



Location

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

In Attendance

Trustees: *In person:* Rodney Lofdahl. *Via Teleconference:* Marvin Waschke, Chair; Lori Jump, Board Secretary; Claudia Disend; and Erika Lautenbach.

Staff: *In person:* Christine Perkins, Executive Director; Michael Cox, Deputy Director; Jackie Saul, Director of Finance and Administration. *Via Teleconference:* 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; Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager; Debby Farmer, Blaine Library Manager; and Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant.

Visitors: *Via Teleconference:* Jack Chaffin and Ray Johnston, Johnston Architects; David King, King Architecture.

Call to Order

Marvin determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the February 18, 2020 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- February 1 - 15, 2020 Payroll: Nos. 1022264544 - 1022264550, (Voucher Nos. 542831 - 542983) Totaling \$ 198,091.66 and February 16 - 29, 2020 Payroll: Nos. 1022418237 - 1022418243, (Voucher Nos. 542989 - 543142) Totaling \$ 197,672.63.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$173,001.02; \$38,759.10 of this is for employee funded contributions to health insurance premiums, health savings accounts, PERS, and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2020-03G: Warrant Nos. 1102341-1102370 Totaling \$123,281.08
- Claim 2020-04G: Warrant Nos. 1103102-1103149 Totaling \$81,414.96

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2020-01C: Warrant Nos. 1102337-1102340 Totaling \$42,236.02
- Claim 2020-02C: Warrant Nos. 1103150-1103152 Totaling \$1,399.06

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

COVID-19 Response

There was a brief review of the current COVID-19 pandemic status and response procedure in Whatcom County. Christine presented a list of WCLS objectives, including adherence to federal, state and county public health department guidelines; promptly advising staff of any changes to policies and procedures; striving to communicate in a calm, clear and factual manner; and exercising our civic responsibility to limit the spread of the disease. In conjunction with the announcements closing of all the county public school districts, WCLS made the announcement on Friday, March 13 that all library branches would be closed March 16 through April 24. All WCLS branches were open on Saturday, March 14, and Lynden and Ferndale branches were open Sunday, March 15. With an average increase of 700-1,000% in check-out materials, it was very challenging to meet social distancing measures. Staff pitched in with great teamwork to clean library equipment and materials, as well as keep up with library patrons in person, on the phone, and online. Amid the hectic activity, the realization was clear that there are many people that depend on us for social interaction—the library is their community.

Christine reviewed WCLS's current response to the COVID-19 pandemic and asked for the trustees' input. Materials handling, cleaning and sanitizing procedures were discussed, including the possible requirement to quarantine returned materials. Erika commented that, to date, there have been no known cases of people getting the virus via inanimate objects. All known cases to date have resulted from person-to-person contact. This does not mean that there is no risk—just that the risk is unknown—and that WCLS should keep up good cleaning and sanitizing procedures in accordance with CDC guidelines. There was further discussion on the possibility and ramifications of continuing physical materials circulation, complications in materials distribution to and from Point Roberts, and leaving specified library areas open for material returns and/or holds pick-ups. At this time, all trustees agreed to a short-term hold on physical material returns and circulation and a closure of all library facilities to the public. Currently, no new holds will be processed, nor notifications of available holds will be made, and due dates on physical materials will be extended to meet closure dates.

Michael discussed providing WCLS laptops to designated staff to remotely manage phone calls and provide social connections. Lisa discussed shifting Collections purchasing resources to digital vs physical materials to meet the change in demand. The Community Relations team has been updating our website, ramping up our social media presence, and are hiring a videographer to assist with the creation of original digital WCLS material, to expand our offerings and enhance our patrons' online experience. Thom is working on securing permissions from some publishers and authors to read specified books aloud to the public on open access, and Youth Services staff are currently developing original felt board Storytimes.

Christine reported that all the library branches' Wi-Fi access will be maintained 24/7, except the Ferndale and Everson branches, where the signal is turned off at 10 p.m. at the request of cities. This allows people to come to library parking lots use our Wi-Fi for internet access. Marv asked if our networking capacity is sufficient to handle the increase in online activity, and Geoff answered that our recent demonstrated capacity has been sufficient and we will continue to monitor the situation and adjust accordingly.

Policy Updates

To protect staff's ability to get paid in this type of pandemic situation, when WCLS buildings may be closed to the public but staying open to staff, Christina drafted changes to our policy numbered 12.35, which will now be titled "12.35 Emergency Closure Policy." Christine explained that the proposed changes to the previously titled "Inclement Weather and Other Emergencies Policy" provide clarified policies regarding emergencies other than inclement weather. The current policy limits pay for closures to bargaining unit and management employees. The proposed revision extends that protection to all employees with some clarifiers, as follows: "Employees may be asked to report to work, work remotely, or staff an alternative location in the event that their primary

work location is closed to the public. Employees are expected to remain available to report to work in case conditions change.”

The Board discussed current concerns and potential future impacts of the updated policy. Jackie explained that these funds are already included in the budget for this fiscal year and are available at this time and noted that WCLS is self-funded for unemployment insurance. Conversation supporting the updated policy included the retention of experienced staff, public health implications of people losing their expected income streams, not burdening the state unemployment system and leaving it available for other entities, and providing a sense of security to staff in another otherwise insecure environment. The trustees discussed the option to readdress the policy in the future.

Claudia moved to approve the updated Emergency Closure Policy, striking the wording in third paragraph, “due to no fault of the employee” and adding the statement to paragraph one, “In the event a closure will exceed eight weeks, the Executive Director or designee will convene the Board of Trustees to review an extension of the closure and provisions of the policy. If a quorum is not possible, the Executive Director or designee is authorized to continue the closure until a quorum is possible.” Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Jackie noted that we need to update the administrative procedures for this policy to reflect the order of the Executive Director’s designees as first the Deputy Director, followed by the Director of Finance and Administration, further followed by any available member of the L3 management team.

Interlocal Agreement with Bellingham Public Library

Christine explained that, at their February meeting, a Bellingham Public Library trustee felt that the wording about public facilities was misleading, potentially being interpreted as the entire building versus the spaces open to the public in the building. She suggested an edit to clarify this item to read “public spaces.” The BPL Board amended the agreement to address this, and approved it, and now it returns to the WCLS Board for approval.

The Chair made a motion to approve the updated Interlocal Agreement with Bellingham Public Library as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Open Public Comment

No public comment.

Blaine Library Update

The architectural team of Johnston Architects and King Architecture have compiled a presentation, which is included in the public agenda packet that was published March 13 on WCLS.org, and joined the meeting via teleconference. The team walked the through the building design proposal, slide by slide, highlighting the expressed requirements from the stakeholders and how the proposed design meets them.

The design team expressed that the building’s lantern effect signals “I’m a public building—welcome, enter and enjoy.” They reviewed the functionality of the spaces and flow of traffic through library, including the ability to close off different areas, as required, for noise abatement or room size requirements. Further noise management tools include lower ceilings above louder areas and vaulted ceilings above the quieter spaces. The architectural team highlighted the open spaces, ability for staff and patrons to see and have access to each other. They emphasized the warmth and friendliness of the space, as well as the historic influence of the marine building industry in the Blaine community reflected in both the interior and exterior design elements and materials.

The total recommended project budget, without alternate options, was estimated at \$7,359,483, including the building, sitework, taxes, and architectural and engineering expenses. The architectural team answered trustee

questions on building spaces and cost estimates, as well as fiscal and timeline effects of the alternate options presented.

Michael noted that the project budget will be presented to the City of Blaine at a meeting next Monday, March 23, at 5:00 p.m. Christine added that, right now, with the COVID-19 situation, WCLS is unable to feasibly share this information at a public gathering. She is not asking trustees to vote on moving forward with any decision on a joint LCFA at this time, but reiterated that the Birch Bay project is in the ballpark of \$5+ million and the Blaine project is at \$7+ million, so we may be asking voters for \$11 million total. Michael commented that the application deadline is mid-May to apply for any state funds for the Blaine project.

Michael reported that the Blaine Library Design Committee, including representation from the City of Blaine and the Friends of the Blaine Library, support the design deliverables as presented. Michael then requested Board approval of a resolution recognizing completion of the Blaine Library Design contract, as suggested below:

Whereas, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Friends of the Blaine Library, WCLS, and the City of Blaine, signed on 4/16/2019, agreed to allocate funds provided by the Friends of the Blaine Library to develop schematic design plans for a new Blaine Library, and,

Whereas, a contract with Johnston Architects and King Architecture, signed on 10/10/2019, identified a scope of work;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the project deliverables are complete and satisfactory.

Claudia made a motion to approve the resolution recognizing the satisfactory completion of the Blaine Library Design contract, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Birch Bay Library Update

Michael reminded the trustees that, at the beginning of the year, we contracted with Zervas to proceed with Phase 2, including the pre-application process and incorporating changes to our preliminary grading plan to reduce soil disturbance. Civil engineers require we bring in more soil and do a geotechnical study to determine how much fill is required. The geotechnical study is scheduled for March 25 and associated cost increases are anticipated. The current cost estimate is at \$5.3 million, including LEED requirements. All paved surfaces must be pervious, which was not included in original estimate, nor was the additional fill or geotechnical study. These figures are required to be able to present the Board with the total estimated cost of the Birch Bay Library project at the April 21 meeting, allowing for a LCFA resolution to be passed in April to be put on the ballot in May. The possible effects of potential COVID-related economic crisis on the election and a LCFA vote were discussed and Christine directed attention to her Capital Funding Strategy chart. There is a Go/No-go point in April, at which state funding for Birch Bay and separate Blaine and Birch Bay LCFAs, versus a joint LCFA, options will be reviewed.

Christine noted that funding for geotechnical study is included in Jackie's budget amendment, which will be presented and voted on next.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie asked the trustees if, in the consideration of time constraints today, they were satisfied with their independent review of the February Finance Committee Report and if there were any questions. The trustees indicated their satisfaction with the report and expressed no questions.

Financial Report and Resolutions: 2020 General and Capital Fund Budget Amendments

Jackie reviewed the 2020 General and Capital Fund Budget Amendments, highlighting the revenue summary on page 48 of the agenda packet, showing additional revenue of \$7,500 from WECU for Summer Reading and \$5,000 from WCLF for the Celebrating Democracy Grant and the transfer of \$15,000 from Reserves to Operating

to cover the geotechnical study capital expenses related to the Birch Bay Library project, as further illustrated on page 49's Transfers-Out to Capital. Other changes shown on page 49 include additional expenditures to reflect increased Salaries and Wages resulting from our job audit process. Two positions were reclassified and this increase reflects the total wage adjustment per year. Anticipated additional office and operating supplies, professional services and travel expenses also shown on this page will be covered by the WECU sponsorship and WCLF grant.

Marv questioned if Page 49, Column 2 should be "2020" instead of "2019" and Jackie confirmed it should read "2020."

An additional expense adjustment was proposed for \$18,000 in Collection Materials, which is not included in the budget expenditures on page 49. This amount is residual from 2019, having been underspent from the 2019 budget. We are proposing to supplement the 2020 collection budget by this amount to increase e-materials in response to current COVID-19 measures and increase in electronic circulation. After a brief discussion, Marv and Claudia agreed with the inclusion of the \$18,000 supplementation in today's budget amendment.

The inclusion of the \$18,000 supplementation to the 2020 General Fund Expenditures for Collection Materials yields a change to the fund balance of (\$21,080) versus (\$3,080), as originally shown.

Resolution 03/17/20-02 amends the General Fund Operating Revenue and Expenditures to include the items discussed above. The budget amendment authorizes transfer of funds from the Facility Ownership and Library Services Fund Reserve to the Capital Fund. The resolution amends the Capital Fund budget to include a new expense associated with the Birch Bay library design project and revenue transferred in from the Facility Ownership and Library Services Fund Reserve to the Capital Fund.

Claudia made a motion to approve Resolution 03/17/20-02 amending the 2020 General and Capital Fund budgets, including an additional \$18,000 for electronic collection materials, noted by the addition of the following conditional statement:

"WHEREAS General Fund expenditures need to be adjusted to reflect additional funds allocated for electronic collection materials; and,"

Seconded. Passed unanimously, with Erika absent at the time of vote.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine noted that, in support of census season, we can answer questions on the phone or encourage users to use our Wi-Fi in our parking lot. We are currently unable to offer internet service via WCLS equipment due to social distancing issues and COVID-19 public health requirements.

Lori commented on Whatcom READS and how well-attended and fascinating the Ferndale event was. Christine complimented Krista Hunter, Ferndale PSA, on her ingenious floral arrangement for the event. Christine commended the Community Relations team on doing a great job of pulling together the annual report, which has been emailed to trustees and will be posted online at WCLS.org soon. Mary noted that a link to the report is available in her written report.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

Michael did not have any additions to his written report.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and reported that some plans are afoot to provide services digitally, including WCLS staff recorded singing, reading books and poems, and doing felt book Storytimes. For older kids and teens,

we are planning conversational book talks and posting instructions to use their ConnectEd account to download e-book and e-audiobook content. Youth Services plans to make a single title available in bulk.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

In addition to her written report, Mary commended the original content being developed by the Youth Services team and noted that Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator, is curating a collection of free online learning materials and sharing these items via the WCLS website and our social media posts. She also noted that Library Giving Day will be exclusively online this April.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

There were no comments or questions on the Performance Measures Report.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

There were no reports by the Personnel Committee.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Marv reported that the Branch Out fundraising event scheduled for April 24 has been canceled and the Foundation is working to plan an alternate or rescheduled event.

Mary reminded everyone that Library Giving Day, April 23, will be exclusively online this year and Marv noted that the Foundation has discussed the possibility of combining it with a virtual Branch Out.

Announcements and Adjourn

- a. April 21 meeting will be now be held at Administrative Services.
- b. The "Serving Homeless Individuals with Compassion" workshops have been canceled. They may be rescheduled for late September or early October.
- c. Be prepared for further schedule changes; call ahead to confirm.
- d. Special Meetings of the Board of Trustees are a possibility. Christine will keep in contact with trustees.
- e. Macmillan Publishing just agreed to end their e-book and e-audiobook embargo.

Marvin adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be at Administrative Services on April 21, 2020 at 9:00am.

Address: 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA

Unanimously Approved by the

WCLS Board of Trustees
Lori Jump, WCLS Trustee

04/21/2020
Date

Signed by Ruth Nail
Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant