthelmess, Youth Services Manager; Geoff Fitzpatrick, IT Services Manager; Christina Read, Human Resources Manager; Mary Vermillion, Community Relations Manager; Lisa Gresham, Collection Services Manager; Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant. Absent: None

Guests: Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager and FOBBL; Brian Bell, FOBBL; Keith Alesse, FOBBL; Ruth Higgins, FOBBL; Doralee Booth, FOBBL.

Video presentation

Neil McKay, WCLS Online Experience Coordinator, presented a YouTube [video](#) chronicling the 75th Anniversary tour of all the WCLS branches and some Bookmobile stops as he traveled Whatcom County with WCLS Trustee Brad Cornwell, Executive Director Christine Perkins, Human Resources Manager Christina Read and Community Relations Manager Mary Vermillion. The video captures the customized collections, décor and festivities being enjoyed by staff and guests at each branch as they celebrated this momentous occasion in the history of our library system.

Featured in the footage of the Lynden Library are the “Spirit of Lynden” quilts, crafted and donated by local quilters, which will continue to serve as a special community feature for patrons and visitors to that branch.

Meeting attendees also got a closer look at Neil’s necktie, which is fashioned to resemble an old library check out card and had been stamped at various branches they had visited that day. Neil and his keepsake tie can be seen in the video as the WCLS road trip crew crossed from Lummi Island on the Whatcom Chief ferry.

Call to Order

Marvin determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

Open Public Comment

Dianne Marrs-Smith, President of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Birch Bay Library (FOBBL), read a letter to the WCLS Board of Trustees from the Board of FOBBL. In the letter, the FOBBL Board presented a consensus position expressing their concerns pertaining to the Birch Bay Library project funding and timeline, as well as options and contingencies they would support. The letter closed with thanks to the WCLS Board of Trustees and

an appeal to them for a “timely decision” to help FOBBL plan their “2020 fundraising and campaign efforts with a clear, understandable message.”

Service Anniversary Recognition

The trustees recognized Mike Kusick, ILL & Circ. Assistant – Lending at Administrative Services, for his 20-year service anniversary. Lisa Gresham, Collection Services Manager, introduced Mike, who is also a US Navy retiree. Skilled with statistics, accuracy and thoroughness, Mike meticulously processes ILL requests and gathers monthly statistics for Board reports. Lisa and Christine presented Mike with a service anniversary gift, expressing thanks for his commitment to diligent stewardship, careful oversight of materials, and his thoughtfulness and concern for patrons.

Staff & Committee Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted the successes of the 75th anniversary all-branches tour and the Library Champions Reception. She noted the recent press coverage of the joint WCLS-BPL decision to say “Farewell to Fines,” as well as her radio interview with KGMI and a planned story to air on KING 5.

Staff & Committee Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared the results of a meeting with the City of Sumas about adding a Library Express location there. Hearing their concerns about liability issues, WCLS is currently putting a hold on such plans, with the potential to readdress them in the future. In the meantime, WCLS will continue to gather performance data and experience with our existing NDX and PRX express locations to evaluate and demonstrate their success.

Michael advised that the Blaine Public Library building assessment will be addressed later in today’s agenda.

Staff & Committee Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and highlighted the successes and challenges of the ConnectEd program. He is meeting with the Blaine School Board soon regarding adding students in that school district to the program. With the addition of Blaine School District, the ConnectEd program would cover all public school districts in Whatcom County. The program is reaching young people who would not otherwise have access and is a key factor in developing a culture of reading in the county. While current book deliveries and returns have been built into existing distribution routes, the picks and holds process is requiring increasing staff hours. The expansion of the program will require additional support and resources, since it performs best when the Youth Services Team works closely with students, faculty and administration. There is a February 8, 2020 meeting planned for stakeholders from the school districts and our staff to brainstorm on solving scale problems.

Staff & Committee Reports: Services Committee and Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael reviewed data regarding hold requests and circulation. In response to a question of whether more people are getting materials via holds requests and pickups versus browsing at branches, it was noted that, since 2006, 70-75% of circulation comes from browsing at the branches.

An update to WCLS’s online magazine software, RB Digital, allows for the newest issue of a patron’s magazine selection(s) to check out instantly. It was also mentioned that Kanopy, our online streaming software, provides increased access to movies not otherwise available locally.

Staff & Committee Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report and noted the extensive press coverage of WCLS's 75th Anniversary and celebrations. When they found out about plans for overdue fines elimination, *The Bellingham Herald* ran the "Farewell to Fines" story this past Sunday, November 17. The story was quickly picked up by *My Ferndale News* and KGMI. We have also shared the *Herald* story via FaceBook. General public feedback has been positive and continued comments are welcomed.

The winter issue of *Explorations* magazine is out in branches and community distribution points. There is [a link](#) on our homepage where we are requesting that patrons complete a survey to share their thoughts on this publication. The results of this survey will be used to consider changes to *Explorations* in 2020.

Staff & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee shared updates on the recruitment of a new trustee to replace June Hahn, whose term ends January 31, 2020. The committee will be meeting early in December to interview applicants. The possibility of utilizing occasional remote meeting access may be considered, if necessary.

During an Executive Session later in today's agenda, the Board will complete the Executive Director's annual performance review.

Staff & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Marv reported that the Foundation did not have a meeting this month, and there is nothing to report except that the WCLF is eager to participate in the Birch Bay and Blaine library building projects.

Later in today's agenda, the Board will discuss the 2020 Addendum to the agreement with the Whatcom County Library Foundation.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the October 15, 2019 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following expenditures:

General Fund:

- October 1 - 15, 2019 Payroll: Nos. 1020794930 - 1020794943, (Voucher Nos. 541570 - 541715) Totaling \$206,636.32 and October 16-31, 2019 Payroll: Nos. 1020960490 - 1020960506, (Voucher Nos. 541720 - 541878) Totaling \$238,633.27
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$169,470.47; \$38,473.49 of this is for employee funded contributions to health insurance premiums, health savings accounts, PERS, and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claims 2019-27G: Warrant Nos. 1093695-1093715 Totaling \$26,091.24
- Claims 2019-28G: Warrant Nos. 1094065-1094082 Totaling \$16,126.75
- Claims 2019-29G: Warrant No. 1094773 Totaling \$750.00
- Claims 2019-30G: Warrant Nos. 1095324-1095380 Totaling \$137,895.26
- Claims 2019-31G: Warrant Nos 1095680-1095699 Totaling \$44,070.62

Capital Fund:

- Claims 2019-16C: Warrant No. 1093716 Totaling \$230.99
- Claims 2019-17C: Warrant Nos. 1094083-1094084 Totaling \$3,838.82

Authorization to Void Warrants:

- Resolution 11/19/19-15 to void warrant 1093143

Brad 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, highlighting that the October report reflected revenue from the second of 2019's annual property tax payments. At 90% of the budgeted property tax revenue amount, this is just shy of the total levy for 2019, with expectations to receive most of the remaining balance in November. There have been a few changes in projected property tax revenue, based on annexations by the City of Bellingham, which ended up slightly reducing our income.

Total expenditures are at 76% of the budgeted amount, and the big jump in net income is due to the previously noted October property tax revenue. In summary, the fund balance is up now due to recent income, but will drop as the year progresses without much added income.

2020 Strategic Action Plan Draft

Christine presented a draft of her 2020 Strategic Action Plan, reviewing ongoing and new strategic projects, including the following highlights.

Ongoing projects:

We are increasing training on reading conversations regarding genre fiction and staff book reviews. With the increase in healthcare costs, we will be investigating new healthcare options and partnering with our employees' union on healthcare benefit delivery. The new WCLS logo requires updates to our signage. A team led by Mary Vermillion is working on swapping out interior and exterior signage, taking a slow and measured approach and replacing items as existing signage wears out. Our goal is to maintain consistency in the actual logo, even if the housing of the logo varies due to differences in the building design.

New projects:

READ – We are ready to launch our Surprise Selections service in 2020, developing metrics to evaluate the process and results, adjusting as necessary. We plan to continue with Macmillan eBook boycotts and offer Read & Share again; it was a really great hit in 2019 and we want to hold onto that momentum.

There are many anniversaries next year regarding suffrage and voting rights, as well as the 2020 Census, which we plan to support. Youth Services has programming planned for the first half of the year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and plans to establish outreach to prenatal families in the second half of the year.

We will refresh staff training on materials merchandising, creating a thematic experience, designing an atmosphere to captivate guests' attention and encouraging borrowing.

ENGAGE: In the first quarter, we will conclude the Blaine community engagement and library design process, and transition to supporting LCFA efforts for the balance of the year, which may require some additional staff, training and funding. On the technology front, we are changing our messaging system from Mailchimp to Patron Point.

We will be continuing to design evaluation tools, develop program training and update staff competencies on serving underserved populations. We have recently implemented a live translation service, which allows staff to speak to a translator on the phone in order to meet the needs of our non-English-speaking patrons and guests.

ACCESS: Promoting Fines Fee has already begun and will continue, along with training and implementation. This will be a joint effort with Bellingham Public Library.

We plan to explore partnerships with higher education institutions, such as WCC and BTC, partnering to support a literate community and recruit new students from distant county locations, such as Kendall, Sumas and Everson.

DILIGENT STEWARDSHIP: Our top priority is to develop a finalized facilities plan. With North Fork and Lynden improvements nearly complete, Everson Library will be next on the list for 2020. Blaine and Birch Bay library building projects will require added attention, including monthly meetings with Department of Commerce to keep them updated on Birch Bay project and funding. We have a tight timeframe, especially with potential public voting on a LCFA in August.

PUBLIC HEARING: Proposed 2020 Operating Budget Revenue Sources and Preliminary Budget

In accordance with RCW 84.55.120, the Board of Trustees of the Whatcom County Rural Library District held this public hearing on the proposed 2020 Preliminary Budget, including revenue sources for the District's 2020 operating budget. The hearing included considerations of possible increases in property tax revenues within the limits of I-747. Beginning Monday, November 25, 2019, copies of the 2020 Preliminary Budget may be obtained at the address shown above or by calling (360) 305-3603.

Jackie presented the Preliminary Operating and Capital Expenditure Budget for Fiscal Year 2020, including a summary of the major fund balance and projections of reserved funds committed. Considering total revenues and expenditures, there is an estimated \$280,000 net operating deficit, with funds budgeted to cover contingencies.

Projected revenues are based on an increase of 1% over last year's levy amount, if approved. With the implementation of the Fines Free program, Fines Income is zeroed, having represented less than 1% of our prior budget. Investment income increased 35% from 2018 to 2019, and 2020 projections are dialed back due to market volatility. Overall, a 2.7% increase in revenue is projected, which includes an estimated 3% from property taxes, with revenues from new construction and the 1% allowable property tax levy.

Jackie noted changes in the 2020 preliminary budget since the October meeting. We've gone through union negotiations and those projections are included here, even though not approved yet. They will be voted on later in the meeting. As previously discussed, health insurance premiums will increase by approximately 14%. Such increases are not sustainable when we only get a 1% increase in property tax levy income per year, as evidenced in the chart demonstrating the flattening trend of the major fund balance. PERS rates are not projected to increase until 2021.

She then reviewed the details of each budget category included, answering questions as asked, and provided departmental information to give perspective on how the budget is divided. She reiterated that we would review the budget again in December. The next step, a resolution approved by the Board of Trustees, is required by law to take the full 1% levy increase, and she has sent the resolution's language to the Assessor's office for preview. The approved and signed resolution must be delivered to the Whatcom County Tax Assessor's Office before November 30, 2019 for that levy increase to go into effect.

Jackie presented Resolution 11/19/19-16: A Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Whatcom County Rural Library District Authorizing an Increase in the Regular Property Tax Levy.

Erika made a motion to approve Resolution 11/19/19-16 as presented; seconded. Passed unanimously.

Jackie presented Resolution 11/19/19-17: A Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Whatcom County Rural Library District Adopting the 2020 Preliminary Budget.

June made a motion to approve Resolution 11/19/19-17 as presented; seconded. Passed unanimously.

Jackie presented Resolution 11/19/19-18: A Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Whatcom County Rural Library District Adopting the 2020 Preliminary Capital Budget.

The Chair made a motion to approve Resolution 11/19/19-18 as presented; seconded. Passed unanimously.

Break

Marvin adjourned for a break from 10:45-10:50 a.m.

Policy Updates – 12.23 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy

Christina reviewed 12.23 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy and advised the Board that it has been revised to include language that more closely matches the language in the FMLA law, to include language and definitions as revised in the 2020-2024 union contract, and to bring the policy in compliance with the Washington State Paid Sick Leave Law regarding the use of paid sick leave during Family and Medical Leave.

Brad moved to approve the updated 12.23 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy, as presented. Seconded. It passed unanimously.

Blaine and Birch Bay Library Building Project Update

Christine and Michael reported on their meeting with the State of Washington Department of Commerce and the State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) for a review of the Birch Bay Library project as part of Executive Order 0505. They discussed the historic building on the property, which is over 50 years old, necessitating DAHP conferral as part of state funding requirements. The DAHP wants to mitigate the loss of the building, so we are building in the likeness of the historical building and keeping naming rights. In our plans, we intend to have a display within the library depicting the old building, the story of the Vogt family in the area, historical photos, and the historical use of the land.

To qualify for state funds, it is required that we develop a MOU with the Department of Commerce and the DAHP outlining how the project plans to mitigate the loss of the historic resources of both the existing structure and the archeological significance of the ground. We have been in communication with the Lummi Nation regarding their requirements for digs and explorations since before we purchased the lot, and we will continue to remain in written contact with them to ensure that we are meeting their requirements as the project progresses.

Michael addressed questions from the Trustees regarding the financial impacts of the DAHP review, legal review, LEED Silver certification and the state fees to administer the grant, as well as the anticipated long-term reduction in utility expenses due to LEED Silver energy efficiency.

Christine thanked FOBBL member Doralee Booth for her frugal resourcefulness in finding some nice used wooden tables and chairs to use for meetings at the Vogt property. Christine also extended her appreciation to the people that put their muscle into moving these items into the existing house.

The Trustees again acknowledged the FOBBL letter presented at the beginning of today's meeting.

Transitioning the discussion from Birch Bay to Blaine, Michael advised the Trustees that the Blaine Library Design Committee met November 12, after which the first of three Blaine Library community engagement meetings, *Hopes & Dreams*, took place at the Blaine Senior Center. About 30 community members participated in various discussions about library spaces. After a short presentation, the Johnston/King architectural team talked with people about a number of images depicting dynamic uses of space within libraries. The choice of site was a consistent question among attendees, who suggested potential alternatives, such as down G Street. Any site change would be made by the City of Blaine, who chose the proposed site based upon its availability.

Michael informed the Trustees that a building assessment of the existing Blaine Library Building was done by a team that included Tim Faber of King Architects, members of the City of Blaine’s Public Works Department and WCLS Facilities Planning Coordinator Carol Oberton. A review of the draft building assessment reveals that most elements of the assessment scored Fair to Poor. Some elements, such as roofing, are Unsatisfactory. It is impossible to assess the steel structure without significant impact to the ceiling and a structural engineer, and it is expected that the existing structure may not meet today’s seismic requirements. Additionally, the water line is a 1” pipe, requiring an upgrade for an expanded building. Costs required to update the existing structure may be similar to new construction. However, the design team will consider what materials may be reused and whether any structural elements may fit within the building design after the building programming is complete.

There was further discussion on the estimated remaining lifetime of assessed elements and the pros and cons of repairing and/or modifying the existing structure versus demolition and new construction. Work area parameters, building codes and site improvement costs related to associated options were also addressed.

Christine thanked all who attended the November 1 meeting of the Birch Bay and Blaine library building projects’ stakeholders that was held at the Lynden Library. There was much engagement, input, and understanding of hopes and fears of all stakeholders. Many strategies were discussed and more research has been done since. Christine reviewed her findings and asked the Board if there were areas in which she could provide more information to them, requesting their further direction on the projects.

The options of two separate LCFAs and a single joint LCFA were discussed, including ballot regulations and timelines; legal review and filing costs; forming, disbanding and/or restructuring LCFAs; the scope of work for each project location; and costs and benefits involved with each option. Various strategies and contingencies were addressed.

There was agreement to continue to move forward with a joint LCFA to be on the ballot in August 2020, keeping in mind an equitable solution for both projects, with separate LCFA contingencies in place for a November ballot. It was reiterated that “equitable” means the same level of service--equally accessible with equal levels of service—which does not necessarily equate to equal cost. Each of these two projects involves a different set of factors, such as size, ownership, and community needs, that need to be considered.

A final plan outlining primary and contingent strategies, with defined exit decision points, needs to be developed and presented to the Trustees at the December 17, 2019 board meeting.

Once again, gratitude was expressed to FOBBL for their well-articulated message and the direction it offered regarding support, fundraising, and getting out the vote.

2020 Addendum to Agreement with the Whatcom County Library Foundation

Christine noted that this addendum is an update of the ongoing agreement with WCLF to include 2020 figures. It does not currently take into consideration any additional hours we would like to have the Foundation Director working for us, such as for the Blaine and Birch Bay fundraising projects. Those requirements will be determined in the future.

Brad made a motion to approve 2020 Addendum to the Agreement, as presented; seconded. Passed unanimously.

Executive Session to discuss 2020-2024 Bargaining Unit Full Contract Update

At 12:00 p.m., the Board Chair moved the meeting to Executive Session, in accordance with RCW 42.30.110(1)(g), to discuss the update on the 2020-2024 Bargaining Unit Full Contract. Marvin stated that the session would end at 12:05 p.m.

At 12:05 p.m., Marvin extended the Executive Session to 12:08 p.m.

At 12:08 p.m., Marvin reconvened Open Session to review and vote on the 2020-2024 Bargaining Unit Full Contract.

2020 Bargaining Unit Full Contract Review

June moved for the approval of the ratified 2020-2024 Bargaining Unit Full Contract, as negotiated between the Whatcom County Library System and the Washington State Council of County and City Employees, Local Number 1581, as presented. Seconded. Passed with unanimous approval.

Executive Session to discuss Executive Director's Annual Review

At 12:13, 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 12:25 p.m.

At 12:25 p.m., Marvin reconvened Open Session. Brad advised that the Board has completed the Executive Director's 2019 annual review and provided recommendations for her 2020 leadership goals, as well as approved a 4% increase in the Executive Director's annual salary.

Announcements and Adjourn

Brad announced that he will be departing the Board prior to the expiration of his term in 2021 due to conflicting commitments. He will be able to attend the December 2019 meeting and will advise of his attendance at the January 2020 meeting. June plans to attend the January meeting. With June Hahn's term expiring January 31, 2020, the Board is now seeking to replace two Trustees.

Ruth reminded everyone that next month's Board of Trustees meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m. and is scheduled to adjourn at 1:00 p.m.

Marvin adjourned the meeting at 12:33 p.m.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be at Administrative Services on December 17, 2019 at 8:00 a.m.

Address: 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226

Signed by Lori Jump

Lori Jump, WCLS Trustee

12/17/19

Date

Signed by Ruth Nail

Ruth Nail, WCLS