



APPROVED MINUTES

Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

February 15, 2022

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; Beth Andrews Human Resources Manager; Lisa Gresham, Collection Services Manager; Geoff Fitzpatrick, IT Services Manager; Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager and President of Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL); Wendy McLeod, Lynden Library Assistant Manager and FOBBL Secretary; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant.

Guests: FOBBL Members Brian Bell, Doralee Booth, Sharman Burnam, Ruth Higgins, and Holly Witte.

Call to Order

Marvin determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., followed by a reading of the WCLS Land Acknowledgement.

Open Public Comment

No public comment.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the January 18, 2022 Regular Meeting of the WCLS Board of Trustees as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- January 1-15, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1028764585 -1028764590, (Voucher Nos. 550126 - 550273) Totaling \$195,646.38 and January 16-31, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1028915868 -1028915874, (Voucher Nos. 550282 - 550286) Totaling \$205,994.16.

- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$84,761.52; \$27,281.29 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2021-43G: Warrant Nos. 1138710-1138743 Totaling \$27,419.86
- Claim 2021-44G: Warrant Nos. 1138954-1138973 Totaling \$113,438.74
- Claim 2022-01G: Warrant Nos. 1138974-1138982 Totaling \$146,339.96

Capital Fund:

- There were no Capital claims in January

Rod moved approval of the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Financial Report: Finance Committee Report and Resolutions

Jackie presented a summary of the 2021 General Fund, noting that property tax revenue exceeded the 2021 levy by roughly \$39,000, likely a result of payments deferred from the prior year. This additional revenue, along with funds received from insurance recoveries, offset the shortfall in budgeted revenue. Expenditures ended under budget this year, particularly in personnel costs. This variance is attributed to unused allowances that were budgeted for COVID-19 pandemic-related illness, along with position vacancies and reduced benefit expenses. The Collection Materials budget was underspent by \$12,000. Jackie recommends adding this amount to the Collection Project reserve fund, and that adjustment is reflected in the proposed budget amendment. Underspending and positive total revenue resulted in an increase of \$245,000 to the year's ending fund balance, bringing it to \$10.5 million.

Jackie reviewed the 2021 Capital Fund and summary, highlighting the completion of the system-wide Facilities Assessment. She noted that the Everson Library remodel, furnishings for which have been impacted by supply chain issues, is almost complete. Jackie shared pictures of the new adjustable circulation desks there. The desks' form and function have been received favorably by patrons and staff alike.

Receiving no questions on the 2021 report, Jackie delivered the January 2022 financial report and provided an overview of the updated five-year Capital Plan for 2022-2026, discussing details of items included in the plan. She commented on the recommendations outlined in the Facilities Assessment report, which have also been discussed with the Finance Committee. WCLS owns the Administrative Services (AS) and North Fork Library buildings, and the report identified several large repair and maintenance expenses at the former. Marv shared his recollection of the pre-WCLS history of the AS building and expressed the need to determine refurbishment requirements and costs compared to costs to move to a new facility. Future research is needed in determining the appraised value for AS, in addition to evaluating the pricing and availability of commercial space. Extensive discussion is required to address this question and other facilities matters, and a Board Facilities Planning Retreat was suggested to do so. The trustees unanimously agreed, offered their availability, and tentatively planned to hold the retreat on a Wednesday or Thursday evening in the latter half of June or later. Christine and Jackie will schedule the retreat and compile the aforementioned data for consideration. For now, smaller routine repairs and maintenance items will be addressed, as well as refurbishing the North Fork and Sumas facilities, all of which are listed in the Capital Plan.

Christine emphasized that this plan demonstrates what WCLS is doing, but does not take into consideration what other building owners of WCLS facilities are planning. Jackie is in the process of having building owners review the Facilities Assessment reports and provide their feedback, so we can incorporate it in our discussions at the Facilities Retreat. She answered questions regarding options if the building owner does not have the means or capacity to repair or maintain a branch facility. Lori posited the option of a combined library and administrative building. Marv suggested we table further discussion for the June retreat, and the rest of the board agreed.

Jackie presented Resolution 02/15/22-01 Adopting the 2022-2026 Capital Improvement Plan.

Claudia moved approval of Resolution 02/15/22-01 Adopting the 2022-2026 Capital Improvement Plan as presented. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Jackie reviewed the proposed budget amendments, highlighting areas to be modified and providing reasons for the changes. With no questions from the trustees, she presented Resolution 02/15/22-02 Amending the 2022 General and Capital Fund Budgets.

Rod moved approval of Resolution 02/15/22-02 Amending the 2022 General and Capital Fund Budgets as presented. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Annual General Meeting – Election of Officers & Committee Assignments

The current roster of officers and committee members for the WCLS Board of Trustees is as follows:

- Marvin Waschke, Chair – Finance Committee and WCLF Liaison (alternate on Personnel Committee)
- Lori Jump, Vice Chair – Community Relations Committee
- Claudia Disend, Secretary – Personnel Committee and Community Relations Committee
- Rod Lofdahl – Finance Committee and Personnel Committee
- Erika Lautenbach – at large

The trustees indicated their willingness and desire to retain their current positions and committee membership, without changes.

Claudia moved to approve the slate of officers and committee members as presented for the next year, without changes. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Since the meeting was ahead of the scheduled agenda, and Erika needed to leave the meeting around 10:00 a.m., the board unanimously agreed to begin addressing the Birch Bay Library Update before the break.

Birch Bay Library Update

Christine reported that we still have until February 18 before receiving certified ballot results. The likelihood of the Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area measure passing does not look promising at this time, however, with current approval at about 57% but requiring 60%. She provided statistics on “yes” and “no” votes and noted that there was more vocal opposition to the proposition this time, compared to last November. Claudia asked for further details on said opposition, which Christine summarized. Michael and Dianne concurred with this summary. Christine thanked and praised the community members who put their hearts and time into this effort.

Christine asked the trustees for their input. Discussion ensued about the options of pausing for a year or more, quickly presenting the measure a third time, the intractability underlying opposition to the measure and limited likelihood of overcoming it, and the influences of the pandemic and current economy on voter mindset. The trustees expressed concerns over the investment in the project to date, the ability to sell the property and recoup these funds, and its use as a combination library/administration building.

Michael fielded inquiries about the status of the \$2 million appropriation from the Department of Commerce (DOC) and the use and potential expiration of those funds. He is meeting with the DOC this afternoon to evaluate options moving forward, as well as review requirements to reapply for funds in the future.

Erika left the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

The possibilities of a single Blaine Library, both a Blaine and a Birch Bay Library, or a combination Blaine-Birch Bay Library to service this northwest area of the county, as well as a combined future LCFA measure, were proposed.

There was a preliminary consensus to put the project on hold for several months and use that time to evaluate our options and communicate with the community.

Marv requested we investigate the feasibility of putting a Library Express or portable building on the site—something with maximal impact and minimal cost—that will enhance a library presence there and allow us to quantify circulation at that location. Michael stated that it is the system’s model to provide library services in buildings that the community provides. He recalled an earlier estimate by Zervas Architects of about \$1 million to address ADA and floor reinforcement requirements to make it usable as a Library Express. Jackie said parking lot updates, and possible additional site improvements, are also required to use the existing building or put a portable building there. Michael has a meeting with Zervas next week and will determine the pending scope of work and if we can restructure the use of any contracted funds to provide estimates associated with these alternatives. Dianne and accompanying FOBBL member Ruth Higgins indicated that their Friends group would support either of these models and view it as a step forward in the process towards a permanent facility.

Christine cautioned that these alternatives present development and ongoing costs, and that we must determine if donors would approve the use of donated funds for such temporary measures. Mary emphasized, and Jenn supported, the importance of prompt direct communication with donors, with subsequent messaging to the Birch Bay and Blaine communities to advise them of potential next steps.

Jackie suggested we further explore the Birch Bay Library building project at the Facilities Retreat in June. The trustees agreed and requested WCLS management gather as much information as possible, with minimal expenditure, to prepare for that in-depth discussion and evaluation.

Christine reiterated her gratitude to FOBBL and Birch Bay community volunteers who valiantly worked to gain support for the Birch Bay LCFA measure. In the chat, Jenn commented, “Thank you to all the Birch Bay volunteers who put their hearts and souls into this most recent effort to build a library in Birch Bay” and Dianne said, “The Friends THANK YOU All for your support and effort to help us bring a library to our community. The majority is still with us and saying YES to a library.”

Break

Marvin adjourned for a break from 10:40 – 10:48 a.m.

Sumas Library Update

Christine reported that she and Alexa Andrews, Everson and Sumas Library Manager, recently met with Sumas Mayor Bruce Bosch and Public Works Director Sunny Aulakh, who shared that the City of Sumas is committed to bringing the library building up to operational level and is in the process of getting repair bids. WCLS has an interest in doing upgrades to the electrical and data cabling, including raising the boxes up to 36-inch counter height, and we will be taking the lead on some of the repair work, which the City will finish. After discussing the idea of a Library Express in the building, and gaining support from the mayor and Public Works Director, we are looking forward to getting it integrated into the building during the refurbishment process. Alexa attended the Sumas City Council meeting last night and shared preliminary information, and attendees were enthusiastic about the plans. Christine noted that the new library shelving will be steel, with the benefit of being durable and the ability to be power-washed if needed. Sumas will be one of the last WCLS branches to transition to this shelving.

Jackie confirmed that she has filed the insurance claim for the Sumas Library flooding losses, and she has been getting regular updates from the adjustor. There may be a delay in receiving a reimbursement commitment, with the volume of claims submitted, but we currently expect to receive the full amount of our claim.

Christine added that, in addition to our insurance claim reimbursement, the Sumas Library project will have several other revenue streams. We may be eligible to receive FEMA funds for some expenses, at a 75% reimbursement rate, since the City of Sumas has been declared a disaster area. We had received American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to address ADA issues at the Sumas Library, including automatic doors, which will now be installed as part of the current refurbishment and Library Express inclusion. Supplemental funding will be provided through the Whatcom County Library Foundation's Sumas Library Recovery Fund.

Although there was a rumor that we were abandoning the library in Sumas, Christine believes we have quashed that misconception. With continued delays getting materials delivered, September is projected for re-opening the Sumas Library, with library services to resume in the fall. We are currently supporting that community with a holds pick-up locker and bookmobile service. In response to Marv's question, Michael explained how we internally route held materials to the Everson Library, where the items are checked out and taken to the lockbox location. Sumas patrons receive a notice that their materials are ready for pickup along with the lockbox combination, and are then able to pick up their held items from the box.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted our robust board game collection, which can be a fun distraction on these gray days of winter. She noted the recent staff reminder that WCLS subscribes to a phone interpreter service to assist in supporting our patrons in languages other than English. Christine thanked the Friends of South Whatcom Library for their donation to the Sumas Library Recovery Fund and lauded the Friends groups' support of each other.

Marv asked if we have an estimate of which languages are translated most often. Michael replied that our biggest impact has been from having certified bilingual staff in branches, versus an outside interpreter service. Christine's impression was that WCLS translated into Spanish the most, then Russian, followed by Punjabi. Mary added that we also translate many of our printed materials into these three languages.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared details of the Learning Together Trainings offered through the Community Engagement Fellows Coalition and WWU. Rather than a passive presentation, these trainings invite attendees to actively participate in social learning and engage with others in the community who have expertise on a topic, such as "Infusing Equity into Meetings" and "Acknowledging Land and History." Recently, we have been engaging in a series of conversations about how to use our library programs to build relationships and develop connections throughout the community.

Michael detailed recent incidents in our libraries, one involving the trafficking of video games stolen from the WCLS collection. A pattern of repetitive disruptive behavior necessitated that we trespass a patron at the Ferndale Library, a branch which has also seen an uptick in mischief and vandalism. Christine and Michael emphasized that the system attempts swift dialogue and resolution to continue providing services, and both commended library staff for their response to these recent incidents.

Michael welcomed Jonathan Jakobitz into his new role as Blaine Library Manager, as Jonathan transitioned from his previous position as Interim Blaine Library Manager.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and the motivation behind the pivot from his regular report. He explained that diverse stressors have impacted us systemwide, and staff are working through challenging and difficult times.

Management has had varied conversations on how to support staff, and one approach Thom chose was to make a collage for each member of the Youth Services team depicting ten qualities that he appreciates in them. In his report, he compiled an aggregate list of these traits.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report and reminded everyone to register for the Whatcom READS author events, several of which will be in-person. Registration serves to manage capacity and convey information required for attendance at in-person events, as well as allows us to communicate directly with registrants if event details change.

Whatcom READS received a \$6,000 grant from Humanities Washington and the National Endowment for the Humanities, which will fund a Field Guide and Journal inspired by this year's Whatcom READS title, *Greenwood*. Mary will talk more about this project next month.

Mary noted that Community Relations checks in with other departments about what library resources would benefit from a highlight in WCLS's communications. She thanked Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator, for his work with local poet Robert Lashley in putting together playlists on Freegal, the library's music streaming service, to honor Black History Month.

Mary referred to her report's list of recent book reviews and recommendations, media and press releases, including coverage of the Birch Bay Library ballot measure and lots of exposure by the Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce and volunteers. She praised the Birch Bay volunteers, and the many voices raised in support, for their passion and time as they shared what the library would mean for their community. Christine will be sending an e-card to the trustees for them to sign in appreciation of that community's library supporters.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael commented that we are comparing 2022 to the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 now, moving on from pre-pandemic 2019. He recalled that we were open for curbside service only in January and February of 2021, and January 2022's Northwest Drive Express physical circulation count has seen a slight decrease now that libraries are open.

Michael noted more visits to our website and slightly fewer to our catalog, likely due to all branches being open and patrons not needing to access the online catalog as much now to put items on hold. With branches open, Internet sessions have increased, as have WiFi sessions.

Lisa reviewed the digital and database usage statistics, remarking that the Whatcom READS title, *Greenwood*, and digital magazines remain among the top checked-out items from our OverDrive collection, even with the relative checkout decreases attributed to the differences in eMagazine platforms between OverDrive and RBDigital. She noted that new OverDrive unique users, the digital equivalent to new cardholders, have increased and that eBooks were slightly favored over eAudiobooks.

With the Libby application expansion, Lisa hoped to see an increase in traffic on Kanopy. Since Libby serves only as a portal to Kanopy, and users are still required to log in to Kanopy afterward, that login step appears to be a limiting factor in Kanopy's usage.

Lisa reported that January's aggregated database usage was the highest month since we began tracking it, and she largely attributes it to the efforts of Youth Services, as well as the Community Relations team. There was an anticipated decrease in the use of the Ancestry database, as the database returned to in-library use only. Lisa noted that Heritage Quest, which can be used at home, is a ProQuest competitor to Ancestry for Libraries.

Marv remarked that he would appreciate a future trustee education presentation of digital and database resources available. Christine made note of that and asked other trustees for suggestions for trustee education topics. Additional topics suggested included local history materials and what we have available; collection management software (e.g., OCLC); IT Services at WCLS; the Library of Things; and what other cutting-edge things we are considering and other libraries are doing.

Marv requested an update on the progress of our Community Resources project and a report on how often it is being used. Michael replied that we have established a Community Resources team and are focusing on user experience and evaluating how to select and review resources, as well as metrics options. Currently, we monitor usage through website visits using WordPress tables and tools. Michael will gather that usage data for next month's meeting.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

No report.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Jenn reported exciting news for January. In the last six weeks, WCLF has received \$30,000 in contributions, with \$17,000 going to the general fund. She is happy to see that donors are thinking of the library philanthropically, upgrading and not waiting until our Branch Out event. Donations allow the Foundation the ability to respond to a variety of community needs, such as helping with the Sumas Library recovery and adding to the Birch Bay Library effort. Jenn noted the correlation of people giving to libraries and voting to support them. She added that, when donors see us spending their donation wisely, they are inspired to give again.

Jenn relayed that Library Giving Day is scheduled for April 6, and the Community Relations team is already working with the Foundation to develop communications around opportunities for giving during that first week of April. Jenn advised that the Foundation Board is evaluating donor demographics at a granular level, and Lori said that data would be an interesting presentation to the WCLS Board.

Announcements and Adjourn

Christine reminded the trustees to watch their email for the ecard she is sending out for their signatures. After discussion, the Board decided to remain on the Zoom platform for the March and April meetings. *
Marvin adjourned the meeting at 11:49 a.m.

Next Meeting

Next regular meeting will be online via Zoom* on March 15, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

_____ /s/ Claudia Disend, Board Secretary	_____ March 15, 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.