



Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

May 17, 2022

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Location

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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.

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In Attendance

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

**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; Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager and President of Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL); Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Ruth Nail, Administrative Assistant.

**Guests:** None.

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Call to Order

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

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Open Public Comment

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No public comment.

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Consent Agenda

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The Consent Agenda included minutes of the April 19, 2022 Regular Meeting of the WCLS Board of Trustees as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- April 1-15, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1029686186-1029686192, (Voucher Nos. 551035-551176) Totaling \$205,814.58 and April 16-30, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1029841897-1029841905, (Voucher Nos. 551183-551326) Totaling \$195,211.98.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$85,946.01; \$28,881.23 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).

- Claim 2022-11G: Warrant Nos. 1144823-1144849 Totaling \$115,517.11
- Claim 2022-12G: Warrant Nos. 1145570-1145598 Totaling \$49,667.25
- Claim 2022-13G: Warrant Nos. 1145832-1145852 Totaling \$104,960.46

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2022-06C: Warrant Nos. 1144850-1144851 Totaling \$10,931.76

Authorization to Void Warrant:

- Resolution 05/17/22-04 voiding warrant 1145591

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

**Financial Report: Finance Committee Report and Resolutions**

Jackie reviewed her report, including the April Notes and Highlights section, pointing out the influx of property tax revenues and replenishment of the Cash Flow reserve fund. She noted that expenses are in alignment with expectations, although fuel costs are running ahead of target. Jackie will continue to monitor this line item and its potential impact on the budget. Over the next few weeks, she will be preparing the 2021 Annual Report for submission to the State Auditor’s Office by May 30. Jackie plans to share the report at the next board meeting. Christine added that she and Jackie will be reviewing the report several times before submission. There were no questions for Jackie on the April financial report.

**Trustee Education – Material Challenges**

Lori suggested, and it was agreed, that we record the trustee education presentation for those absent, as well as for future reference. She further suggested that we consider recording future trustee education presentations.

Christine, Lisa and Thom shared a presentation on material challenges, citing current news articles detailing public challenges at school and public libraries across the nation and requests to remove materials from these libraries. Christine noted that the American Library Association (ALA) has a system to report challenged books. In the US, there were 1,600 challenges reported in 2021, versus 377 in 2019. When questioned, Christine clarified that the ALA is a professional organization, not a governing body, and added that there is no federal oversight for libraries.

Erika joined the meeting at 9:20 a.m.

Christine provided examples of recent books challenged, including children’s books, and the basis upon which they were challenged. The materials challenged represented a variety of topics and viewpoints, across the ideological spectrum. Rod inquired about percentages of materials that are challenged, compared to those that actually get removed or banned. Christine answered that, for WCLS, challenges resulting in removal are very few, although there is an occasionally a resulting reclassification. She also gave examples of materials that are not getting challenged, including many popular titles.

Lisa presented an in-depth review of the WCLS collection policy and its principles. She noted the policy’s inclusion of such foundational documents as the ALA Library Bill of Rights, the ALA Freedom to Read Statement and the Washington Library Association (WLA) Intellectual Freedom Statement. Lisa reiterated the library system’s goal of choosing a balanced collection, focusing on breadth rather than depth, and demonstrated how selectors utilize the policy guidelines to this end. Lisa shared our Library Materials Comment Form and explained how branch staff listen to and acknowledge patrons’ feelings about a collection item. The comment form would be offered, if the patron desires, for further review by the Executive Director, Youth Services Manager (Youth materials), Collection

Services Manager (Adult materials) and selector. This team considers the item against our guidelines, reviewing and responding within two weeks to the commenter.

Thom further elucidated the history and content of the ALA Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read Statement, and the Office for Intellectual Freedom and illustrated how they guide our collection. He noted the library system's commitment to Intellectual Freedom evident in the areas of Choice, Reflection, Community and Family. Putting readers in charge of their consumption improves their chances of becoming better, more enthusiastic readers. Showing readers the entire world reflected in literature affirms their place in the world, while helping readers to appreciate the perspectives of others and develop empathy. Connecting readers through common experiences is among the many reasons to read, and libraries serve as guides and entrust families with their own reading choices.

Christine, Lisa and Thom shared further learning resources and answered trustees' questions about the utilization of the collection within the ConnectED program and the availability of challenged materials through interlibrary lending. They listened to trustee concerns about these nationwide materials challenges and reassured the trustees that WCLS has not seen an uptick in materials comment forms to date. Marv thanked the three presenters for their thorough presentation.

The recording was stopped. Ruth will email the recording to all trustees.

Lori inquired about making this topic available for public education, too, and suggested it be presented at other meetings. Marv agreed about increased advocacy, and Mary concurred that it would be good for sharing at Friends' meetings. She added that Online Experience Coordinator Neil McKay was in attendance to prepare for the possibility of featuring this topic on a future WCLS podcast.

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## Trustee Recruitment

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Christine recapped recent efforts for trustee recruitment, including an update to the WCLS Trustees' webpage. An invitation to apply to be a trustee, along with trustee responsibilities and qualifications, are featured on the page. She said the invitation was also included in a media release, a WCLS social media post and an email to patrons, the latter of which had a 27% open rate and, of those that opened the email, 73 people clicked on the trustee recruitment link.

The WCLS management team has been networking throughout the community and reaching out to potential candidates. Christine requested candidate suggestions from the trustees, asking them to forward ideas to her or contact candidates themselves. Erika offered some input, and she will send Christine contact details.

The trustees offered suggestions on edits to the trustee qualifications listed on the webpage and noted that the time commitment, as well as meeting date and time, may be limiting our recruits. They expressed their willingness to change the meeting date and time, if necessary.

Rod, representing the Personnel Committee, and Christine have a meeting scheduled June 2 with Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu. Christine is aware of only one applicant to date and will set up Zoom meetings with the Personnel Committee when there are several candidates ready to interview. She emphasized that we would like to fill this opening as soon as possible and asked again that trustees review their network contacts to assist in finding suitable candidates.

Looking at the time, it was suggested and agreed to break now and resume the agenda with the Birch Bay update.

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## Break

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Marvin adjourned for a break from 10:20 – 10:28 a.m.

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## Birch Bay Update

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Michael shared data related to the option of modular construction (a portable building) for Birch Bay library services. He has been given a rough quote of \$215,000 for a 1,000 sq. ft. open plan with specific parameters and considerations. This figure is informational only and does not include additional costs such as site prep or parking. If WCLS decided to pursue this option, an RFP would be required.

Michael addressed a variety of concerns with the Board, including delivery impediments, placement of the portable building on the site, additional archeological oversight and site development requirements, and the associated costs still to be determined. Getting these budgetary answers will likely require more expenditures.

Michael expressed decreased confidence that the modular structure option would be supported in a request for scope change with the Department of Commerce (DOC). He also emphasized the need discuss this option with key private donors that have already made their gifts under an earlier premise.

Marv asked Dianne Marrs-Smith for input from the Friends of Birch Bay Library (FOBBL) about this option. She said that there are concerns within FOBBL and the community about the placement of the portable building, its aesthetics and its impacts on the historic house. Dianne stated that FOBBL would accept the modular if that is their only option, but feel that this option will likely generate more questions and resistance in the community, and they are therefore less enthusiastic about pursuing this option than others that have been discussed to date.

Discussion followed about the house's impact on the value of the property. It was reported that the house is structurally appropriate for a residence and has been identified as an asset, whether on the property or moved elsewhere. In addition to its physical value, it has historic and sentimental value. The use of the outbuildings as part of a temporary solution was proposed, as was partnering with another public entity, such as a post office. Some associated limitations of these options were explored, and the desire not to focus funds on a temporary solution was expressed. Christine clarified that using DOC funds obligates us to a solution that is not temporary.

Michael said a site plan has been developed with Zervas that utilizes the existing house. He would like to share the plan at the June 21 meeting, after gathering more budgetary information. He feels we can deliver full library services in the 1500 sq. ft. of the house's first floor at a smaller scope than the previous new construction plan. He reiterated that additional time and expenditures are necessary to get more data on costs to use the existing structure(s).

The trustees shared their concerns about meeting the needs of community and the extended focus on Birch Bay in comparison to other branches. It was agreed that Michael utilize budgeted funds to continue gathering costs to present a more informed proposal at the June 21 meeting. Michael will follow up with Jackie to verify the balance of budgeted available and proceed accordingly.

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## Trustee Education – Library Giving Day / Library Foundation

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Foundation Development Director Jennifer Rick shared a timeline of how the Foundation got started and how they have moved forward in the past 17 years. She referred attendees to the [video link](#) on the WCLS website detailing the 2004 FBI Case at Deming Library and the 2005 PEN/Newman Award the started the Foundation.

Jenn reviewed early fundraising efforts, the hiring of a Foundation Development Director, and the beginning of the annual fundraising event, Branch Out, and its subsequent success. She credited key donors, such as Joan Airoldi, Chris Villani, Ziad Youssef, Robert Bates and Kathy Veterane for their gifts that created project grants, memorial funds, endowment funds. Jenn thanked Judy Ross for her donation that seeded sub-endowment funds for each library branch. The WCLF Endowment Fund and branch sub-endowment funds are managed by the Whatcom Community Foundation, where the funds continue to grow with reinvested dividends and additional donations.

Jenn recalled our first Library Giving Day in 2019 and the 2020 initiation of the Give Every Month (GEM) Campaign. She recounted how the Foundation was able to pivot its fundraising efforts in 2020 and 2021, when Branch Out was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, the Foundation has received over \$32,000 for the Sumas Library Recovery Fund, designated to help that branch reopen after being closed due to 2021's historic flood event in Whatcom County. Jenn highlighted that the Foundation has surpassed their annual fundraising goal for the General Fund in the first five months of 2022. She shared further statistics on donations and grant distributions, as well as the growth of the Endowment Fund.

Jenn expressed her gratitude to all of the Foundation's donors, whose gifts help to meet community needs. She reminded attendees that this year's Branch Out event will be held September 9 and encouraged everyone to save the date. Marv thanked Jenn for her presentation and efforts cultivating donors and spreading the word about the Foundation.

Erika left at 11:00 a.m.

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### Staff Reports: Executive Director

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In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted the retirements and departures of several staff members. With the retirement of long-time employee Sarah Koehler, Ferndale and Mobile Services Manager, and the departure of Everson and Sumas Manager Alexa Andrews, the majority of our Branch Managers are on the newer side. We welcome the new energy and ideas, while also acknowledging the extra onboarding time required in Michael's schedule. Christine also noted that Ruth Nail will be filling the opening created by the retirement of Accountant Mary Jochen, leaving the position of Administrative Assistant to be filled.

Christine reported that the Washington State Tax Structure Work Group is currently examining adjusting the 1% cap on levies for taxing districts and receiving input on the matter. She reminded attendees that each year, our junior district can only levy 1% more than the prior's year's property tax levy. Christine had drafted a letter to the Work Group communicating how library districts fit in to this adjustment and requesting that they consider libraries in their considerations. The Board would like to include their signatures on the letter. Ruth will send the letter for the trustees' signatures via DocuSign this afternoon and Christine will submit the signed letter to the Working Group by the due date at the end of this week.

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### Staff Reports: Deputy Director

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In addition to his written report, Michael expressed his enthusiasm about library staff being able to be out and about at various community engagement opportunities. He stated that, with so many plans to visit so many locations, it's great to be meeting with people face-to-face again.

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### Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

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In addition to his written report, Thom also noted his excitement about being able to be focus on in-person programming. He drew attention to the Pride in the Park celebration at Marine Park on Saturday, July 16, from 11:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. This family event stems partially out of input from Blaine Youth Services Assistant Marie Guenette and her interactions with youth and families at the library.

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### Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

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Mary discussed her written report and highlighted the Power of Sharing campaign. 99.9% of the campaign work is done in-house, with support from an outside agency that places our digital ads. She shared statistics from this

