



Location

Via teleconference for all attendees, in accordance with Proclamation 20-28, *et seq.*, by the Governor of the State of Washington, allowing open public meetings to occur remotely.

In Attendance

Trustees: Marvin Waschke, Chair; Lori Jump, Vice Chair; Claudia Disend, Secretary; Erika Lautenbach and Rodney Lofdahl. Absent: None.

Staff: Christine Perkins, Executive Director; Michael Cox, Deputy Director; Jackie Saul, Director of Finance and Administration; Mary Vermillion, Community Relations Manager; Christina Read, Human Resources Manager; Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager; Sarah Koehler, Ferndale Library and Mobile Services Manager; Alexa Andrews, Everson and Sumas Library Manager; Paul Fullner, Everson Public Services Assistant; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator and Diversity Advisory Committee (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.

Service Anniversary Recognition

The trustees recognized Paul Fullner, Everson Library Public Services Assistant, for his 10-year service anniversary. Everson and Sumas Library Manager Alexa Andrews introduced Paul and lauded his research and reference skills, as well as his role as a local history resource. She commended Paul for being a change leader and team builder, deftly establishing relationships with patrons and staff alike.

Christine echoed Alexa's sentiments, expressing appreciation for Paul's public interface and interaction abilities, and thanking him for always being ready to step in and step up, such as during the recent roof replacement and remodeling at the Everson Library. While working from home during the libraries' pandemic closure, Paul's charismatic WCLS@Home video highlighting the system's offering of online Chilton manuals was a big hit.

Paul thanked the trustees for doing what they do to allow WCLS staff to do what they do.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the August 17, 2021 Regular Meeting of the WCLS Board of Trustees, as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- August 1-15, 2021 Payroll: Nos. 1027145524 - 1027145528, (Voucher Nos. 548585 - 548728) Totaling \$187,036.66 and August 16-31, 2021 Payroll: Nos. 1027309226 -1027309233, (Voucher Nos. 548734 - 548879) Totaling \$199,359.14.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$85,702.12; \$27,828.67 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2021-26G: Warrant Nos. 1130998-1131021 Totaling \$153,194.34
- Claim 2021-27G: Warrant Nos. 1131313-1131331 Totaling \$32,859.88
- Claim 2021-28G: Warrant Nos. 1131754-1131779 Totaling \$71,543.71
- Claim 2021-29G: Warrant Nos. 1132473-1132480 Totaling \$33,070.38

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2021-13C: Warrant No. 1131041 Totaling \$108.00
- Claim 2021-14C: Warrant No. 1131780 Totaling \$15,565.10
- Claim 2021-15C: Warrant No. 1132543 Totaling \$30,796.33

There were no questions. Claudia moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her report, including the August Notes and Highlights section, noting that we have not yet needed to access cash flow reserves during the current property tax revenue trough. She reported on the theft of catalytic converters from WCLS vehicles, despite being in a fenced and locked lot, and the pending purchase of security camera equipment for increased monitoring. The replacement of the boiler at Administrative Services is also in process.

Jackie presented Resolution 09/21/21-11 Amending the 2021 General Fund Budget. She detailed affected line items in the amendment to the 2021 General Fund Budget, including insurance and FEMA reimbursement revenue received, a reduction of projected printing and copying services revenue attributable to recent policy changes, and a decrease in anticipated investment interest revenue based on current trends. The net reduction of revenue and added aforementioned maintenance expenses will be offset by reduced expenses elsewhere in the budget, leaving the ending fund balance unchanged, resulting in a neutral budget amendment.

Rod moved approval of Resolution 09/21/21-11 amending the 2021 General Fund Budget as presented. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Jackie followed up on last month's discussion of Bookmobile capacity and ventilation. She has confirmed with Mobile Services Manager Sarah Koehler that the Bookmobile utilizes its multiple vents, open windows and doors to provide ventilation for its square footage. Reduced occupancy capacity, with only one household allowed on the Bookmobile at one time, is a result of its small space and the requirement for adequate distancing.

Jackie provided a brief explanation of property tax levies, including the current 1% limit on annual levy increases, calculations pertaining to new construction, Whatcom County's present method for assessing property valuations and statutory limitations affecting our rural library district. She referred to examples of increasing and decreasing assessed property valuations, as well as new construction considerations, and noted their impacts on levy rates. She provided a WCLS Levy History for 2008 – 2021 to demonstrate the relationship of assessed valuation, WCLS's levy rate and the levy amounts for the library system over the past fourteen years.

Jackie emphasized that WCLS establishes its property tax levy amount as part of the annual budget adoption. The total assessed valuation (AV) of properties in a taxing district, as determined by the Assessor, is an amount that fluctuates annually. The levy rate (an individual property's tax rate per \$1,000 of AV) is determined based on that total district assessed valuation and is therefore also changeable. Jackie highlighted the effects of the

real estate market and the inverse relationship between AV and levy rates. As the district AV increases, the levy rate decreases to yield the same levy amount. If the district AV decreases, the levy rate increases, as demonstrated in the examples provided in the presentation. Jackie noted that the maximum levy rate allowed for a public rural library district in our state is \$0.50.

Jackie qualified that, since our budget (levy amount) is fixed, and capped at a 1% annual increase, the voters must approve an excess levy amount either via a permanent levy adjustment, known as a Levy Lid Lift, or through the sale of bonds to provide funding for specific purpose and duration. She will discuss these excess levies at next month's meeting.

There was further discussion about specific property tax exemptions, current trends in the Whatcom County real estate market, inflation and the CPI-W, the hierarchy of junior taxing districts, historical levy lid lifts, and the effects of contested assessed valuations and new construction on levy rates and resulting property taxes.

Christine urged the trustees to retain a copy of this primer on property tax levies, or to contact her or Jackie for assistance in explaining this process. Lori asked about the possibility of including this document on our website. Christine acknowledged Lori's request and will work with Ruth to add the document to our website.

Break

Marv adjourned for a break from 9:54 to 10:00 a.m.

COVID-19 Update – Mandatory Vaccination & Testing of Public Employees

Christine spoke of the recently announced federal mandate for employers with more than 100 employees to require staff be vaccinated against COVID-19 or submit to weekly COVID testing if unvaccinated. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), part of Department of Labor, is drafting an emergency temporary standard for implementation of this requirement. Since WCLS falls within this category of employers, Christine has made an announcement to staff of this requirement and indicated that we are continuing to await details and timelines to be provided by OSHA. She will share this information with staff as it becomes available, along with associated updates in procedures within our library system.

Christine reminded the trustees that WCLS staff sign a quarterly attestation to perform a daily self-evaluation of health status. She emphasized that staff have been directed to remain at home when sick to reduce the transmission of COVID and other colds, flus, and similar illnesses. Christina elaborated on current Washington state mandates regarding the accrual of paid sick leave by employees, the accrual of paid sick leave by bargaining unit employees as negotiated in their union contract, the breakdown of WCLS staff included and not included in that bargaining unit, and minimal occurrences of unpaid leave. She clarified that some unpaid leave is not related to coverage under our Sick Leave Policy and noted that WCLS has implemented a Pandemic Shared Policy to address pandemic-related absences. Christina answered questions from the trustees and reiterated that WCLS continues to operate in accordance with CDC COVID guidance and will apply the guidelines established by OSHA as they are made available. Erika provided a brief summary of Whatcom County's current COVID status.

Christine expressed her gratitude to public services staff and the challenges many have faced while enforcing the mask mandate. Some interactions have been unpleasant and several resulted in an Incident Report. At least one required issuing a letter of trespass. One person requested a conversation with the board, and Marv responded. Michael detailed recent incidents and efforts being taken to provide additional training and support for staff in handling these stressful confrontations and the aftermath.

Birch Bay Library Update

Christine stated that our website features up-to-date information on the Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area and the proposed Birch Bay Vogt Community Library. Four community information sessions will be held on Zoom from September 27 through October 19, with one being recorded for future access at wcls.org/birch-bay. News

releases are being emailed to our Birch Bay cardholders and the *Northern Light*, and are being shared via our social media channels.

Christine reported on her presentation to the Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce last week. Multiple real estate agents were in attendance, many opined that a library is a civic amenity, and one new real estate firm is pledging to donate 5% of each commission to the Birch Bay building project fund. The Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL) are pursuing similar discussions and charitable opportunities with other area real estate firms and business owners. A community group is organizing sign waving and other awareness efforts.

Michael commented that he listened to Sacha from the Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce interviewing Christine on the [Birch Bay BuzzPod](#) podcast. Mary confirmed that the news about that podcast, letters to the editor in the *Northern Light* and more are included in this month's Community Relations Report.

Staffing Update

Christine and Christina reported on staff retirements and resignations over the past eighteen months and noted that the system is feeling the loss of the organizational knowledge and experience represented by those staff members. They spoke of internal promotions to fill vacancies, as well as the creation of four new PSA – Cultural Focus positions (Hispanic, Nooksack and Lummi Nation) and the 10 staff members qualifying for bilingual pay in Russian, Spanish, and Punjabi dispersed throughout the system and county. Christine added that sixteen staff members have an MLIS degree, with six more currently enrolled, and three others interested.

Christine noted the impactful resignation of our Human Resources Manager, Christina, who is moving out of state. Christine reported that we are currently in the process of filling this vacancy, with interviews starting next month, and that Christina has agreed to stay with WCLS during annual union negotiations and the hiring process of a new HR Manager. Christine thanked Christina and praised her well-informed advice, management of HR issues, and positive influence on the organization—all on a part-time schedule, at Christina's request. Christine added that the position opening is posted as full-time, although WCLS will accept a candidate who prefers part-time. Christina expressed that it has been an honor to work with the system and support a mission that she believes in so strongly. Marv also thanked Christina for her years of service to the library system and its staff.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted the eRead of the month program and its “always available” copies that allow many people to read the same title simultaneously. In August, 141 people were reading the same book at the same time, which is not as feasible with printed materials.

She recounted the evolution of our Search for Sasquatch campaign and its system-wide influences. Last year, Christina and her team kicked things off with morale-boosting Secret Sasquatch care packages. Little Sasquatch stuffed companions arrived in the care package for Administrative Services from Ferndale Library, thanks to Breelynd Huntley, along with the help of Ruth Snitselaar and Shelley Ewell. South Whatcom Library staff added the idea of hiding a stuffed animal to be found in the building, and Lynden Library teens bumped it up to the next level with a scavenger hunt. Community Relations Aide Suzanne Carney and volunteers from Ragfinery created a design and sewed larger stuffed Sasquatches for each branch to hide for patrons' discovery. With the Sasquatch patterns also available for folks to make at home, this well-rounded campaign offers patrons increased opportunities to try a new craft or pattern, explore within the library and engage with WCLS online and in person.

Christine reminded everyone of the upcoming Washington Library Association annual conference and WCLS's All Staff Learning Day, both of which will be entirely virtual again this year, and welcomed the trustees to attend.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

Michael presented his written report and highlighted the diverse programming series inspired by this year's Read & Share title, *House Lessons*, by Erica Bauermeister. The series began last week with a program on

Whatcom County Homelessness and this Thursday State Architectural Historian Michael Houser will discuss historic barn architecture in Whatcom County with examples provided by local photographer Jeff Barclay ([Old Barns of Whatcom County](#)).

Michael reported that the Books by Mail (BBM) program has officially begun. This program will augment our existing Homebound Services and will allow us to significantly increase the number of such patrons served. We will be using the same style of reusable canvas bags that are utilized by our Interlibrary Loan department to mail materials. The BBM program entails monthly phone calls by staff engaging in Reading Conversations with patrons and referencing a reading history to provide new relevant material without sending duplicates. We are looking to connect with Senior Centers and the Opportunity Council in 2022.

Erika left the meeting at 10:52.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

In Thom's absence, Christine presented his report, commending Teen Services Coordinator Tamar Clarke's work as one of three judges for Youth Titles for the 2021 Washington State Book Awards. Christine remarked on the youth groups meeting via Zoom and the cross-county interactions with people they may not otherwise have met. She said that the Lummi Nation School has resumed its ConnectED partnership this year and the program once again serves every public school district in the county.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary reviewed her written report and shared some nuances behind the full spectrum coverage of WCLS's offerings. With *Explorations* now being direct-mailed to all county households, we embraced the opportunity to rethink the features we wish to address and how best to do it. *Explorations* is a vehicle for getting information out, bringing new people in, and advising the community of the variety of services and programs the system offers.

She highlighted the comprehensive Read & Share programming arranged by Adult Programming Coordinator Ann McAllen and how it addresses local interests and needs. Mary expressed her appreciation for author Erica Bauermeister's great job of sharing information on this programming via the author's own social media presence.

Mary expanded on the Sasquatch Sightings campaign to encourage people to visit the branches during Library Card Sign-Up Month and connect in fun and whimsical ways. She highlighted our partnership with Ragfinery and thanked them for their work creating and sewing our stuffed companions and providing a pattern for the community to join along.

Our podcast, [WCLS in Whatcom County Presents Library Stories](#), continues with an interview of author and librarian Nancy Pearl. An interview with local author Clyde Ford is scheduled for later this week.

Mary acknowledged the ongoing work of the Community Relations team, along with the contributions of branch staff, Administrative Services, and our partners in community as we explore new ways of sharing.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

Michael presented the reports, highlighting our hard work to return to full-service and even see a slight increase in open hours. He noted that visitor door counts are decreased by 42% compared to 2019, which is an improvement over the previously observed downturn of 50%. Interlibrary Loans saw a peak in 2020, perhaps due to some libraries being closed while we were open. Michael noted that Overdrive usage showed huge increases in 2020. Once libraries opened up in April 2021, that usage started going down, but it was back up in August, with a peak in unique users. This may be a result of the eRead of the Month program. Kanopy usage is seeing a similar trend, with August 2021 higher than August 2020, and database use is also on the rise. Marv

