



December 17, 2019

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Location

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

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In Attendance

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**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; Thom Barthelmess, Youth Services Manager; Geoff Fitzpatrick, IT Services Manager; Mary Vermillion, Community Relations Manager; Lisa Gresham, Collection Services Manager; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant. Absent: Christina Read, Human Resources Manager.

**Visitors:** Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager and FOBL President; Wendy McLeod, Lynden Library Assistant Manager; Debby Farmer, Blaine Library Manager; FOBL Members: Cindy Leffel, Carol Macmillan, Sandra Bogen, and Pat Kingshott; FOBL Members: Ruth Higgins, Brian Bell, and Chuck Kinzer; Bruce Ansell, Fire Commissioner (NWFRS); Jeff Lazenby, City of Blaine; Brooke Pederson, Island Library Manager.

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Call to Order

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Marvin determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

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Open Public Comment

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No public comment.

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Birch Bay Library Update

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Michael discussed his update on the Department of Archaeology and Historical Preservation (DAHP) review process, including the Drayton Archaeology report, indicating that the report needs to be updated with new archaeological findings and building design plans. In compliance with Governor’s Executive Order 05-05 and RCW 27.53, we are maintaining communication with the DAHP, Department of Commerce and Lummi Nation to keep these entities apprised of our findings and plans and ensure we are fulfilling their requirements. WCLS has a meeting scheduled with the Lummi Nation tribal government on January 7, 2020 and resulting input will go into our MOU with the DAHP and Department of Commerce.

Michael addressed historic considerations, such as including the Vogt family name in the library’s name, selling the house and moving it offsite, and designing the new library to maintain features resembling the original building. The garage buildings do not meet historic guidelines.

Michael reviewed his update on the Zervas fee proposal, which includes fees required as part of the pre-application process, such as performing a hydraulic and hydrologic study, habitat assessment, State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) report and meeting with local jurisdictional authorities. It was reiterated that

these costs are included in the original project cost estimates and are not additional to the project budget. It was further clarified that, while these costs are part of the total building project cost estimate, if we don't raise the total project funds required to meet the deadline for the state grant funding, we will not be reimbursed for these project expenses.

It was reported that a 10-year-old Birch Bay girl, Bailey Black, held a bake sale on Saturday, December 14, to raise money for the Birch Bay Library. After doing the vast majority of the canvassing and publicity herself, her original goal was to raise \$300, and she ended up collecting approximately \$2,200.

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## Blaine Library Update

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Christine updated the Trustees on the recent discussion of the library project at the City of Blaine Capital Budget Study session. Items discussed included the City's population growth projections for 2036 of approximately 9,400 people, the future Blaine Library's estimated square footage, ownership and maintenance of the library, and the prospect of the City allocating budget funds for the library project, which does not seem likely at this point. Funding options, including a LCFA, were reviewed. While a vote would still be required, a LCFA is presently a council-supported option. Jeff Lazenby, from the City of Blaine, confirmed that there was nothing currently proposed for voter approval next year for the City of Blaine, although Blaine School District has a replacement levy coming up for vote in February.

Michael reviewed the final 2019 facility condition assessment report for the existing Blaine Library, highlighting the bolded summary text that recommends new construction replacement versus re-use of the existing building. As such, the focus is now on developing a plan and design for a new library building, including site analysis, library usage, and focus group input. Current Blaine Library usage data indicates about 32% of checkouts are children's materials and that 40% of total circulation is attributable to Birch Bay residents, not counting people in Birch Bay who are also using the Bookmobile.

Overall, interest in the Blaine Library project appears to be increasing, and Michael reviewed community feedback on three design plan draft options, detailing the pros and cons of each. Parking, entryways, after-hours access, public services desks, meeting rooms, youth areas, acoustics, sunlight, and WCLS delivery area and truck access were among the many items addressed with each design. Additional items considered in planning are technology requirements, such as bandwidth, electrical wiring, computer cabling, and the space dedicated to the use of desktop and/or laptop computers. All plans would also have to meet the design concerns and requirements for the City of Blaine.

All three design options presented are just under 9,000 square feet, based on usage for approximately 13,000 people X 0.7 sq. ft. per person. This number was calculated using Blaine's current population, plus projected (by the city and county) population growth by 2036, minus the 40% of patrons expected to be primarily served by the Birch Bay Library. This square footage gives Blaine the potential to be our 3<sup>rd</sup> largest branch, with Ferndale and Lynden each being around 15,000 sq. ft. and Deming just over 7,000.

The next community input meeting is Tuesday, January 14, with another public input meeting scheduled in February. Notices are scheduled to go out with utility bills for a community meeting to present final design plans. The Trustees heard input from Birch Bay and Blaine visitors in attendance.

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## Blaine and Birch Bay Strategy Discussion

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In accordance with the vote taken at the October Board meeting, Christine has been developing a funding/LCFA plan for these two building projects. Both Birch Bay and Blaine stakeholders are anxious for some clarity in direction, and a decision by the trustees today is desired. Christine reviewed the Washington state budget and financing procedures and funding timelines. She presented a proposed strategy with go/no go points. June noted that she really appreciated the work Christine put into this strategy plan and the pivot points; however, she needs to know who is going to own and operate the new Blaine Library and the overall cost that will be proposed to taxpayers before she can vote on going forward with a LCFA. The trustees discussed the implications of municipal ownership, the benefits of municipalities' dedicated public works and building

departments, and the increased operating costs to WCLS that are generally associated with non-municipally-owned and maintained buildings. After further deliberation, the trustees unanimously agreed that WCLS needs a clear MOU with the City of Blaine that establishes that the City will own and maintain the new Blaine Library as a library building for a long term. Furthermore, the trustees requested a firmer cost estimate, and it was debated as to whether that would be possible prior to making a final decision on the building design. There is concern that waiting until March for a final design, and its associated cost estimate, will cause us to lose valuable time scheduling other processes. It was then posited that we establish a budgetary number first and have the architects design within that budget. It was proposed that, by taking into consideration population projections, square footage, cost/square foot and annual cost escalations, we can prepare a Blaine option that is equitable to Birch Bay, and be able to present a levy number that both communities can support.

Jennifer Rick noted that, in this scenario, it will be important to determine what levy amount will garner the necessary votes to pass. Bruce Ansell, a Birch Bay resident and also a fire commissioner in south Whatcom, expressed his concerns that any number takes money away from the fire district, which is also a junior taxing district, putting them in the position of competing with the library district for public funds. The fire district has an upcoming levy renewal and he feels they cannot operate sufficiently if the library district pursues a LCFA levy rate of \$0.35/thousand. Christine reassured him that WCLS is currently considering a more moderate levy rate.

The trustees heard further input from the visitors, who voiced their concerns about the projects, door counts, community usage, costs, funding sources, and fundraising and building construction timelines. Two single LCFAs versus a joint LCFA, and the potential associated levy rates and other considerations for the Blaine and Birch Bay communities, were again discussed.

Christine emphasized that a LCFA resolution has to be ready by May 8. She readdressed the LCFA strategy schedule dates and budget proposal, going over each item in detail, highlighting that the cost estimates listed are at the high end and could come in less. She would like to get some items on the schedule as soon as possible. Marvin indicated his appreciation for Christine's analysis. He reiterated that the Board wants an MOU with the City of Blaine and a tighter estimate on the size and cost of the Blaine project. Brad stated that it would be preferable to have this done by the January Board of Trustees meeting. All trustees agreed on the need to be delivering comparable service **system-wide**.

There was another review of the LCFA Budget Proposal, specifically addressing the Staff Education, Foundation staff support, and Design Fees components, costs of which total \$42,685.

***The Chair entertained a motion to approve a budget request to fund staff education, Foundation staff support, and design fees, for a total of \$42,685, to be paid by the Facilities Ownership and Libraries Fund Reserve. Brad moved for approval as stated. Seconded. Passed unanimously.***

Marvin announced that, since the meeting is running long, today's meeting agenda will be adjusted to address the consent agenda immediately after the break, then the Financial Report and Budget approval, followed by the Personnel Committee Report and Staff Recognition, and will finish with departmental reports.

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## Break

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Marvin adjourned for a break from 10:54-11:01 a.m.

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## Consent Agenda

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The Consent Agenda included minutes of the November 19, 2019 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following expenditures:

### General Fund:

- November 1 - 15, 2019 Payroll: Nos. 1021160772 - 1021160784, (Voucher Nos. 541883 - 542031) Totaling \$197,902.19 and November 16 - 30, 2019 Payroll: Nos. 1021334442 - 1021334452, (Voucher Nos. 542037 - 542187) Totaling \$ 189,269.53.

- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$170,043.98; \$38,764.85 of this is for employee funded contributions to health insurance premiums, health savings accounts, PERS, and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claims 2019-32G: Warrant Nos. 1096407-1096434 and 1096482, totaling \$64,941.62
- Claims 2019-33G: Warrant Nos. 1097079-1097094, totaling \$8,448.82
- Claims 2019-34G: Warrant Nos. 1097690-1097731, totaling \$192,297.56

Capital Fund:

- Claims 2019-18C: Warrant No. 1096406, totaling \$25,128.07

Authorization to Void Warrants:

- Resolution 12/17/19-19 to reissue paycheck 1019058255

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

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Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

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Jackie reviewed the Finance Committee reports, highlighting that we have received roughly 99% of our total budgeted general property tax levy of \$8.6 million. As of the end of November, we still had almost \$97,000 in pending receipts, and there is roughly \$67,000 still outstanding as of today. At this time last year, we were about \$12,000 short. There is a chance that we may not receive the full levy amount, and this will affect the 2019 projected ending balance, which was based on receiving the full amount.

Personnel costs are still under budget. Invoices for collection materials expenses are still incoming, and it is anticipated that most of the 2019 budgeted amount will be spent. At the end of November, there was a net operating income of about \$972,000, leaving a fund balance of \$11 million.

Jackie reviewed the proposed general and capital budget for fiscal year 2020, noting adjustments made since her presentation of the Preliminary 2020 Budget in November. She specifically noted adjustments resulting from changes in healthcare coverage during the December open enrollment period, as well as the annual Capital Fund transfer.

She presented a summary of the General Fund going back to 2016, with the ending fund balance projecting a loss of about 3%, with built-in contingencies. Property tax revenue is projected to increase by 3.5% when including new construction revenue, which will not be finalized until the end of this year. A budget amendment will be completed in February to incorporate those finalized numbers. Fines revenues have been zeroed out in accordance with the Fines Free program that goes into effect January 1, 2020.

There is a projected 6.5% increase in operating expenditures, with expenditures expected to outpace income, leaving a decrease in the ending fund balance. We had projected similarly last year, but did not need to access our contingency funds, so Jackie does not project an operating deficit in 2019. It is unknown if this will be the case in 2020.

Jackie reviewed the revised Borrower's Schedules of Fines and Fees, as well as Meeting Room and Facilities Use Fees. She noted the need to complete a system-wide facilities assessment, which will help to flesh out the five-year Capital Plan. Since last month, Birch Bay Library design fees of \$30,935 have been added to the Capital Budget. We expect about \$200,000 additional revenue in our capital fund, with Friends' groups reimbursing us for some design and/or renovation fees.

Jackie presented Resolution 12/17/19-20: A Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Whatcom County Rural Library District Adopting the 2020 General and Capital Fund Budgets.

***June made a motion to approve Resolution 12/17/19-20: A Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Whatcom County Rural Library District Adopting the 2020 General and Capital Fund Budgets. Seconded. Passed unanimously.***

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#### Staff & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

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The Personnel Committee shared preliminary results of their December 2, 2019 interviews of prospective trustees to replace June Hahn and Brad Cornwell. They have interviewed three candidates and still have three more candidates to interview in order to present their recommendations to the Whatcom County Executive in January. There is not sufficient time to interview remaining candidates, have a full WCLS Board of Trustees meeting and vote prior to putting forth candidates at the January County Council meeting.

***Brad moved to approve the Personnel Committee, with Marvin also in attendance, interview the remaining Trustee candidates and make a recommendation to the County Executive prior to the next Board of Trustees meeting January 21. Seconded. Passed unanimously.***

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#### Board Recognition

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Christine extended thanks to the Board for their commitment and service to WCLS and the community. Resolutions of gratitude and appreciation were read and presented to outgoing trustees Brad Cornwell and June Hahn.

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#### Service Anniversary Recognition

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The trustees recognized Kim Patterson, Cataloging Specialist at Administrative Services, for her 10-year service anniversary. Kim was originally hired by Debby Farmer at the Blaine Library, who recommended Kim when a cataloguing position opened up at Administrative Services in 2011. After successfully competing with over 100 applicants for the position, Kim has continued to demonstrate her strong skills as a cataloguer with her insights and ability to anticipate how to make items findable by patrons. This also requires meticulously filling out detailed Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC) records. Kim has helped clean up and improve cataloging projects, some very large in scale, including hyper-local material and some in foreign languages. At All Staff Learning Day two years ago, Kim and a co-worker delivered a fun and fascinating presentation on cataloging.

Lisa and Christine presented Kim with a service anniversary recognition, expressing thanks for her attention to details, great memory and teaching skills, and dedication to providing patrons better access to items for which they are searching.

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#### Staff & Committee Reports: Executive Director

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In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted the Lighted Christmas Parade and the great job done by Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator, in documenting it for social media. She noted that every public school district in the Whatcom County is now supported by the ConnectEd program and expressed her gratitude to Thom Barthelmess, Youth Services Manager, and Carmi Parker, ILS Administrator, for all of their hard work to make that happen. She also extended thanks to WCLF for approving grant requests supporting the WCLS Celebrates Democracy and the Right to Vote project and the system's offering of training material presented by Ryan Dowd to community leaders addressing working compassionately with individuals experiencing homelessness.

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## Staff & Committee Reports: Deputy Director

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In addition to his written report, Michael invited Brooke Pederson, Island Library Manager, to share her artistic talent with the trustees. She is a paper cutter and demonstrated the art of telling a story via snowflakes, which she has been making as Christmas gifts for the past ten years. She demonstrated how she chooses a fairy tale and starts from the center, cutting figures in the snowflake, telling the story as she moves outward. She showed one of her works, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, with cutouts depicting the cow, mother, and beans. A growing beanstalk moves through snowflake, spreading to a spoon (representing the giant's wife), then the giant, "fffm" ("Fe Fi Fo Fum"), a bag of gold, the hen that laid the golden egg and finally the golden lyre. Brooke is able to create these fairy tale snowflakes with only a few trial runs, and the results are quite spectacular.

Michael noted that issues of the *Nooksack Reporter* from December 1907 through November 1908 are now available on-line via Washington Digital Newspapers.

He reported on a couple incidents, one of which occurred at the Point Roberts Express (PRX) space, which was quickly resolved and included no vandalism or bad behavior. The other occurred at the North Fork branch parking lot and is being monitored for recurrence.

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## Staff & Committee Reports: Youth Services Manager

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Thom shared his written report and highlighted the *Whatcomics* reception which will be held at the Lynden Library on Saturday, January 11. He acknowledged the efforts of the teen contributors to this annual publication, as well as Cynthia French, Communications Specialist, for doing the layout and binding, and Kim Patterson, Cataloging Specialist, and her colleagues for cataloging these items. He called attention to the newest WCLS Teen Intern, Giordanne Panis, whose artistic skills can be seen in this year's issue of *Whatcomics*, as well as on display in the arrangement of artwork at the reception. Thom invited everyone to the reception to show support and appreciation for our local teens.

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## Staff & Committee Reports: Community Relations Manager

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Mary discussed her written report, noting potential community sponsorship opportunities, including a program to support Summer Reading in partnership with Bellingham Public Library. She and her team are reviewing existing policies to determine if there is a need to write a new sponsorship policy. They are in the exploration phase right now and will bring more information to the Board of Trustees in the future.

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## Staff & Committee Reports: Services Committee and Performance Measures

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In addition to his written report, Michael reviewed the trend of circulation going up and door counts going down, noting the potential impacts of the Fines Free and ConnectEd programs. ConnectEd increases circulation without impacting door counts. Kanopy (streaming video) usage has fallen just shy of their original estimate, which is commendable, especially without much promotion this year.

The difference in the Adult Programming statistics between November 2018 and November 2019 is largely attributable to Nov 7<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and Read & Share with Leif Whittaker.

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## Staff & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

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Christine announced that there was a new potential Foundation member at the recent WCLF meeting. The Foundation approved the funding of two grant items and adjusted their operating budget to include a line item for a PAC to support a county-wide levy lid lift. 2019 donations were greater than expected, a lot of which was raised from the Library Giving Day project, with many thanks to all the donors.

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## Announcements and Adjourn

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Trustee mileage/expense claims are due by 12/27. Christine is trying to use up some vacation time, so she will be out of the office for the rest of the year, other than to interview trustee candidates and address any Birch Bay-Blaine items as needed. She will be in town and available to be reached via text.

Marvin adjourned the meeting at 12:07 p.m.

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## Next Meeting

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Next meeting will be at Administrative Services on January 21, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Address: 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226

*Signed by Lori Jump*

Lori Jump, WCLS Trustee

January 21, 2020

Date

*Signed by Ruth Nail*

Ruth Nail, WCLS