



APPROVED MINUTES

Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

November 15, 2022

Location

This meeting was held in a hybrid manner, with remote attendance via Zoom and in-person attendance at Ferndale Public Library, 2125 Main Street, Ferndale, WA 98248.

In Attendance

Trustees: Marvin Waschke, Chair; Lori Jump, Vice Chair; Matthew Santos; and Rodney Lofdahl. Absent: Erika Lautenbach

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; Beth Andrews, Human Resources Manager; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Em Olpinski, Administrative Assistant.

Guests: Holly Robinson

Call to Order

Marvin determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m., followed by a reading of the WCLS Land Acknowledgement by Michael.

Open Public Comment

No public comment.

Consent Agenda

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

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- October 1-15, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1031771775-1031771777, (Voucher Nos. 552872-553024) Totaling \$206,589.00 and October 16-31, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1031948807-1031948810, (Voucher Nos. 553032-553193) Totaling \$224,857.63 (note this payroll also includes annual vacation cash outs).
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$80,112.60; \$27,508.40 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2022-33G: Warrant Nos. 1154774-1154784 Totaling \$26,514.20
- Claim 2022-34G: Warrant Nos. 1155004-1155019 Totaling \$78,349.03
- Claim 2022-35G: Warrant Nos. 1155505-1155516 Totaling \$61,412.80

- Claim 2022-36G: Warrant Nos. 1155921-1155954 Totaling \$114,182.38

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2022-17C: Warrant Nos. 1155020-1155021 Totaling \$7,391.81
- Claim 2022-18C: Warrant No. 1155517 Totaling \$1,350.00

Authorization to Void Warrants: Resolution No. 11/15/22-12 voiding warrants older than one year.

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

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her report and pointed out that WCLS has currently received 93% of the 2022 property tax levy, with approximately \$659,000 left to receive in November and December. The funds WCLS received in October were primarily from property tax revenue. Jackie noted that we are on target for the year, having currently spent about 75% of our 2022 budget.

PUBLIC HEARING: Proposed 2023 Operating Budget Revenue Sources and Preliminary Budget

Continuing with the scheduled agenda, Marvin announced the beginning of the public hearing at 9:07 a.m.

Jackie presented the proposed 2023 Operating Budget Revenue Sources and Preliminary Budget, highlighting that she has worked to bring some expenditures down in the 2023 Budget. The deficit is now projected to be below \$600,000. The Budget was made on the assumption that the full 1% increase to the Regular Property Tax Levy is approved.

Jackie shared that funds from intergovernmental revenue sources usually earmarked for the Capital fund are currently slated to stay in the General fund, to offset the operating deficit. The Capital transfer included in the budget is for repairs in Sumas. The funds for these repairs have come from many sources, including FEMA, insurance, and the Whatcom County Library Foundation.

The PERS contribution rate will be less than projected—which has reduced WCLS’s budgeted contribution. Jackie is still waiting for L&I rates for 2023. Open-enrollment goes through the end of November, which will result in some alterations to the Budget in December. Jackie has also built a 10% increase for property insurance into the Operating Budget, but this may increase in the Final Budget if rates are raised.

Currently WCLS has flood insurance for Sumas and Everson. Jackie thinks it would be wise to also pay for flood insurance at WCLS properties in Ferndale and Birch Bay. The cost of a plan in Ferndale would be approximately \$1,400 a year and \$1,800 in Birch Bay. A flood insurance plan for all remaining uninsured WCLS buildings would cost approximately \$14,500 a year.

Christine asked the Trustees for their opinions on these two flood insurance options. Marvin remarked that he believes flood insurance in Birch Bay is wise. He also commented that the area surrounding the Ferndale Library has never flooded.

Lori asked Jackie how much money WCLS has received from insurance to conduct repairs on the Sumas Library. Jackie responded that WCLS has received \$172,000 from insurance. Lori commented that in comparison to flood damage costs, the cost of insuring buildings is very small.

Rod mentioned that we are currently in an environment where we are consistently seeing unprecedented flooding in Whatcom County, which could make additional insurance charges worth it for the safety of our buildings. Marvin commented that he favors the option of insuring all WCLS locations. Jackie will include flood insurance for all locations in the Final Budget to be presented in December.

Jackie then presented Resolution 11/15/22-13 Authorizing an Increase in the Regular Property Tax Levy.

Jackie mentioned that the Levy has to be approved and shared with the County Assessor's Office and County Council by the end of November. Therefore, since the 2023 Property Tax Levy is not yet finalized, Jackie has built a little extra room into the levy to allow for increases due to new construction, state assessed valuations, or refunds. After these amounts are finalized at the end of the year, the Assessor's Office will adjust the levy down as appropriate, but it cannot be increased. Jackie noted that the budgeted levy amount could decrease slightly.

Lori asked why we're not making the levy even higher. Jackie commented that building in too much cushion could create a false sense of security. Jackie believes that the levy increase she has planned will be adequate for the 2023 Operating Budget.

Rod moved approval of Resolution 11/15/22-13. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Jackie then presented Resolution 11/15/22-14 Adopting the Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget.

Lori asked if the County Council has to approve the budget WCLS submits or if they just file it. Jackie responded that they will just file it with the Department of Revenue.

Rod moved approval of Resolution 11/15/22-14. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

The public hearing closed at 9:32 a.m.

Marvin suggested the idea of holding a retreat for Board Members on Levy Lid Lifts in the coming year. Joan Airoidi, the Executive Director of WCLS when the 2009 Levy Lid Lift was passed in Whatcom County, could potentially be invited to present.

2023 Meeting Calendar

Christine presented the 2023 Meeting Calendar prepared by Em Olpinski, which details potential dates and locations for the 2023 Regular Meetings of the WCLS Board of Trustees. Since the Governor lifted Washington's COVID-19 Emergency Declaration at the end of October, WCLS is now required to offer in-person meetings. Holding in-person meetings could be a great chance to visit different WCLS branches, so Trustees can meet staff throughout the system and familiarize themselves with the services of different libraries.

After having to cancel travel to several branches for Board Meetings in 2022, WCLS aims to visit the following locations in 2023: Lynden Library in January, Ferndale Public Library in February, Point Roberts Library in May, Island Library in July, and Everson McBeath Community Library in September.

Lori suggested adding Sumas Library to the 2023 Board Meeting Schedule to celebrate the branch re-opening following the historic flooding that damaged the library in November of 2021. Christine mentioned that August could be a good month to travel to Sumas.

Lori also suggested potentially having Ferndale as the base location for Board Meetings, instead of the Administrative Services building. Matthew voiced his interest in finding the best location to host the majority of Board Meetings throughout the year.

Thom mentioned that a drawback to consistently having meetings at the Ferndale Library would be occupying the space where Storytime events would otherwise be able to occur. Marvin suggested continuing to use the Administrative Services building as the base location for Board Meeting to prioritize programming and patron usage of the Ferndale Meeting Room.

Christine also mentioned potentially shifting the time Board Meetings are held at to help make new Board positions more accessible to the public, in addition to making it easier for current and new Trustees to consistently attend meetings.

Comments from the Board of Trustees regarding meeting times and locations will be considered by Christine, and a finalized 2023 Meeting Calendar will be presented for Trustee approval at the December Board Meeting.

Amended 2023 Wage & Benefit Agreement

Beth shared that updated insurance information was received following the conclusion of Interest Based Bargaining, requiring amendment of the 2023 Wage and Benefit Agreement adopted at the October Board Meeting.

The initial 2023 Agreement stated that the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) would offer a percentage contribution towards an employee's deductible, which has been updated to state that PEBB will now be contributing a finite dollar amount towards the deductible of a member's plan.

Rod and Marvin mentioned that this update does not make a significant change to the original Agreement.

Rod moved to approve the updated 2023 Wage and Benefit Agreement. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Break

Marvin adjourned the meeting for a break from 9:46 a.m.-10:00 a.m. Marvin reconvened the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

2023 Addendum to Agreement with the Whatcom County Library Foundation

Christine presented the 2023 Addendum to the Agreement with the Whatcom County Library Foundation (WCLF). This is WCLS's 12th agreement with WCLF. Christine noted that the purpose of this agreement is to make the relationship between WCLS and WCLF clear to the State Auditor.

Marvin asked if there are any changes to the agreement other than dollar amounts. Christine replied that dollar amounts and some dates have changed.

Marvin noted that the Foundation is incredibly valuable to the success of WCLS. Without the Foundation, WCLS would be significantly more limited in its reach and scope.

Matthew moved to approve the 2023 Addendum to the Agreement with the Whatcom County Library Foundation. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

Christine gave an overview of her written report, highlighting that repairs are moving forward in Sumas. Christine offered thanks to Carol Oberton, Facilities Planning Coordinator, for her contributions to the construction process in Sumas. Carol has worked closely with the project's contractor and the City of Sumas to make certain the library's needs are being fulfilled to a high standard.

Christine also offered thanks to WCLS's Cultural Liaison Public Service Assistants, Diana Antaño and Amelia Martinez, for the joyful and informative celebration of el Día de los Muertos they hosted at Lynden Library last month. The event received a great response from the community and had a diverse audience in attendance.

Christine closed with a final thanks to Director of Finance, Jackie Saul, for her vigilance in tracking and managing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and FEMA funds. This process has taken a large amount of time and stewardship on Jackie's part, and we are fortunate to have her making certain these federal funds are spent appropriately.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In summary of his written report, Michael shared information about Community Engagement events being hosted at branches. The idea for these events began in conversations last year with Dr. Travis Tennesen, the Director of the Center for Community Learning at WWU. The events developed allow Branch Managers to facilitate community conversations where people share and listen to each other's stories. These events have been small, but have received strongly positive feedback.

Lori mentioned having attended a Community Engagement Cohort (the training Branch Managers received to host these events), and shared that it was a great experience. Marvin commented that this kind of community engagement is what will ensure the future of public libraries, and he values the notion that WCLS is actively building community.

Michael then shared an image of the new locking holds pickup box recently added to Island Library. The purpose of this box is to allow holds to be picked up by patrons outside the library's normal open hours, increasing access to library materials. Marvin mentioned the idea of having the lock box activated by a patron's library card, which could make the patron experience of this service even more seamless.

Michael concluded his report by sharing that WCLS will no longer be receiving COVID-19 test kits for distribution. While the program was running, WCLS was able to distribute 14,000 test kits to the community. In light of this, Jackie mentioned the program *Say Yes! Covid Tests* offered through the Washington State Department of Health, where households can receive free tests through the mail each month. The link to this resource can be reached on the [Community Resources](#) page of WCLS.org.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report, highlighting the work Youth Services is doing with book discovery to help young readers find books they actually want to read. Youth Services is offering this service to young readers with a new "Staff Shelf" page on WCLS.org. This page features staff reading picks in a searchable database. Titles on this page are also linked with Bibliocommons.

Thom noted how valuable the Staff Shelf page has been during ConnectED outreach and events and offered thanks to Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator, for making this feature smooth and user-friendly.

Thom also noted that currently 40 youth titles have been made available through Washington Anytime Library without a wait time. Carmi Parker, ILS Administrator, has made carousels that display these titles. Marvin commended Youth Services for their excellent usage of the Internet in providing services to patrons.

Thom also highlighted the work Tamar Clark has been doing with the Blaine High School English Language Learning Class. Tamar received a thank you note from the class that shows how many different languages the students speak. The diversity of this class shows the importance of having language-diverse materials available at WCLS. Marie Guenette, Youth Services Assistant at Blaine Library, will be visiting this class next month and bringing two Spanish-speaking Cultural Liaison Public Service Assistants with her, to help meet the needs of these students.

On the topic of Youth Services, Marvin asked if the concern over banning books is still active at WCLS. Christine responded that she hasn't received a material comment form in a month or two.

Marvin also asked how recovered WCLS is from the pandemic. Christine has discussed this recently with Paul Fullner, Branch Manager of Everson Library. Some people in this community had a challenging time with WCLS's enforcement of the State mask mandate, but most patrons have returned to using the Library, despite initial pushback.

Michael responded to Marvin that he doesn't know if WCLS is back to normal. Patrons have had a long time to change their habits throughout the pandemic. Usage of materials is bouncing back to pre-pandemic levels faster

than actual visits to the library. Lori remarked that many people now prefer using Library Express or curbside holds pickup over visiting the library.

Marvin reiterated that people no longer have to go into the library to access books or many library services. The current shift to patrons using library services without physically visiting libraries could be reducing opportunities for community engagement.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report. She recommended listening to the most recent episodes of the WCLS Podcast. Episode 26 discusses the importance of the return to in-person storytimes. Episode 27 tells the story of the historic 2021 flooding in Sumas and features Paul Fullner with members of the Sumas community.

Christine noted that featuring guests from outside WCLS is a great way to help the community engage with the podcast. Mary thanked Neil McKay for his work producing the podcast.

Mary also mentioned that checkout receipts now have the amount of money a patron saved by borrowing from the library printed on them. Rod shared his appreciation for this idea, and Mary thanked Carmi Parker for making this happen. Branch staff have been asked to note any comments they receive from patrons about this.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that total circulation experienced an upward trend in October, compared to October 2021. Christine believes WCLS could surpass a circulation of 2 million items by the end of the year. Point Roberts, Everson, and Lynden are posting some of the greatest gains in circulation from last year, month to month. Usage of eBooks and eAudiobooks are also continuing to increase.

Michael also noted that entrances to WCLS.org and Bibliocommons are continuing to grow, based on October numbers. Internet sessions and WiFi sessions have also increased as people return to the library.

Everson Library has observed an increase in physical circulation from October 2021 to 2022, but not in visits to the library. This could potentially be an example of how patron behavior has changed. Thom mentioned that the Everson Elementary partnership with WCLS results in a high circulation of materials with no corresponding door count.

Rod commented that some people may devalue the library's opportunities for community engagement. People's habits have changed throughout the pandemic, but he hopes that with time, more people will physically return to libraries.

Marvin pointed out the importance of the quality of a patron's visit to the library compared to the simple metric of a door count. Are patrons visiting the library just to check out materials, or are they engaging with staff and programming? Matthew mentioned that the quality of a patron's visit is subjective. Different types of visits and experiences of the library are all valuable.

In Lisa Gresham's absence, Michael shared that during October, Overdrive usage continued to increase month to month from 2021. Thom mentioned that when a student is shown how to use Bibliocommons at a ConnectED event, they get a chance to download an eMaterial then and there, which helps expand engagement with this service.

Michael also noted that Kanopy usage is down from October 2021. However, usage of databases such as Culturegrams and Gale Reference resources have expanded, most likely because of school engagement.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee
