



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; Thom Barthelmess, Youth Services Manager; Mary Vermillion, Community Relations Manager; Lisa Gresham, Collection Services Manager; Geoff Fitzpatrick, IT Services Manager; Sarah Koehler, Ferndale Library and Mobile Services Manager; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Angelina Kuchar, Deming and North Fork Youth Services Assistant; Joshua Olsen, Deming PSA – Cultural Focus (Nooksack); Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant.

Guests: None.

Call to Order

Marvin determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Open Public Comment

The trustees read the prepared statement, included in the board agenda packet, that had been emailed from Marlene Dawson and expressed thanks for the enclosed comments.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the November 16, 2021 Regular Meeting of the WCLS Board of Trustees as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- November 1-15, 2021 Payroll: Nos. 1027920422-1027920431, (Voucher Nos. 549339-549498) Totaling \$214,256.72 and November 16-30, 2021 Payroll: Nos. 1028077843-1028077849, (Voucher Nos. 549505-549650) Totaling \$197,324.86
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$77,843.13; \$26,118.82 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction)
- Claim 2021-36G: Warrant Nos. 1136178-1136212 Totaling \$154,404.70
- Claim 2021-37G: Warrant Nos. 1136779-1136802 Totaling \$102,764.64

- Claim 2021-38G: Warrant Nos. 1136824-1136834 Totaling \$23,130.41

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2021-20C: Warrant Nos. 1136213-1136214 Totaling \$5,242.90
- Claim 2021-21C: Warrant Nos. 1136542-1136543 Totaling \$19,355.02
- Claim 2021-22C: Warrant Nos. 1136835 Totaling \$16,655.00

Authorization to Void a Warrant:

- Resolution 12/21/21-16 voiding warrant 1137328

Rod moved approval of the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded. Unanimous board approval, with Lori absent at the time of the vote.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her report, including the Notes and Highlights section, which covers items in November and December. 99.86% of our 2021 property tax levy had been received by the end of November, with \$40,000 - \$50,000 in collections is projected in December indicating that some of the 2020 levy shortfall will be collected this year. Total year-to-date revenue is about \$80,000 below target. We are staying within the year's expense budget, with wages and benefits expenditures currently under budget. Approval has been received from FEMA for another batch of COVID-19 expense reimbursements, payment of which is expected to be received in the next fiscal year.

Jackie emphasized that insurance reimbursement for flood losses at the Sumas Library will be \$48,000 short of replacement expenses, currently projected at \$225,000, factored for supply chain issues and inflation. Jackie has requested quotes for increased insurance coverage at Sumas and Everson. She is looking into additional funding opportunities such as FEMA.

The State audit of fiscal years 2019 and 2020 is underway and going smoothly, Jackie reported. An Audit Entrance letter was included in the meeting packet. The audit is expected to wrap up in January, and an auditor's briefing for the trustees is tentatively scheduled for the January 18 board meeting.

Jackie plans to present the Facilities Assessment reports in January along with an amended five-year Capital Plan. She may be emailing the trustees a single-page executive summary from each facility's report next month. Printed copies of the complete reports, one binder for each facility, are available for review in the front office at Administrative Services. There were no questions for Jackie on her financial report nor the audit letter and process.

Jackie reviewed the Final Operating and Capital Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, indicating changes made to the Preliminary 2022 Budget and providing explanations behind those changes, as reviewed with the Finance Committee last week. Specifics of revenue and expenditure categories are noted in the budget's narrative summary. As shown in budget documents, we are transferring \$45,000 from the Facilities Ownership & Library Services Fund Reserve to cover ballot expenses associated with the Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area. Jackie announced that the bill for the November regular election was received yesterday from the county. We had budgeted \$45,000 for that election, and with the expenses shared by all participants, our final cost was closer to \$5,000. Marv asked Jackie about anticipated costs for the February election. She replied that since it is a special election in February, with far fewer participants than the November election, our cost may be less than \$45,000 but significantly more than \$5,000. She will have a budget amendment prepared for the February board meeting that will reflect the final 2021 ending fund balance and any costs that need to move forward to the 2022 budget.

There were no questions on the General Operating Fund Budget. On the Capital Improvement Plan and Budget, Rod asked if there were planned furnishing updates for the Sumas branch, outside of flooding. Jackie confirmed that Sumas was on that list of planned updates. Claudia asked about Sumas flood damage photos, and Jackie replied they will be shared in the upcoming Sumas Library Update today. There were no more questions.

Jackie presented Resolution 12/21/21-17 Adopting the 2022 General and Capital Fund Budgets for approval.

Erika moved approval of Resolution 12/21/21-17 Adopting the 2022 General and Capital Fund Budgets, as presented; seconded. Passed unanimously.

Jackie thanked the Board of Trustees for their review and approval.

Sumas Library Update

Christine presented an update on the Sumas Library, which was actively flooding at the time of the last board meeting. She noted that, soon after that meeting, Everson PSA Paul Fullner went over to the Sumas Library via kayak to evaluate the situation at the Sumas branch. Flood waters had pushed the book return away and someone from the public brought it back. Due to its condition, we have a temporary one out in Sumas now.

Christine shared photos of the Sumas Library's exterior with the flood waters up to the windowsills and covering the library sign. Photos of flood debris on the window ledges and throughout the interior indicated that the flood waters reached at least 25 inches high. When a salvage team from WCLS arrived in the following week, armed with rubber boots and respirators, they found a thick layer of silt throughout the library and evidence that water had come in with such force that it moved some materials, including furniture and fixtures, many of which had soaked up water. Luckily, the night before the flooding started, a Sumas staff member had asked substitute staff working there to move materials off of the bottom shelves, which allowed us to save a percentage of the collection. Some items on lower shelves were still moisture-damaged, with books swelling up so much that their expansion forced the end panels off of bookshelves. Geoff noted the extensive damage to electrical systems and IT inventory, and Michael recalled the overwhelming smell that lingered in the building.

Jackie reported that she met with an insurance adjustor onsite and we are awaiting final costs regarding clean up and debris removal. WCLS is using the same firm as the City of Sumas for this service, and the initial estimates appear to be close \$20,000. Michael added that, at last update, the carpet had been removed and drywall removal and replacement is in process. We will reestablish WiFi service as soon as we have assurances from the City of Sumas' Public Works department that electricity in the building is stable.

Christine said that a team has been created to address next steps, including working on ways to continue providing interim services to the Sumas community, such as lockboxes for holds pick-ups and an added Bookmobile stop, both of which we plan to have operational in the coming weeks. There was discussion about the history of the Sumas Library, the location of the building in a flood plain, the history of flooding there, and the City's plan to restore the building on its current site. Concerns were voiced by Marv and Claudia over the vulnerability of this location to future events of this nature. Michael noted that, under our current contract, the City determines the building and we agree to provide services, therefore the City is the driving force on location. If we opt not to build and/or own another building, we can develop a preparatory checklist to guide staff if a major weather event is anticipated and further buffer damage by moving furniture, fixtures, electronics and the collection out of the building and into temporary storage. We will maintain contact with the City of Sumas regarding the existing library building and any new buildings.

Christine said that during this flood event, the public wanted to know how to help, so we added a [form](#) on our website for donations to the Sumas Library Recovery Fund. Without additional promotion, this fund has received over \$3,000 to date. Additionally, the Whatcom County Library Foundation has received a \$20,000 grant for use in an area of highest need. Foundation Director Jenn Rick is acquiring approval from the donor for this donation to be used for the Sumas Library Recovery Fund. Christine acknowledged Whatcom Community Foundation's tremendous work with its Resilience Fund, which has focused primarily on relief efforts for people in immediate need. A potential exists for future focus on funding for recovery and rebuilding.

Christine encouraged everyone to listen to the latest [WCLS podcast](#), Episode 14, in which host Neil McKay speaks with various staff members about the flood in Sumas. Marv asked about the undamaged Sumas collection, which Jackie confirmed is currently being stored in the Administrative Services conference room.

Birch Bay Library Update

Christine reported that WCLS was able to get the Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area (BBLCFA) proposition on the ballot for the February 8, 2022 Special Election as Proposition No. 2. Local supporters are working on strategies to maintain and increase approval of the measure.

Christine noted that, for the November ballot, there were no volunteers to prepare an “Against” statement. This time, however, there were volunteers for that statement, and the major points cited were the boundaries and general increases in taxes. A rebuttal to the “Against” statement has also been submitted for inclusion in the voter pamphlet.

There were no other concerns voiced regarding the BBLCFA, and attendees were directed to contact Christine directly with any future questions.

Break

Marvin adjourned for a break from 10:05-10:10 a.m.

Trustee Education: Land Acknowledgement

This agenda item was rescheduled from the November meeting when it was originally planned in recognition of National Native American Heritage Month. Flooding in Everson and Sumas took precedence. Today, Christine shared a presentation about the history of Land Acknowledgements, what they are and how they are used, and the process our team took in creating ours. She introduced Joshua Olsen and Angelina Kuchar, who, along with Thom Barthelmess, Mary Vermillion, Ann McAllen and Neil McKay, developed a WCLS Land Acknowledgement statement in consultation with representatives from local tribes and other resources.

Accompanied by a backdrop of beautiful scenery from the area, Christine read aloud our Land Acknowledgement, which we plan share at the beginning of meetings and public events. She further discussed the statement’s usage and signage, explaining that best practices are still being determined.

Claudia was very enthusiastic and suggested that the entire Land Acknowledgement be recited at significant moments, and perhaps only the first line should be read at all events and meetings. Marv echoed these sentiments. Erika spoke about how the Whatcom County Health Department’s Land Acknowledgement statement is read and its wording emphasizing the connection between ancestral indigenous health practices and those of the Health Department, positing about a library connection, and WCLS specifically, in our statement. After further discussion by attendees, Rod expressed that he felt that the latter two sentences speak to who we are as an organization and Mary agreed, adding that our statement is unique from those she has seen from other institutions. Marv asked Christine to re-read the Land Acknowledgement, after which there was agreement about the organizational and community service focus of those two sentences.

Lori inquired if the statement would be on our website, as well as a spoken introduction. Christine replied that the tradition is to deliver the acknowledgement orally and our intention is to read it at programs and events. We will also consider having it as a reference on our website. Mary suggested attendees view WWU’s website, www.wvu.edu, to see a model of what we are considering for our site. Angelina added that the acknowledgement in WWU’s footer remains no matter across all visited pages, and there is a link to click to learn more. Mary emphasized interest in that level of engagement for our site.

Marv requested more emphasis on our local history collection. Christine spoke about our *Since Time Immemorial* kits and other resources that we are in the process of developing, and Lisa highlighted Joshua’s work utilizing the interlibrary lending system to evaluate local history materials to add to our collection.

Christine thanked Angelina and Joshua for joining the meeting today and for their efforts, and the input of all involved, in developing this Land Acknowledgement.

2022 Strategic Action Plan

Christine shared a draft of the plan, which has a quarterly format displaying ongoing and new projects. She reviewed details and timing of the referenced projects, demonstrating how they support our new WCLS CARES mission and vision.

Claudia moved approval of the 2022 Strategic Action Plan, as presented; seconded. Passed unanimously.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted the Zoom class action lawsuit and our stewarding of public funds. She noted that she and Lisa Gresham have been writing monthly book reviews for *Cascadia Weekly* for the past eight years., She thanked Collection Development Librarians Mary Kinser and Emma Radosevich, and other staff who contribute reviews to local papers, newsletters and social media, for reading, writing and keeping the library system visible in our community!

Christine advised that we have been contacted by Unity Care Northwest to distribute free at-home rapid COVID-19 test kits as part of the federal program. She emphasized that the public is encouraged to pick up kits in advance, when they are asymptomatic and feeling healthy, to have available at home for a quick screening tool as needed. Erika confirmed that these tests are designed to be used as a rapid screening tool before an event, such as a holiday dinner. If you are experiencing symptoms, please contact your healthcare provider promptly.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared the story of staff assisting people in the utilization of ArriveCAN. He expanded on how WCLS has curated the Community Resources tool on our website and plans to grow it, highlighting certain sections of focus periodically as applicable.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and its emphasis on the snowflakes created and displayed around our buildings. He noted that this initiative demonstrates one more area where we are working WITH our patrons—not just for them—creating agency in their relationship with the library. In his story of a Ferndale family’s recent experience, he recapped the small but indelible way the snowflake creation allowed a young person to choose the library as theirs. Thom shared photos of some of these snowflakes at our branches and invited everyone to join in the fun.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report and noted how her team shared on social media about the snowflake-making stations and got a fantastic response. She outlined the team’s utilization of all kinds of media and methods to increase community engagement and awareness of library materials and services. Mary highlighted these tools, such as [Explorations](#), podcasts, Whatcom READS and its programs, press coverage and social media. She lauded the teamwork involved in WCLS joining the Twitter thread, “Tilda Swinton as Libraries.” Marv found a clip of Tilda, in her role in *The Budapest Hotel*, fashioned as the Point Roberts Library.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael reminded us that it was a year ago, 10/26 – 11/23/2020, that we were able to open libraries briefly before being reclosed, and physical circulation is up 43% YTD. He noted that we saw the typical decline in physical circulation from October to November, except for the Island and North Fork branches, which both show an uptick. Christine commented that, if we keep up the same circulation numbers in

December, we will be just shy of the two million mark, first crossed in 2017. She encouraged everyone to review their "To Be Read" lists and check out items to nudge us over that threshold. Michael highlighted the high number of online attendees at our first two Whatcom READS programs and stated that it looks like online programming is here to stay. He thanked Ann McAllen, Adult Programming Coordinator, for her work planning, arranging, and often hosting, these programs.

Michael added that the top circulation item is the teen thriller *Five Total Strangers*. Kanopy visits have increased a little in November, compared to October. In December, a portal to Kanopy is available through the Libby app, providing another gateway for more library content. He noted that November database usage jumped up and that the Ancestry database will revert to exclusively in-library use beginning in January 2022.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

Nothing to report.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Jenn expressed gratitude for the response to the Sumas Library Recovery Fund, adding that Book Clubs are driving much of the gifting, locally and throughout the state. There is a link to the Sumas Library Recovery Fund at the top of our homepage, wcls.org, providing an easy path to connect people who may be interested in donating. She thanked the Community Relations team for their support, and noted that, even with this year's struggles, we are doing a good job of reaching people who are ready to support the library. All metrics are up, with a 51% increase in new donors and a 93% increase in reactivated donors.

Jenn reported that the Ferndale Library was the recipient of a low-vision reader generously donated by [Northwest Eye Surgeons](#), [Vision Matters](#) and the [Whatcom County Library Foundation](#). She urged attendees to familiarize themselves with the reader and spread the word about its availability.

Announcements and Adjourn

Christine advised the trustees that she has small gifts for them at Administrative Services. These have been purchased by Christine personally; no WCLS funds were used.

Marvin adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

Next Meeting

Next regular meeting will be online via Zoom* on January 18, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

_____ /s/ Marvin Waschke, Board Chair	_____ January 18, 2022 Date	_____ /s/ Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant
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*Pending further issuances from the Office of the Governor of the State of Washington.