



Location

Via teleconference for all attendees, in accordance with Proclamation 20.28.15 by the Governor of the State of Washington, which amends and extends Proclamation 20-28, *et seq.*, and currently allows open public meetings to occur remotely.

In Attendance

Trustees: Marvin Waschke, Chair; Lori Jump, Vice Chair; Claudia Disend, Secretary; and Rodney Lofdahl. Absent: Erika Lautenbach.

Staff: Christine Perkins, Executive Director; Jackie Saul, Director of Finance and Administration; Thom Barthelmeß, Youth Services Manager; Mary Vermillion, Community Relations Manager; Christina Read, Human Resources Manager; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator and Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) Leader; Marie Guenette, Blaine Library PSA -Youth and DAC Leader; Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant.

Guests: None.

Call to Order

Marvin determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Open Public Comment Opportunity

No public comment.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the July 20, 2021 Regular Meeting of the WCLS Board of Trustees, as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- July 1-15, 2021 Payroll: Nos. 1026824688-1026824691, (Voucher Nos. 548280-548426) Totaling \$197,296.12 and July 16-31, 2021 Payroll: Nos. 1026998355-1026998361, (Voucher Nos. 548433 - 548587) Totaling \$192,608.39.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$88,985.96; \$28,783.93 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2021-23G: Warrant Nos. 1129246-1129259 Totaling \$81,718.54
- Claim 2021-24G: Warrant Nos. 1129712-1129736 Totaling \$48,645.73
- Claim 2021-25G: Warrant Nos. 1130231-1130252 Totaling \$96,698.43

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2021-11C: Warrant Nos. 1129737-1129738 Totaling \$3,550.09
- Claim 2021-12C: Warrant Nos. 1130253-1130254 Totaling \$7,626.62

There were no questions. Rod moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded. Unanimous board approval, with Claudia absent at the time of the vote.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her report, including the July Notes and Highlights section, emphasizing the July FEMA reimbursement of COVID-related costs and our application to the Washington State Library for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. She reported that the system-wide Facilities Assessment is well under way, with results expected in November for inclusion in 2022 budget planning.

Jackie presented the 2022 Budget Planning Schedule and provided details on its content, including expected impacts, assigned tasks and scheduled checkpoints. Christine noted the options of a budget-focused Board Retreat or including budget discussions in our regular meetings. Lori, Rod, and Marv indicated their desire to pursue the latter option. Jackie will follow up with Claudia and Erika to ascertain their preference. Marv suggested that the trustees be well-versed in explaining a levy lid lift, when that time comes in the future. Jackie confirmed and she will include a tutorial on levies at the September and October meetings. Christine commented that she and Mary are preparing levy talking points, which they will also provide to the trustees.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine expressed her pleasure in interacting with patrons and branch staff during her recent Public Services shifts. She has received much positive feedback on this summer's StoryWalks, which provided a great engagement and reading opportunity for many local families, some of whom have made trips around the county to read the stories at multiple branches.

Christine shared some observations from her recent trip to Central Skagit Library in Sedro-Woolley with Bellingham Public Library Director Rebecca Judd. Central Skagit Library is using a locker system that allows patrons to pick up held items 24/7. As a complement to our Library Express model, this locker system may provide an alternate holds pick-up solution when lobby space is not available. The youth area featured a fun floor mat that was interactive with little feet and hands.

Christine commented on the staff turnover and hiring challenges experienced by Bellingham Public Library (BPL) over the past year and a half, which are hampering their ability to restore full service and schedules at all three of their locations. The BPL Board of Trustees is discussing fall modified schedule options at their meeting later today. Marv inquired about WCLS's current staffing status, and Christina replied that we are temporarily down several staff members, with a few open postings and other positions in the interview process. Overall, we are keeping on top of filling vacancies.

Adding to Jackie's earlier discussion about ARPA funding, Christine reported that the Washington State Library has confirmed receipt of our application and we are still awaiting approval.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In Michael's absence, Christine reviewed his written report, highlighting the Cultural Focus PSA-Lummi position and our work with Lummi Nation stakeholders and current Cultural Focus PSA-Nooksack to tailor the position and its recruitment process.

Christine shared her gratitude that the Bookmobile has been able to maintain operations, albeit limited, during the pandemic and can now expand them by allowing one family on the bus at a time and taking the Bookmobile to events around the county. Jackie responded to Marv's question about ventilation on the Bookmobile, noting that it has two ceiling vents, plus windows, providing ventilation for the small space. When necessary, the Bookmobile also utilizes an onboard generator and air conditioner. Christine noted that adequate distancing

may be affecting occupancy more than ventilation. Jackie will follow up with Mobile Services Manager Sarah Koehler to verify current occupancy limits and ventilation.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom presented his written report, underscoring the team-based structure that has evolved in Youth Services wherein smaller groups with team leaders facilitate strategic focus and provide leadership opportunities, strengthening the department and its services. He outlined the teams—ConnectED, Book Discovery, Restorative Practices, Programming, and Summer Reading—and their leaders, reviewing details of each team’s focus.

Christine called the trustees’ attention to the ConnectED materials developed by Youth Services and Community Relations. A ConnectED Presentations resource sheet, student handout cards and posters have been designed to remind staff, faculty, and students of ConnectED as a resource.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary reviewed her written report and highlighted this year’s Read & Share selection, *House Lessons: Renovating a Life*, by Erica Bauermeister. She commended Adult Programming Coordinator Ann McAllen for arranging the comprehensive programming, scheduled September 16 through November 3, designed to complement the book. Various concepts of home will be featured, including Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribal lands and traditional places, local archaeology and historic buildings, a discussion of county homelessness, poetic and sociological examinations of home spaces and objects, and a 2-day memoir-writing workshop by the author. Mary complimented Public Services, Collections Services and Community Relations staff for their cohesive efforts in supporting and promoting *House Lessons* and the Read & Share program events. Episode 7 of our podcast, [WCLS in Whatcom County Presents Library Stories](#), features Collection Services Manager Lisa Gresham’s interview of Erica Bauermeister.

Mary expressed gratitude for the local coverage of the library system’s press releases and the strong relationships with media sources in the county. She noted that branch staff do a great job of identifying newsletters and other resources through which we may distribute our media releases, as well as spaces to do their own sharing. Mary praised South Whatcom Library Manager Liz André’s fantastic job of getting library news in the Sudden Valley eNewsletter and *Sudden Valley Views*.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

Christine presented the performance reports, noting the inclusion of 2019 figures to provide a more comprehensive comparison. She remarked that 2021 physical circulation is still a little behind compared to 2019 and electronic circulation has tempered after a big spike in 2020 when libraries were closed.

Christine commented that the trend of patrons checking out more materials during fewer branch visits persisted in July, with a rebound in total circulation while visitor counts remained down. She noted that the bi-directional materials flow with BPL is back on track, with their Central Library now open and operating its new book sorter. Friends of the Library groups throughout the county are starting to meet, plan and have book sales. Christine reported that the Friends of the South Whatcom Library is recruiting a new slate of officers and will turn over its leadership starting in September, bringing new ideas and energy to that group.

Marv praised the reference skills of Lynden Assistant Manager Wendy McLeod, who helped him source historical newspaper articles in *The Lynden Tribune* and *Blaine Journal* to provide supporting details for his recent [blog post](#) about smoke and wildfires in Whatcom County. On his blog, [VineMaple.net](#), Marv recalled the 1910 forest fire that affected his newly married grandparents on their Waschke Road homestead and included a credit to Wendy for her help. Christine recalled the wildfire that devastated the Whitman County Library last year and reported the recent notification that the Stevens County Library needed to evacuate due to wildfires. She noted these types of events serve as great reminders of the value of preparing for emergencies and disasters.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

No report. This year's annual union negotiations are scheduled for October 11 and 12, with October 18 tentatively planned, if required.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Christine reported that one of the two Branch Out house parties planned this week was just canceled. She will be attending the other one at Dick and Cheri Little's house.

Without objection, the Birch Bay Library Update was advanced in the agenda and addressed prior to the break.

Birch Bay Library Update

Christine reported that our resolution requesting the establishment of the Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area was unanimously approved by the Whatcom County Council on July 27 and was subsequently filed with the Whatcom County Auditor on August 3. The resolution is scheduled for inclusion as Proposition 14 on the November 2, 2021 General Election Ballot. There was a second solicitation for volunteers to write "For" and "Against" statements, resulting in responses solely for the former. Friends of the Birch Bay Library members Doralee Booth, Keith Alesse, and Ruth Higgins coordinated on the "For" statement and it has been submitted to the County Auditor's office for inclusion in the ballot materials.

Christine and Blaine School District Superintendent Christopher Granger have been invited to the September Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce luncheon meeting, during which Christine will provide facts about the Birch Bay LCFA proposition. She noted that Fire District 21's levy proposition was unsuccessful in August's election and will be reintroduced in November alongside ours, with each entity supporting the other's efforts. Christine stressed the importance of being clear on the library's proposed levy amount and how funds will be used, reiterating that neither staff nor trustees may use WCLS email accounts nor worktime to advocate for the proposition. We can provide information only on the levy, bonds, and building, but no persuasion on the measure. Rod requested confirmation that the board members may support the proposition as individuals, but not on behalf of the system, and Christine indicated this was accurate. She will provide the trustees with MRSC's "Guidelines for Local Government Agencies in Election Campaigns."

Claudia joined the meeting at 10:05 a.m. and Christine reiterated the limitations of the board members' involvement in the LCFA effort.

Break

Marv adjourned for a break from 10:08 to 10:20 a.m.

Strategic Plan

Christine presented a final draft of the Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2025 for the trustees' approval. The trustees requested the following modifications:

COMMUNITY – Revise **Objective 3** to: **"WCLS renews its reputation as a trusted reference source for unbiased local news and information."**

ACCESS - Objective 3, Add as the first point: "Train staff in digital and information literacy skills to ensure they are prepared to assist the public."

RESOURCES - Objective 3, Change second point to: "Provide opportunities for a wide variety of discussion groups."

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION – Objective 1, change first point to: “Develop comprehensive plan for ongoing recruitment, support and retention of staff and trustees from underserved communities.” Delete second bullet point.

Objective 3, Revise third point to: “Enhance signage and resources to welcome local non-English language readers and speakers.”

STEWARDSHIP – Objective 6: Revise second point to: “Approve Crisis Communication Plan for crises and other events that affect WCLS operations.”

Lori moved approval of the Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025 as modified. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Policy Updates

Borrower’s Policy 4.01 and Borrower’s Policy Fee Schedule 4.01.04 – Christine presented revisions to the policy and fee schedule that allow for flexibility in assessing damage fees on returned materials. She detailed the current practice of not assessing fees for damage to board books and picture books. Thom expressed the potential to expand this practice to all youth materials as an extension of restorative practices, emphasizing the value of patron relationships over time, for which these revisions provide. He noted that just under \$1,000 was collected for damages to youth materials in 2019 and therefore the anticipated fiscal impact of these revisions is negligible.

The Chair moved approval of the revised Borrower’s Policy 4.01 and Borrower’s Policy Fee Schedule 4.01.04 as presented. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Trustee Education: Storytime Collection Analysis

Thom explained that the Storytime collection consists of books and other materials, such as flannels boards and puppets, that is curated for our Early Years audience. The WCLS Storytime collection began as a volunteer effort about twenty years ago and grew organically, piece by piece, and has been circulated solely among library staff.

Thom noted that Storytime is designed to introduce kids to the glories of the world depicted in picture books written and illustrated just for them. Our goal is that young people see themselves represented in the collection, using the “books as windows and mirrors” framework introduced by Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop. In an effort to assess how well our materials fit this framework, we chose to undertake an official diversity audit. With the pandemic closure, the collection materials were out of circulation and available for extensive review at Administrative Services. During this period, we were also fortunate to have the expert dedicated volunteer time of a San Jose State MLIS student intern with us for his practicum. This confluence provided the unique opportunity to pursue a labor-intensive examination of the collection, with a defined scope and parameters.

In his presentation of the audit parameters, Thom explained that the ethnicity of the story’s protagonist was designated into categories, such as Asian, Black, Latinx, White, Indigenous, Diverse, Animal, and Other, with additional categories included as the audit progressed. Individual copies of books were counted, because increased copies tend to equate to increased coverage. Items were placed into singular categories and counted only once; not twice, in cases of intersectionality. Throughout the process, the influences of the protagonist, author and illustrations were considered. Thom provided examples of representative titles and reflected that categorization wasn’t always clear and invited a subjective analysis.

Thom presented charts depicting the results of the audit, indicating areas for increased representation and demonstrating a larger spread of diversity in youth materials purchased since 2019 as his team has increased their focus here. He shared the need to keep weeding and reconsider the distribution and sharing of materials. Thom noted that both developing and auditing a collection are an art and a science. He reiterated that books are pieces of art and their expressions can be complex, nuanced and sophisticated. This subjectivity allows each reader to see something different and take something unique away from the experience.

