



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; Erika Lautenbach, Secretary; Matthew Santos and Rodney Lofdahl. Absent: None.

Staff: Christine Perkins, Executive 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; Dana Pallas, Payroll Specialist; Em Olpinski, Administrative Assistant; Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator; Sam Wallin, Mobile Services-Distribution Manager; Dianne Mars-Smith, Lynden Manager; Alix Prior, Ferndale Manager; Lisa Gresham, Collection Services Manager; Barry McHale, Public Services Assistant-Mobile Services

Guests: Holly Robinson

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.

Service Anniversary Recognition

The Board recognized Dana Pallas, Payroll Specialist, for her ten-year service anniversary. Jackie shared that Dana started at WCLS as an Administrative Assistant and then took on payroll duties two years later. In 2016 she transitioned to working solely as Payroll Specialist. Jackie has greatly enjoyed working with Dana and commented that she is very reliable. WCLS employees are able to reach out to her with questions on a multitude of subjects. Dana also brings humor and fun to the workplace, such as with her 'payroll pets' timesheet reminders.

Christine noted that Dana was her first assistant when she started her position as Executive Director with WCLS. As an assistant Dana was thoughtful and proactive. Christine said that Dana manages her work artfully and with grace and kindness.

Dana thanked Jackie and Christine for their remarks. The past 10 years with WCLS have been the best years of her career. She is also thankful that WCLS has helped her make her position work remotely so she can live close to her family.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the November 15, 2022 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- November 1-15, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1032124666, (Voucher Nos. 553201-553349) Totaling \$205,305.43 and November 16-30, 2022 Payroll: Nos. 1032318107-1032318104, (Voucher Nos. 553357-553507) Totaling \$195,483.16
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$96,046.66; \$27,809.52 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2022-37G: Warrant Nos. 1156712-1156728 Totaling \$44,981.64
- Claim 2022-38G: Warrant Nos. 1157003-1157014 Totaling \$24,529.31
- Claim 2022-39G: Warrant Nos. 1157633-1157647 Totaling \$94,768.50
- Claim 2022-40G: Warrant Nos. 1158036-1158068 Totaling \$102,399.52
- Claim 2022-41G: Warrant Nos. 1158338-1158359 Totaling \$98,653.60

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2022-19C: Warrant No. 1156729 Totaling \$299.74
- Claim 2022-20C: Warrant No. 1157648 Totaling \$3,736.93
- Claim 2022-21C: Warrant No. 1158069 Totaling \$3,858.50
- Claim 2022-22C: Warrant No. 1158360 Totaling \$5,477.12

Authorization to Void Warrant

- Resolution 12/20/22-15 voiding warrant 1557640

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

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her financial report, including the November Notes and Highlights section. WCLS has received 99% of its property tax levy, and she has no concerns about collecting the full levy. WCLS's 2022 revenues have been mostly as expected. There has been a small increase in revenue from rents and leases, which represents an increase in library meeting rooms being reserved for commercial events. Jackie commented that this is a sign that people are visiting libraries again.

Most 2022 expenditures have also been as predicted. As of November, there is \$1.8 million left unspent in the 2022 budget. By the end of the year, we will likely come close to breaking even.

Jackie recently attended a Department of Retirement System (DRS) webinar discussing Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) contribution rates. With an updated system of funding, there will be no more supplemental charges to PERS Plan 2 and 3 to accommodate a PERS Plan 1 deficit. This will result in a significant decrease in the cost of PERS contributions by WCLS over the next two to four years. Marvin commented that he is relieved by this funding update and is glad less of the onus will be falling on WCLS and its employees.

Jackie then presented the final Operating and Capital Budget for Fiscal Year 2023. At November's meeting, the preliminary 2023 budget was approved. Since then, some minor adjustments have been made. The beginning general fund balance has been updated based on year-end projections for 2022. Budgeted revenues in 2023 have increased by about \$42,000 as a result of delayed COVID-19 Non-grant Assistance Funding from FEMA. This, combined with an increase of approximately \$10,000 in expenses, has decreased the projected deficit in 2023 by about \$32,000.

Wages have also been adjusted in the 2023 budget, decreasing spending by about \$25,000. Retirement costs have also decreased, while contributions to employee healthcare plans have increased by about \$11,500 as a result of coverage changes made during the recent open enrollment period. The amount budgeted for small tools and equipment has also decreased, though some purchases currently being made could be carried over to 2023.

Jackie then reviewed the insurance section of the budget. Following the discussion at November's meeting, flood insurance for all WCLS locations has been added to the 2023 budget. Premiums for the relevant policies come to about \$15,000. Many premiums for other insurance policies did not go up as much as expected, although WCLS's deductible for property insurance increased.

Jackie is still waiting on a quote for cyber insurance in 2023, as Philadelphia Insurance Companies declined to renew our policy. Lori asked if it would be possible to use Whatcom County's cyber insurance. Jackie responded no, because WCLS is a separate organization from the county government. Jackie also recently received L&I rates for 2023, and rates have gone down as a result of having no claims for the past five years.

The 2023 budget will be amended in February once it is clear how the 2022 fiscal year closes. Adjustments will be made in the appropriate areas based on any carry-over expenses. The 2023 Schedules of Fines and Fees is also included in the 2023 budget. No changes have been made to the 2022 schedules, and approval of these schedules is included in the motion to approve the 2023 budget.

Rod moved to approve Resolution 12/20/22-16, adopting the 2023 General and Capital Fund Budgets, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously

Jackie then reviewed WCLS's preliminary Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan. Because of many unforeseen obstacles encountered in 2022, some projects originally planned for 2022 have been delayed. This has resulted in many projects being shifted forward to 2023. Despite the challenges WCLS faced in 2022, several projects included in the 2022 plan were seen to completion, such as updating Island Library's exterior sign and installing a holds pickup box at this library.

Several building and furnishing enhancement projects are currently planned for 2023, including: finishing updates to Sumas Library, updating the circulation and staff work areas at North Fork Library, updating the staff work area at Island Library, and completing updates to teen areas at several libraries, as advocated for by Tamar Clarke, Teen Services Coordinator.

Building repair and maintenance projects scheduled for 2023 include a LED lighting retrofit at Deming Library and installing a backup generator at Administrative Services. Facilities projects for future years are currently less detailed than for 2023. Jackie noted that WCLS is aiming to hire a Facilities Department Head in the next few months who will help shape the plan in more detail. Projects aiming to improve access to WCLS services in 2023 include an expansion of WCLS's library express model. A library express is included in the updates planned for Sumas Library.

Over the next few years, the replacement of several small and midsize vehicles is planned. Reduced use of vehicles throughout the pandemic has extended the replacement date for many vehicles.

In 2023 funds will not be transferred from the general fund to the capital fund. This will result in a net deficit in the capital fund, but the capital fund has a sufficient balance, so this should not pose an issue.

Marvin asked if in 2023 it could be decided to transfer funds to the capital fund later in the year. Jackie answered that if there are surplus revenues in 2023, these could be transferred to the capital fund at the end of the year.

Matthew moved to approve Resolution 12/20/22-17, adopting the 2023 Preliminary Capital Plan, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Christine thanked Jackie for her work on the 2023 Budget and the 2023-2027 Capital Improvement Plan.

Levy Lid Lift Timing Discussion

Christine presented a document discussing considerations for various election dates that WCLS could attempt to put a Levy Lid Lift on a ballot. The cost of putting a measure on a ballot will depend on when WCLS chooses to go out to voters. It would be cheaper to have a measure on a ballot during a primary or general election in August or November than during a special election in February or April because ballots are already sent to the entire county during these elections, with the county covering a significant amount of the cost.

Erika expressed concern about the jail initiative that will potentially be on the ballot in November 2023. She wondered if the County Council would vote to put any other measures on the ballot for that election. Christine responded that WCLS does not need the County Council's vote to have a levy lid lift placed on the ballot, though WCLS should be mindful, as we would like to retain support from the council long term. Discussion followed about how jail initiatives have been historically divisive, and thus, it could be best to avoid having a measure on a ballot at the same time as the jail.

Several points were made by trustees about the importance of expressing a clear need for funding to the public before asking voters to pass a levy lid lift. Marvin noted that to get a measure passed, it is important to show taxpayers what their money will be getting them. Rod noted that it might be difficult to have a levy lid lift passed when WCLS is running a small deficit. Waiting until after 2023 to go to voters could help make WCLS's need for funding clearer.

Jennifer asked Christine if the Foundation could fund a survey to help gauge public opinion on a levy lid lift. Christine responded that she believes this would be allowed, as WCLS has not put anything on a ballot yet. Christine also mentioned that analysis tools could be purchased to help understand voting behavior.

Christine asked the trustees if they are at all interested in putting a measure on a ballot in 2023. Marvin mentioned that the longer the library goes without a levy lid lift, the more difficult conditions will become. Erika commented that waiting a few more years before going to voters could show a positive message of financial constraint. Rod mentioned that a benefit to going out in 2023 is that the levy would be a fresh issue, and WCLS could still garner support during the summer. However, waiting to go to voters until earlier in 2024 could allow time to craft a clear message of need.

Matthew noted that waiting until 2024 could be an appealing option, as it would allow WCLS to gather more information and resources to gain voter support. He also likes idea of going out at the November 2023 election, because it could allow WCLS to test the waters and gain visibility. However, the trustees expressed interest in not running a levy lid lift campaign at the same time as a jail ballot measure if possible. If the jail effort does not succeed in 2023 and is revisited in 2024, it may wind up that a library levy lid lift and a jail bond measure do share a ballot.

The trustees agreed to begin planning for putting a Levy Lid Lift on a ballot in 2024. This would most likely be in August or November 2024. During 2023, work will be done to investigate public opinion and how WCLS could best utilize the funds brought in by a levy lid lift. Erika believes it isn't too early to begin communicating a message of need to the public, even if we're not going out for a vote yet.

Break

Marvin adjourned for a break from 10:24 to 10:30 a.m.

Policy Updates

12.31 Political Activities and Expression by WCLS Employees and Trustees

Christine presented the proposed update to policy 12.31. In the agenda packet, track changes to the policy have been included to show proposed edits, along with comments from WCLS's attorney, Karen Funston.

Christine asked for the Trustees if they have any questions regarding the changes. Marvin asked why Trustees are included in each term of the policy, except for the section regarding an employee having to disclose their relationship with WCLS when making a public endorsement or critique of WCLS services on a social media

platform. Christine responded that it is possible that Federal Consumer Protection Laws only apply to employees, but this may just be an oversight. The Board agreed to insert the words “and trustees” into the corresponding section.

Erika moved to approve the Policy 12.31, Political Activities and Expression by WCLS Employees and Trustees, as amended. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Trustee Education: Jail Service

Trustees watched a [video](#) of Neil McKay interviewing Barry McHale about WCLS’s Jail Service. The WCLS Jail program has been operating for 50 years. In the video Barry explains how he offers library services to people in the Whatcom County Jail and emphasizes the importance of treating these people with dignity and respect.

Christine and the trustees thanked Barry for the work he is doing. Christine mentioned that conditions in the jail have become even more challenging since she last visited a few years ago. Barry’s work area in the jail is very small, COVID-19 restrictions apply, and there are very limited hours that he gets to be in the jail. With WCLS’s budget it would be difficult to increase these hours now, but Christine hopes future increases are something the trustees will keep in mind.

Matthew asked how many hours Barry usually spends in the jail a week. With current funding, Barry is in the jail for about eight hours a week. Lori asked if library services are provided to the Whatcom County Juvenile Detention Center. Barry responded that Tamar Clarke leads a book discussion group at the center.

Marvin asked Barry what percentage of the jail population uses library services. Barry responded about 50% of people in the jail directly use library services, but he knows the figure is likely higher because of book-sharing that occurs. Barry will be working with Circulation Specialist Mike Kusick to track materials requests made by people in the jail next year.

Christine asked Barry how long people usually spend in the jail. Barry replied that 60% of people at the jail are pre-trial, and the other 40% are serving a sentence of a year or less post-trial. The pandemic has lengthened many trials and the waiting period pre-trial, thus lengthening the time many people are spending in the jail. Barry served one person for three years before they received a sentence.

Barry shared that he can get jail-clearance for any WCLS trustees or staff who would like to visit. He also thanked Neil for his work editing the video. The complete interview can be heard in episode 29 of the WCLS podcast. He also commented that WCLS could do work towards offering re-entry programs to people who have been incarcerated. He would like to see this conversation continue.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

Christine shared with the group that Joan Airoldi, former Executive Director of WCLS, passed away on December 3. Messages have been received from people all across the state with stories of Joan’s impact. A WCLS podcast episode will be released early next year in her honor. Christine thanked Neil for putting this episode together.

Christine also shared that WCLS is in the early stages of setting up a WiFi hotspot lending pilot program for patrons and is in communication with Bellingham Public Library (BPL) about the services they offer. Lisa has included a limited number of WiFi hotspots in the Collection Services budget for 2023. Katrina Buckman, manager of North Fork Library, is overseeing this project. A number of BPL’s WiFi hotspots are being lent to WCLS patrons. Christine noted that she is excited to test the waters with this program and see if WCLS patrons benefit from it. Marvin asked if hotspots will be connected to the same network WCLS uses. Lisa responded that WCLS hotspots will not be set up that way for cybersecurity reasons.

Christine reported that repairs are in full swing at Sumas Library. The drywall and paint are now finished, and floor-coverings are being installed. Shelving installation dates are currently being planned, and a soft-opening of the library is targeted for early 2023.

Connections with UW iSchool are continuing to strengthen. Christine and other WCLS staff members, including Cultural Liaison Public Service Assistants Joshua Olsen and Tashina Villaluz, who represent the Lummi and Nooksack nations, as well as Theresa Morrison and Tamar Clarke, met with Dr. Sandy LittleTree earlier this month to discuss library services for tribal communities. In many areas, WCLS is leading the way among public libraries across the state with this work.

Christine concluded her report by thanking former employees for subbing at AS during staffing shortages in the past few months. She then introduced Sam Wallin, WCLS's new Mobile Services and Distribution Manager.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In Michael's absence, Christine gave a summary of his December report. She mentioned that Mike Caroff's popular program, *Wildlife Photography from a Designer's Perspective*, has been rescheduled for Saturday, February 4 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. at the Sudden Valley Community Association Barn.

Christine then shared that following the Staff Diversity Advisory Committee's review of WCLS's Disruptive Behavior Procedure, the document has been updated to include more equitable language.

Christine then spoke more on the experience and expertise Sam Wallin brings to WCLS. While working for Fort Vancouver Regional Libraries he assisted WCLS with many projects, such as helping us plan the Northwest Library Express holds pickup location. Christine is thankful to now have Sam working with WCLS.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report, highlighting Matt Luxon's work painting wintry, story-themed scenes on windows in WCLS libraries. He also noted that it's great to see children and families returning to libraries in large numbers and shared an anecdote about a connection he witnessed being made at a library event between two children who speak different languages. This event represents how library programming can help foster connections between diverse communities.

Thom offered his thanks to Whatcom County Library Foundation's Books Unbound program for providing funding to the Juvenile Detention Center Book Club and recommended the most recent book read by the club, *Rain Reign* by Ann M. Martin. Thom then gave a preview of Youth Services' Earth Day programming, which is aiming to uplift feelings of community and belonging.

Marvin commented that Thom runs a marvelous program for the youth of Whatcom County.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report. She noted that it is Whatcom READS season. Trustees will be receiving a copy of *The Cold Millions* by Jess Walter—the 2023 book selection. All 2023 events are posted on WCLS.org. Jess Walter will be in Whatcom County for author events March 2-4. This is 15th season of Whatcom Reads.

Mary further encouraged the group to listen to WCLS's podcast. Episode 28 features Lisa Gresham explaining the lifecycle of a book, and episode 29 centers around WCLS's Jail Service. An episode honoring Joan Airoidi will be released early in 2023.

Marvin asked Mary how much WCLS uses Twitter, and if Twitter collapses, will it impact WCLS? Mary does not believe so. Twitter is not WCLS's primary social media platform. Neil noted that WCLS engages with patrons mostly on Facebook and Instagram, not Twitter. WCLS does connect with authors and the media on Twitter, but not as much as many larger organizations.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures
