

Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

September 20, 2022

Location

This meeting was held in a hybrid manner, with remote attendance via Zoom and in-person attendance at Administrative Services, 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226.

In Attendance

Trustees: Marvin Waschke, Chair; Lori Jump, Vice Chair; Erika Lautenbach, Secretary; Matthew Santos 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; Geoff Fitzpatrick, IT Services Manager; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Beth Andrews, Human Resources Manager; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Wendy McLeod, Lynden Library Assistant Branch Manager; Alix Prior, Ferndale Branch Manager; Amanda Bonilla, Administrative Assistant.

Guests: Rochelle Hollowell, President of the Friends of the North Fork Library.

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 by Michael.

Open Public Comment

Rochelle addressed the Board about approving pursuit of funding for an addition to the North Fork Library. She indicated that the North Fork/Maple Falls community has grown since the library was built in 2011, and they require a bigger space to provide more programs. Rochelle noted she has experience with grant writing, but needs help from WCLS to find grant funds for construction of a library addition, along with the books and required furnishings.

Marv noted Rochelle's request and identified the critical factor in this process as community support. The surest way to fund an expansion is through donations. If this does not work, then the library could perhaps engage in an LCFA, which is a proposal to tax the area around the library to fund construction. The narrow loss of the Birch Bay LCFA at the polls has demonstrated the need for strong popular support for such projects prior to undertaking them.

Christine offered to meet with Rochelle and the North Fork Friends of the Library group at their next meeting on 9/21 to get working on the needs assessment process for a potential expansion.

Service Anniversary Recognition

The trustees recognized Jennie Littlefield, Page at Lynden Library, for her exemplary service of ten years at WCLS. Lynden Assistant Branch Manager Wendy McLeod was thrilled to celebrate Jennie's ten-year anniversary, describing her as a major asset for the Lynden and Blaine branches where she has worked, as well as for WCLS at

large, due to her willingness to sub at various branches. Wendy highlighted Jennie's commitment to continuing education, with her attending many webinars and making great use of LinkedIn and Libby for professional development. Despite her natural reticence to do so, Wendy noted Jennie excels at working with the public and making recommendations, and patrons are always happy to talk with her. In each performance review, Jennie has advocated for patrons to be able to branch out into new genres and experiment with their reading. Wendy commended Jennie's willingness to think differently. Christine echoed Wendy's sentiments and the trustees applauded Jennie's accomplishment.

The trustees also recognized April Prado, Processing Specialist for Collection Services, for her achievement of ten years of service. Christine presented Collection Services Manager Lisa Gresham's commendation of April's work. April began working at the Blaine Library as a page, and moved through to her current role in Administrative Services, truly representing a full career with WCLS. April is hugely supportive of youth events, serving as a story time substitute and planning and executing a *Doctor Who* event for teens. As another impressive feat, April has singlehandedly managed the WCLS Instagram account for many years. Her work demonstrates a high level of efficiency and love of detail. The trustees applauded April for ten years of library service and advocacy.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the August 16, 2022 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- August 1-15, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1031059922-1031059925, (Voucher Nos. 552257-552404) Totaling \$203,163.93 and August 16-31, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1031223877-1031223880, (Voucher Nos. 552411-552557) Totaling \$205,318.89.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$84,684.61; \$27,113.32 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2022-24G: Warrant Nos. 1151479-1151490 Totaling \$7,408.56
- Claim 2022-25G: Warrant Nos. 1151813-1151827 Totaling \$40,248.42
- Claim 2022-26G: Warrant Nos. 1152272-1152289 Totaling \$91,449.83
- Claim 2022-27G: Warrant Nos. 1152429-1152451 Totaling \$98,146.37
- Claim 2022-28G: Warrant Nos. 1152986-1152999 Totaling \$41,380.03

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2022-13C: Warrant No. 1152290 Totaling \$675.00
- Claim 2022-14C: Warrant No. 1152452 Totaling \$75.00

Jackie pointed out that Resolutions 09/20/22-09 and 09/20/22-10, both voids, were unintentionally excluded from the consent agenda and required separate approval.

Rod moved to accept the Consent Agenda excluding Resolutions 09/20/22-09 and 09/20/22-10. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Matthew moved to approve Resolutions 09/20/22-09 and 09/20/22-10 as presented. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her finance report.

The Intergovernmental revenue section of the August revenue shows WCLS is expecting some funding from a Federal American Rescue Plan Act grant. Jackie is not expecting to receive the full \$30,000 listed, because the application schedule coincided with the network shutdown. The incoming FEMA funds are currently intended to recover funds lost from COVID, and in the future will assist with Sumas flood recovery. WCLS also just received a check from the Whatcom County Library Foundation representing funds collected for the Sumas Recovery Fund, which will be on October's report. Overall, the other big line in terms of revenues is insurance recoveries for the Sumas flooding and network security event.

Looking at August expenditures, Jackie outlined statistics on staff costs, supplies and fuel. Fuel costs have been high and require a budget amendment to increase the fuel budget, though prices appear to be going down in comparison to earlier this year. Costs are also trending a little high in the repair and maintenance category. There have been unexpected costs, namely repairs to the HVAC system at Administrative Services and vehicle issues. The general cost of repairs is high nationwide, and Jackie will be taking these trends into account as she moves into planning next year's budget.

Marv noted that WCLS is running fairly low on collection expenses, and Jackie responded that some funds are being put aside for materials to fill the Sumas Library when it reopens. Christine and Thom also noted that there are many publishing releases in the fall, so in the next few months there will be an increase in spending on collections.

Jackie presented the 2023 Budget Planning Schedule, which outlines the plan to develop and adopt next year's budget from the current date through February 2023. She has been meeting with leadership in the past month to create a budget plan which will be shared at the October meeting and during union negotiations. In November, the Board will be asked to approve the preliminary budget, and the final numbers will be ready for Board approval in December. In February, there will be a budget amendment based on final 2022 totals.

Lori inquired about the current economic environment locally, namely inflation and high property costs, and whether it could create a situation where WCLS would be delayed in receiving revenue from property taxes. Jackie determined it was best to project the maximum amount, rather than to have a planned reduction set aside for this purpose, and to monitor the situation throughout the year. For example, in the past there has been an extended deadline for tax collection due to COVID, and WCLS altered our budget planning to accommodate this.

IT Services Update

Christine updated the Board that the two Requests for Proposals for IT consulting, one for cybersecurity and one for Microsoft 365 optimization, have been released and all responses received. The cybersecurity RFPs yielded six proposals from various firms, and two interviews with finalists were held. Both firms were strong candidates, but one company stood out in terms of their approach and their team. Christine is currently checking their references and it appears likely they will be selected. Their budget matches the \$100,000 budget approved in August's board meeting.

Marv added that he was very impressed with both cybersecurity finalists. Looking at the Microsoft 365 proposals, Christine described one as over-budget and all as lacking clarity in their scope. At this time, she is focusing on what can be done in-house versus what requires a consultant. Christine will be working with the branches, the Learning Coordinator and Human Resources to determine clear learning goals for using the software. The Microsoft 365 RFP will be re-released once the scope is narrowed down and specified.

Geoff noted the IT team has made solid progress on getting the network back in order, and they are looking forward to working with the cybersecurity professionals. The IT Committee determined that the consulting work

will not be completed by the December board meeting as originally planned, but were satisfied to begin this work now.

Christine pointed out that cybersecurity investigators have reported as recently as this morning that WCLS information is not appearing on the dark web. Summarizing the notification process around the network event, she relayed that all individuals who were affected by it, as well as all current and former staff members, received notification letters. Only a very limited number of staff were affected, but letters were sent to all out of an abundance of caution.

Marv noted that the WCLS network event was small in scale in comparison to others experienced by many other organizations and companies. In his estimation, most people are currently encountering regular data compromises. However, Marv is optimistic that increased awareness of, and responsiveness to, cyber-attacks will decrease their effectiveness.

Board Secretary

The role of Board Secretary has opened through the resignation of Claudia Disend. Erika volunteered to take this position.

The Chair moved to name Erika Lautenbach as secretary to the Whatcom County Library System Board of Trustees. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Break

Marvin adjourned for a break from 9:55-10:05 a.m.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted her recent attendance at the 101st anniversary of the Peace Arch, as part of the Cascadia Innovation Corridor Conference on climate change. One chief take-away for Christine was that more and more climate migrants will be moving to Whatcom County in the near future, and WCLS will need to be able to make the necessary changes to serve a growing population.

Christine described the scope of the conference, which addressed topics like high speed rail, sustainable aviation fuel, and different ways to access energy. She spoke with representatives from Shell Global about their transition to renewable energy. Shell is undergoing experiments with public electric vehicle charging, and encouraged WCLS to set up EV charging stations at the libraries. Christine expressed interest in looking into providing this service. Lori inquired about the nature of the Cascadia Innovation Corridor, and Christine clarified that is a nonprofit founded by former Governor of Washington Chris Gregoire and underwritten by Microsoft.

The IT Committee has recently formed with Marv and Lori, and will be meeting in person on 10/13.

Matthew inquired if there would be an event when the Sumas Library reopens. Christine replied that current plans are to have a soft opening at first in order to focus on getting services up and running, then to have a more formal event once finishing touches are put in place. Marv asked about the status of WCLS ordering supplies and furnishings, and Christine indicated they are up to date, and WCLS is waiting on the City of Sumas to do their repair work. Right now, we are hoping to be back in the space serving the public around November, with shelving installed and the library fully operational early in 2023.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael noted the presence of new Ferndale Branch Manager Alix Prior at the meeting and outlined her impressive experience in social services and team leadership. He reported that the

Blaine library is developing a relationship with the Blaine Arts Council, and that branch manager Jonathan Jakobitz is working on ways to display more art in the library.

Michael is recently back from the Association of Rural and Small Libraries conference, which he found to have impressive programming. Part of the reason he attended was that Joshua Olsen, Cultural Focus PSA at the Deming library, is working with the Outstanding in their Field Leadership Institute, which led to him speaking at this event. Joshua spoke on how libraries can help areas experiencing food insecurity. Michael was honored to have Joshua participating in this program and making a difference in the community.

Michael reported that poor air quality recently caused two branches to close early, due to their HVAC systems bringing in outside air. Branch managers are working on a plan to reduce the number of staffing hours in response to smoky conditions, in order to limit people's exposure. Christine added that the HVAC systems are not only different in each library, but there are different micro-climates throughout the county that means the air quality can vary greatly from location to location. Lori asked if air quality information could be included in the community resource webpage, which was started during COVID. Michael indicated he would look into the possibility of air quality notifications on the WCLS site.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and highlighted that there has been great progress in the category of Access, including a new audience filter to improve event calendar search results. Youth Services has also been working hard on introducing new educator cards, which will make it easier for teachers and homeschoolers to have the materials they need. YS is working with Carmi Parker and Linda Shindruk to develop the administrative and technical side of the project, and the cards should be available in the fall.

Marv asked about the requirements for educator cards, and Thom noted that YS elected to go on an honor system and allow people to identify themselves as homeschool teachers, without the need for verification.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report. She invited attendees to engage with year's Read and Share, the third quarter event that began with WCLS 75th anniversary. Local author Clyde Ford will be presenting online events related to his award-winning memoir *Think Black*, his writing process, as well as his most recent book *Of Blood and Sweat: Black Lives and the Making of White Power and Wealth*. People can sign up at wcls.org/readandshare.

Mary noted that library card sign-up month is also underway and WCLS cultural liaisons have been performing outreach in their communities.

Lori inquired about the national issue of book banning, noting the Books Unbanned program currently being offered by the Brooklyn Public Library, which allows youth all over the country to obtain a card and access eBooks. She asked about potential options to designate certain banned books as always available. Jackie replied that there are guidelines with the vendors that require users to be physically located within the district. Maggie Mae confirmed that reciprocal borrowers cannot use the Washington Anytime Library eBooks.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that physical circulation is up 11%, with the summer months remaining on par with prior years. eBooks and eAudiobooks are performing strong. There is a decrease in usage for eMagazines, which is due to WCLS moving to a new platform that no longer gives patrons the ability to automatically check out new issues. EMusic has had a significant decrease, which is likely due to people signing

up to their own streaming services. Kanopy and other database with decreased usage, which is typical for summer months, as people tend to enjoy the outdoors more. Overall WCLS is down 13% in total circulation, versus its high in 2019.

Door counts have returned, and there have been more people coming into libraries this summer. We've experienced a large influx of new borrowers so far this year. The return of youth programming this summer has likely contributed to the increase in door counts. Lost door count data has been backfilled from the period around the network event as we were able to download it from the devices themselves.

Marv notes that there seems to be a steady increase in eBook usage and inquired how that would affect the budget going into the future, as they can be more expensive. Jackie has been in conversation with Lisa about this; WCLS is somewhat limited in their ability to reduce the holds queue for eBooks, but is looking into options. Michael noted Carmi Parker, ILS Administrator, is included in a recent NPR podcast about this issue, which is featured in the Community Relations Report.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

Rod announced that the upcoming Executive Director evaluation process will involve sending out surveys in the next few days.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Jenn reported that Branch Out was highly successful overall, and expressed gratitude to Christine who sponsored the Trustee table. The donations were more generous than expected and the donor pool was larger than the last event in 2019. Altogether there were 173 attendees and the foundation grossed \$32,708 in gifts, pledges, and tickets. The gift average was \$200 per group, which is similar to past years.

Jenn heard many positive things about the event from attendees. The presence of Paul Fullner to accept the check for Sumas repairs helped contribute to the excitement. She noted there were some food and service issues with the Bellwether which will likely result in a reduction of the bill. Due to how well they have handled these issues, Jenn would be interested in returning to the Bellwether for future events.

Jenn relayed that Branch Out had a much higher attendance than many other local charitable events, and expressed her appreciation to the trustees for their attendance and support. Christine thanked Jenn for her hard work in planning and executing a successful fundraiser. Erika commended the event and Jenn's composure as a host. Jenn gave credit to the WCLS system as a whole for garnering enthusiasm and support from donors. She was happy to report that four guests showed interest in working with the Board of Trustees in the future.

Announcements and Adjourn

The Public Employees Relations Commission's (PERC) interest-based bargaining training will be held online 9/26/22 from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Marv and Rod noted that this training has been highly useful and informative in the past.

Union negotiations will occur in person on 10/10/22, 10/11/22 and 10/17/22 (if needed).

Marvin adjourned the meeting at 10:56 a.m.

Next Meeting
