



Location

This meeting was held in a hybrid manner, with remote attendance via Zoom and in-person attendance at Lynden Library, 216 4th Street, Lynden, WA 98264.

In Attendance

Trustees: Marvin Waschke, Chair; Lori Jump, Vice Chair; Matthew Santos and Rodney Lofdahl. Absent: Erika Lautenbach, 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; Lisa Gresham, Collection Services Manager; Geoff Fitzpatrick, IT Services Manager; Beth Andrews, Human Resources Manager; Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager and Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL) President; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Em Olpinski, Administrative Assistant.

Guests: Ruth Higgins; Holly Robinson; Grace McCarthy, Editor of *The Northern Light*; Virginia Naef, President of the Friends of Deming Library

Call to Order

Marvin determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m., then read the WCLS Land Acknowledgement.

Open Public Comment

No public comment.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the December 20, 2022 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- December 1-15, 2022 payroll: check nos. 1032527833-1032527838 and voucher nos. 553515-553661 totaling \$206,545.09 and December 16-31, 2022 payroll: check nos. 1032761396-1032761400 and voucher nos. 553669-553816 totaling \$198,231.42
- ACH transactions for employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$79,416.07; \$27,900.76 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2022-42G: warrant nos. 1159005-1159033 totaling \$103,751.08
- Claim 2022-43G: warrant nos. 1159297-1159322 totaling \$43,454.91
- Claim 2022-44G: warrant nos. 1159563-1159586 totaling \$262,505.28

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2022-23C: warrant no. 1159034 totaling \$945.00
- Claim 2022-24C: warrant no. 1159093 totaling \$727.62
- Claim 2022-25C: warrant no. 1159587 totaling \$1,149.00

Authorization to Void Warrant:

- Resolution 01/17/23-01 voiding warrant 1154030

Authorization to Void and Reissue Paychecks:

- Resolution 01/17/23-02 to reissue paychecks 1030185257 and 1030386038

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

Birch Bay Library Update

Michael shared a PowerPoint with the group on the current status of the Birch Bay Library Project. The project began in 2016, with the initial goal being to build a 7,600 square-foot library on a property purchased in Birch Bay. A \$2 million Library Capital Improvement grant was awarded for this project scope in 2019. However, after narrowly failing to gain a supermajority of support on two Library Capital Facility area votes, it was decided to reimagine the project on a slightly smaller (and less-expensive) scale.

The new project plan for the library would utilize the existing structure on the property purchased in Birch Bay, provide 1,700-square-feet of space for library services and cost approximately \$2.5 million. In August 2022 a Scope of Work Amendment Request was submitted to the Department of Commerce to see if the grant funds awarded to WCLS in 2019 could be used towards the revised plan. Michael noted that upon submitting the amendment, we were informed that we would not receive an explanation behind the Department of Commerce's decision. In December we were informed that our request was denied.

Michael shared that though the request was denied, the \$2 million allocation for the original 7,600-square-foot library plan still stands. WCLS also has the option to request that these funds be carried forward to another biennium.

Christine asked the trustees what factors need to be considered in the wake of the scope change request being denied. Rodney responded that we need as much input from the Friends of Birch Bay Library as possible.

Dianne, who is president of the Friends of Birch Bay Library, said that the Friends are ready to increase fundraising efforts for the library and go to the community for private donations. With the accelerated timeline of this project, fundraising has not been as congruent as possible.

Lori asked Dianne which project scope the Friends prefer. Dianne responded that the Birch Bay community supports the revised project scope because it preserves a historic building and will be less expensive to complete. Christine noted that if we pursue the smaller library design, WCLS will not be able to access state funding, and the Friends of Birch Bay Library will need to raise more than \$2 million. However, if we decide to go with the original project scope, the Friends will need to raise about \$5 million.

Lori asked if WCLS has approached BP for further donations. Dianne responded that the Friends are planning to meet with Pam Brady, Government Affairs Manager at BP. Lori suggested presenting both project scopes to BP, as their input could be helpful in deciding which to pursue.

Matthew asked Michael what the deadline is for requesting that the state grant award be moved to the next biennium. Michael responded that he will connect with our Department of Commerce contact to discuss our options. Michael noted that if we decide to vacate the \$2 million grant funds, the option exists to submit a new grant application. However, the grant WCLS received in 2019 was from the first round of grants issued by the Library Capital Improvement Program, when there were fewer criteria required of libraries applying for grants. Now, one of the top criteria is being located in an economically distressed county—which Whatcom County is

not. It is also now required that libraries contribute 50% the amount of state funding they receive as a match towards the project.

Lori asked if there is a historic home society in Birch Bay that may be interested in supporting the revised project scope. Christine responded that there is a historical society in Birch Bay, but they don't have the means to help support building a library. Lori suggested looking for other historic groups in the area that may be interested in lending support.

Matthew commented that he is curious how WCLS's efforts to improve library services in Birch Bay fit into the larger picture of WCLS's other goals and projects in the coming years. He also emphasized the importance of going to the community to see what the people of Birch Bay want and is curious how WCLS can steward community support.

Michael said that the first decisions ahead of us is deciding how to treat our \$2 million state appropriation. This matter is time-sensitive, and it would be ideal to reach a decision by the February board meeting. Lori asked if it is possible to keep our state appropriation while also exploring a different project scope. Michael replied that if we keep our original appropriation, we would not be able to apply for another Library Capital Improvement Grant. Michael noted that in terms of receiving state funding, we need to consider if we want to submit another scope change request, or if we want to wait until the next deadline and re-apply for a grant with a revised project scope. Michael added that projects are more likely to be awarded state funds if they have already amassed significant funding as a match.

Marvin asked if a demographic analysis has been conducted to evaluate if the need for library in Birch Bay still exists and if residents of Birch Bay actually want this library. Michael replied that during the Service Area Analysis conducted in 2016, population and distance from other libraries were primary factors in the decision to open a library in Birch Bay. Birch Bay is the fourth largest community served by WCLS (though it is currently only serviced by the Bookmobile and online services). Christine noted that the population of Birch Bay has increased from 8,000 to 12,000 residents since the beginning of this project, which shows the increasing need for a library in the area.

Christine reiterated that a decision will need to be made regarding the re-appropriation of the state grant at the February board meeting.

Levy Lid Lift Planning

Christine shared that at last month's meeting, it was decided to go to voters for a levy lid lift in 2024. It is time to begin planning how to go about running a campaign and gaining community support. Christine passed out a tentative levy lid lift timeline to the group.

The timeline includes rough details of what needs to be accomplished each quarter from winter 2023 to fall 2024 to prepare for a levy lid lift vote. Currently, the number one priority for levy lid lift planning is making certain everyone associated with WCLS has a strong understanding of property tax levies.

Jackie Saul, Amy Jones, and Mary Vermillion have collaborated on a one-page handout that gives a summary of how the levy system works and why WCLS needs a levy lid lift. These handouts are to be used internally at WCLS as an educational tool. Mary distributed these handouts to the group.

Lori commented that the handout would also be a great resource for taxpayers and voters in Whatcom County. Christine responded that a similar document will be shared with the public soon, once it is decided if any edits are needed. Matthew said the handout gives a great summary of the levy system, and shared that it could be helpful to include what services the lid lift would be funding at WCLS. Christine commented that it is still being planned what new services a levy lid lift could allow WCLS to offer. The majority of the funds brought in by a levy lid lift would go towards maintaining current library services.

Marvin commented that the most important detail of the levy system is that it guarantees the level of service WCLS is able to offer will decrease as the county's population increases. In having a lid lift passed, WCLS is primarily aiming to maintain services, with the hope of making some improvements. If a lid lift does not pass, that means WCLS will be able to offer fewer library services, even as the demand for these services increases. Marvin and Rodney believe that this point could be made more clearly in the handout.

Christine said that we will be working with staff to discuss the repercussions of the lid lift not passing and ways to address budget shortfalls. Once the Board has approved this approach, we will develop messaging for the public about these repercussions. Marvin reiterated that he believes the most important argument for the necessity of a levy lid lift is being able to keep up with demand for services.

Lori pointed out that it can be difficult to convince voters to approve an increase in property taxes when the assessed valuations of properties have been consistently increasing in recent years. She added that she would appreciate further explanation on this topic as it relates to WCLS's levy rate. Jackie shared that she has resources from the County Assessor's Office that help clarify how the levy system functions relative to property taxes.

Christine shared that she plans to reach out to the organization Every Library for assistance on how to structure our campaign strategy. In 2009 when WCLS last went to voters for a levy lid lift, a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) was created to help determine messaging and strategies to gain voter support. Christine supports forming a committee again and asked the board if they believe a CAC would be useful. She also asked board members to send her community contacts who may be interested in joining.

The trustees voiced support for forming a CAC. Rodney asked Christine how large the committee will be. Christine responded that for the 2009 election, the CAC had about eight to twelve members. Lisa shared that members of Friends groups were an invaluable asset to the CAC in 2009.

Marvin then asked if WCLS has a way to hear the opinions of people who oppose a levy lid lift. Dianne responded that people who oppose a lid lift will share their thoughts on social media platforms, like Nextdoor. Christine commented that we are planning to hold many public presentations about levy lid lifts throughout the county, which will be great opportunities to hear from community members.

Lori asked Christine if Bellingham Public Library can ask for a levy lid lift. Christine responded that as a department of the City of Bellingham, they cannot. It will be important to make this distinction clear to voters.

Christine shared that the plan for spring 2023 is to begin meeting with key community leaders and individuals of influence to discuss the lid lift. Elected officials appreciate being informed and can be great advocates for local agencies. Christine asked the board who they believe WCLS should reach out to about the proposed lid lift. Lori proposed that WCLS host an hour-long talk on levy lid lifts through the Academy for Lifelong Learning, which community members could attend. The trustees also proposed reaching out to school districts and higher education institutions in Whatcom County.

The trustees and WCLS leadership members further discussed community officials and organizations to reach out to in 2023. Christine is going to begin setting up meetings with community officials, to which trustees are welcome to join.

Christine asked the trustees to consider if they would be interested in joining the CAC. Preferably, two board members would join as ad hoc members. Christine also asked the trustees if they would like to have the levy lid lift as a monthly agenda item at meetings or if they would prefer to spend several hours discussing the lid lift at a retreat. The trustees agreed to continue having shorter discussions about the levy each month and are open to having a longer discussion on the mechanics of levies at a retreat.

Trustee Education Planning

Board meetings present a chance to inform trustees about the functioning of WCLS and its services. Christine asked the trustees what they would like to learn more about during 2023.

The trustees responded that they are interested in a variety of topics, including: Homebound Services, Collection Services, the Mendery, Friends of the Library groups, library meeting room use, and ConnectEd programs.

Christine will be working with staff on presentations relating to these topics in the coming months. She asked the board members to reach out to her if they have any other ideas.

Break

Marvin adjourned for a break from 10:11-10:23 a.m.

Financial Report and Resolutions

Jackie reviewed the Finance Committee Report, sharing that the 2022 fiscal year is open through mid-January. The 2022 year-end report will be presented at the February meeting. Jackie also shared that initial reports from the County Treasurer's Office indicate WCLS collected \$9,408,995 of property tax revenue in 2022. This falls about \$10,000 short of the projected 2022 levy, though this final amount will be paid eventually, as property taxes remain due by the property owner until they are paid.

There will be an amendment to the 2023 budget in February after the 2022 fiscal year closes. The amendment will include updates to the 2023 beginning balance based on the 2022 final ending fund balance, and the 2023 budget will be adjusted to include any expenses being carried over from 2022. Jackie noted that even if expenses were approved in 2022, if they are being carried over, they must be reapproved.

Jackie reviewed the 2022 Debt Write-Off section of the report, sharing that \$42,339.19 of uncollected debts were waived in 2022. She also shared that in 2022 no projects were awarded a Small Works Award.

Jackie also reviewed the 2022 Incident Report Summary. With a small number of incidents occurring at WCLS locations in 2022, there are not enough trends for any type of incident to be statistically relevant. In 2022, 57 incidents were reported, as compared to 43 incidents in 2021. This can likely be explained by higher visitation to libraries in 2022. The majority of incidents occurred at Ferndale and Lynden Library, which are WCLS's largest branches, and at the Administrative Services building.

Lori said that she remembers there being some discussion with the police about installing cameras outside of Ferndale Library and asked if this came to fruition. Jackie responded that there are cameras only at WCLS's Library Express locations and around the garage and rear parking area at Administrative Services. Christine added that at Ferndale Library, the majority of incidents are in restrooms, not outside, so there does not appear to be a current need for cameras.

In 2023 there will be a Small Works Project at Deming Library to replace the library's fluorescent lighting with LED lighting. Jackie shared that the initial bid for the project was outside our budget, so we went back out for bids in December with a modified project scope. Two bids were received in December, with Scott Electric being the lowest bidder. Jackie shared that approval is needed from the board for Scott Electric's bid and alternate in order for the project to move forward. If the board moves to accept Scott Electric's bid, a minor budget amendment will be necessary.

Marvin asked if this project will pay for itself in energy-savings. Jackie replied that she did not bring these figures with her but that it would likely take up to 20 years. Jackie has been in communication with the Friends of Deming Library about this project and will be discussing cost-sharing with them.

Rodney moved to award the Deming Library Lighting Retrofit Small Public Works Project to the low bidder as presented. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

Christine read a Proclamation in Honor of Marvin Waschke and his ten years of service on the WCLS Board of Trustees. Marvin is an outspoken champion of library services for all and has led the board with care and dignity. Christine said working with Marvin has been a pleasure and that WCLS is grateful for his service.

Marvin thanked Christine for her kind words and said that being on the board has been a fulfilling experience that has brought him much joy. Lori and Rodney said that it has been wonderful working with him and that he has set a great example.

Christine then shared her January report. At Ferndale Library trespass orders are being followed through on in response to a recent vandalism. Christine emphasized that even in the event of patron misconduct, though, WCLS aims to allow people back to the library once they are ready to behave appropriately.

A work party was held at Sumas Library on January 11 to get materials back on the shelves. Metal shelving has been used in case there are flooding events again in the future. Work is currently being done on the library's restrooms, and we are waiting on a Certificate of Occupancy from the city. A ribbon cutting celebration is tentatively planned for February 15.

Christine also discussed holds ratios, sharing that Collection Services aims for a 4:1 holds ratio for physical materials to keep wait times down. In the Washington Lending Library Consortium, the ratio for eAudiobooks is 7:1. WCLS has been purchasing collections of Always Available eAudiobooks to keep up with demand.

Christine encouraged the group to check out the booklist created by Collection and Youth Services in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Episode 30 of the WCLS podcast honoring former WCLS Executive Director Joan Airoidi.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared a photo of a light installation from the Deming Community Garden, which has been a wonderful winter attraction for the community.

Michael then gave an update on the library weather closure procedure. WCLS works to keep phone lines operating even when libraries are closed. The decision to close WCLS locations is made on a site-by-site basis, and many factors are considered when deciding to close a library, including: road conditions, the forecast, other local closures, and the advisement of local officials. A schedule is followed when making the decision to close a location, which can be found in the January agenda packet.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report, highlighting a program offered at all WCLS branches in November and December for children and teens to fill out postcards thanking local postal workers. Kids really engaged with this activity, and Thom felt that it helped show kids that their voices matter at the library.

Thom also shared that a Whatcomics Reception was held at Lynden Library on January 14 to honor the teen artists featured in the 2023 issue. At the reception, Thom had some meaningful conversations with teens about how they see art intersecting with their futures. He believes that by giving teens agency at the library with programs like Whatcomics, WCLS can better learn how to serve them.

Christine shared that a WTA bus now features art from the 2023 issue of Whatcomics and thanked Mary for helping secure this partnership. At Saturday's event, it was very special for teens to see their art on the bus. Our society has many accolades for teens in sports, but it is far less common for teens to be recognized for their art. Christine noted that Whatcomics and its associated events are a great way to offer this to teens and thanked Tamar Clarke, Cynthia French, and all the staff who worked on this project this year.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report. She noted that the winter and spring 2023 edition of *Explorations* is out. This edition includes information on 100 library events happening in the coming months. Even more library events are listed on the LibCal calendar at [WCLS.org/events](https://wcls.org/events). There are also several Whatcom READS events being hosted at WCLS locations this year, including an event featuring the author of *The Cold Millions*, Jess Walter, at Deming Library on March 2. These events can also be found on the online calendar.

Christine commented that Jess Walter is a very interesting author, and she hopes people will take the time to read *The Cold Millions* and attend his event.

Mary closed by announcing that the WCLS podcast will hit 3,000 downloads by the end of January. Episode 31 explores the process of re-opening Sumas Library.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

Michael gave a summary of his report, noting that use of Interlibrary Loan is currently very active and close to matching pre-pandemic use. Program attendance and use of WiFi in libraries are both strong as door counts continue to recover from pandemic closures in 2020 and 2021. There was a 6.24% increase in the circulation of physical materials in 2022, along with a 4% increase in total circulation. As Christine predicted, total circulation surpassed 2 million materials in 2022.

Michael asked the trustees if they want to continue seeing 2019 door counts as a pre-pandemic benchmark on the Performance Measures Report in 2023. Lori and Rodney agreed that this benchmark is still useful.

Lisa shared that December is usually a low month for database use. However, Overdrive use saw an increase in December. Following the December Creativebug campaign, use of this platform greatly increased. This shows that campaigns can be an effective way to increase community engagement with WCLS resources.

While overall magazine use was down in December, five individual titles were among the most circulated items. In the Washington Anytime Library, there is high engagement with single-use packages. Lisa said this trend is currently being analyzed to determine if more packages should be purchased for bestseller titles.

It was decided that it is no longer necessary for Lisa to include figures from 2019 in her reports on online resources, as the use of the resources has increased significantly in the last four years.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

Geoff gave an update on the IT services committee and shared that they are continuing to investigate options for cybersecurity insurance. Marvin suggested discussing plans with the Moss Adams consultants WCLS is currently working with. Marvin also mentioned the importance of re-establishing WCLS's credibility with insurers following the 2022 data breach.

Christine shared that Holly Robinson has received a recommendation from Personnel Committee to join the WCLS Board of Trustees. Holly's appointment needs to be approved by the Whatcom County Executive, and in the event that it is, she will be able to join the board on February 1.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

No report.

Announcements and Adjourn

The trustees agreed to move the February board meeting from Ferndale Library to Administrative Services, since the conference room at Administrative Services is now available.

Marvin adjourned the meeting at 11:24 a.m.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be February 21, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. online via Zoom and at Administrative Services.

Address: 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98225

_____ /s/	_____ 02/21/2023	_____ /s/
Rodney Lofdahl, Chair	Date	Em Olpinski, Admin. Assistant