



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 98225.

In Attendance

Trustees: Rodney Lofdahl, Chair; Erika Lautenbach, Secretary; Matthew Santos; and Holly Robinson. Absent: Lori Jump, Vice Chair.

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; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Em Olpinski, Administrative Assistant.

Guests: Louise Granger, President of the Friends of Deming Library; Virginia Naeff; Vice President of the Friends of Deming Library.

Call to Order

In the absence of the Vice Chair and vacant Chair position, Erika determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m., followed by a reading of the WCLS Land Acknowledgement by Michael.

Open Public Comment

Virginia asked the group when the minutes from the January meeting will be available. Em responded that they will be available online at WCLS.org once they are approved, likely after today's meeting.

Annual General Meeting – Election of Officers and Committee Assignments

With Lori being absent from the meeting and Erika needing to leave early, Christine suggested amending the agenda to move the Annual General Meeting from item seven to item three, so the board Chair can be approved and run the meeting once Erika needs to leave. After the Annual General Meeting, the rest of the agenda can be followed as originally outlined.

Rod moved to amend the order of items on the agenda as discussed. Seconded. Approved unanimously.

The Annual General Meeting commenced. Erika asked Christine to go over the roles of the officer positions. Christine responded that the board Chair runs the monthly meeting and calls for special meetings when they are necessary. The Vice Chair serves as the second to the Chair and runs meetings in the Chair's absence. The board Secretary signs meeting minutes at board meetings and attends to any secretarial needs of the board, though

there are usually not many. The Whatcom County Library Foundation (WCLF) liaison works with the WCLF board and attends WCLF board meetings to help ensure the interests of WCLS and WCLF are aligned.

Christine also gave a summary of each committee the board members can participate in. The Finance Committee meets to discuss revenues, expenditures, claims, and the yearly budget. The Personnel Committee meets to discuss new board assignments when there is an opening on the board. The Technology (IT) Committee was created in response to the data breach WCLS experienced in 2022 and meets to discuss internet and network security and other technology issues. The Citizen's Advisory Committee will be introduced later in 2023 to help WCLS structure its levy lid lift efforts.

Holly suggested the following officer nominations:

Chair – Rodney
Vice Chair – Lori
Secretary – Erika
WCLF Liaison – Lori

Holly moved to approve the officer nominations. Seconded. Approved unanimously.

The trustees then discussed committee assignments for 2023 and decided on the following nominations:

Community Relations – Lori and Matthew
Finance – Rodney
Personnel – Rodney and Holly (Erika as alternate)
Technology – Lori and Matthew
Citizen's Advisory - Holly

Holly moved to approve the committee nominations as outlined in the discussion. Seconded. Approved unanimously.

Erika apologized for not actively participating in any of the committees. Her work commitments outside of the board have made scheduling difficult, but she is happy to keep serving as a trustee as long as the board continues to benefit from her presence.

As the new board Chair, Rodney began leading the meeting.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the January 17, 2023 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- January 1-15, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1032923032-1032923034 and voucher nos. 553824-553973 totaling \$213,496.94 and January 16-31, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1033094273-1033094276 and voucher nos. 553981-554132 totaling \$224,644.30
- ACH transactions for flood insurance premiums, employee benefits and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$100,725.36; \$29,309.60 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2022-45G: warrant nos. 1160327-1160343 totaling \$48,535.91
- Claim 2022-46G: warrant nos. 1160678-1160702 totaling \$47,463.80
- Claim 2022-47G: warrant nos. 1160760-1160784 totaling \$65,509.36

- Claim 2022-48G: warrant nos. 1161374-1161383 totaling \$10,958.15
- Claim 2023-01G: warrant no. 1160344 totaling \$7,004.00
- Claim 2023-02G: warrant nos. 1160703-1160704 totaling \$101,345.73
- Claim 2023-03G: warrant nos. 1160785-1160793 totaling \$71,186.99
- Claim 2023-04G: warrant nos. 1161354-1161373 totaling \$98,837.36
- Claim 2023-05G: warrant nos. 1161651-1161667 totaling \$30,241.30

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2023-26C: warrant no. 1160930 totaling \$1,350.00

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

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her report, including a summary of the 2022 general fund. In 2022 we were \$10,823 shy of collecting our full budgeted levy, occurring as a result of property taxes not being paid. However, unpaid property taxes remain due with each property, so these funds will eventually be collected. There was also a delay in receiving American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds awarded in 2022. It is expected that these funds will be received in 2023. \$40,207 was received from FEMA for COVID and Sumas Flood Recovery. FEMA funds that were expected and not received in 2022 have already been included in the 2023 budget. Investment interest exceeded the amount initially budgeted by \$14,090. WCLS also received some unforeseen insurance recovery in 2022, primarily for flood damage at Sumas Library. We received less revenue than was budgeted from excise taxes on timber sales, which varies yearly based on timber market conditions.

In 2022, operating expenditures were 7.7% below budget, primarily in Personnel, Collection Materials, and Professional Services. Unspent funds budgeted for Collection Materials will be added to the Collection Project reserve fund. Several projects were postponed in 2022 because of unforeseen complications; the 2023 budget amendment includes rolling forward some Professional Services expenses that were budgeted in 2022.

Several capital projects were also postponed in 2022, and the Capital fund was significantly underspent. Jackie noted that a Capital fund amendment will be presented to the board at the March meeting.

Despite the challenges WCLS faced in 2022, several capital projects were seen to completion (or almost to completion), including: the Everson McBeath Community Library remodel, repairs of the Sumas Library, and the installation of a monument sign at Island Library.

Jackie then presented Resolution 02/21/23-3 Amending the 2023 General Fund Budget to the board. The purpose of the amendment is to adjust the 2023 beginning fund balance to account for the final changes to the 2022 ending fund balance. The amendment also adjusts our 2023 levy amount based on final numbers from the County Assessor.

Total operating revenues for 2023 will be increasing by \$577 in the amended budget. We have been withholding Washington Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) premiums for fiscal years 2019 – 2022, but because of a PFML payment system issue, payments will be made in 2023 and have been included in the amendment. General fund expenses have also been updated to include payments for transactions that were pending at the end of 2022, in addition to the remaining amount to be paid for the ongoing cyber security audit.

The fiscal impact of the budget amendment is a net increase of \$96,341 to the 2023 ending fund balance. \$60,000 of these funds are earmarked for the Collections Project Fund.

Holly asked if we did not collect our full levy in 2022 because of unpaid property taxes. Jackie answered yes.

Holly moved to accept Resolution 02/21/23-3 Amending the 2023 General Fund Budget, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Erika exited the meeting.

Trustee Education: Processing Department Tour

Lisa led a tour of the Processing Department for the trustees, with assistance from Processing Specialists Suzanne Carney and April Prado.

The processing department used to be called the Mendery, but WCLS does not mend many books anymore. The primary role of the Processing Department is to get new items in the collection ready to enter circulation.

Suzanne gave a summary of how books are processed. After books are cataloged, they are pulled by the processing department. The specialists have to print and apply spine labels, bar codes, and genre labels; and add a property stamp to the bottom of each book. Selectors provide the specialists with work orders for each book, which include instructions with any special details on how the book needs to be processed.

April gave the group an overview of how physical media items, board games, theme kits, and curriculum kits are processed. Much planning goes into labelling and packaging these items so they are easy for patrons to transport, use, and return.

Mending books is very time and labor intensive so books are only mended if they are irreplaceable or have historical value. Lisa noted that large print books go out of print very quickly, so we aim to keep the copies we have as long as possible.

Suzanne shared that she does most of the mending on print items. This can include replacing the plastic cover on a book, re-taping the cover, repairing ripped pages, or repairing damage to the book's spine. Repairs can also be done on digital items. Damaged DVD and CDs can be resurfaced, and damaged or dirty cases and cover artwork can be replaced. Playaway items can also be repaired, which usually involves replacing their charging pieces.

Lisa commented that the Processing Department is a place of glue, tape, and scissors. The specialists' job duties can be energetically and physically taxing, so Lisa is constantly working with the specialists to find new ways to process materials in easier, more efficient ways.

Break

Rodney adjourned the meeting for a break from 10:15 a.m. to 10:24 a.m.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

Christine thanked Lisa for leading a tour of the processing department. She then gave a summary of her written report, highlighting the ribbon cutting held to celebrate the reopening of Sumas Library on February 15. More than 111 people attended the event throughout the evening. Christine thanked Michael for providing décor at the event and for emceeding, the Friends of Sumas Library for providing refreshments, and Paul Fullner and Cayla Samms for their work on the project committee. Thom Barthelmess and Lisa Gresham also served on the committee. Christine recognized Carol Oberton for her dedicated work throughout the repair process in Sumas and commented that IT Services has done a great job ensuring all technology at the library is running smoothly. The Sumas community is very pleased to be back at the library.

The work of Public Service Assistants Tashina Villaluz and Joshua Olsen as Cultural Liaisons to the Lummi and Nooksack tribes has gained notice across Washington State, and they have both been invited to a gathering of tribal library staff preceding the Washington Library Association conference in March. Tashina and Joshua, along with Christine and Theresa Morrison, were able to give a presentation to Cindy Aden's UW iSchool class on community building. WCLS is among the first library systems in our state to have employees tasked with serving tribal communities, and it is exciting that the work of Tashina and Joshua is attracting interest.

Christine shared that WCLS is continuing to communicate with state legislators about the Birch Bay library project scope change. She and Dianne Marrs-Smith, President of the Friends of Birch Bay Library, are travelling to Olympia on Thursday, February 24, to discuss the scope change request denial with legislators. Members of

the Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce and the Friends of Birch Bay Library will also be joining them. Christine hopes they will be able to show that there is widespread support for the amended library plan in Birch Bay.

Christine concluded by thanking Holly for sharing the *New York Times* article “A Love Letter to Libraries, Long Overdue” with her. A WCLS patron left a kind note on this article’s social media post about the many online services and resources WCLS offers. This article can be found in the February Agenda packet.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

Michael shared that the Sumas library has reopened with the addition of Library Express services. From 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., patrons can scan their library cards to access the lobby and retrieve holds that are ready. At the touch of a button, patrons can get support from library staff at a phone located in the checkout kiosk.

Michael also commented that the ribbon-cutting event at Sumas Library was a great success, and that it reminded him of WCLS’s 75 Anniversary Celebration in 2019. Michael also shared that it may be awhile until the Sumas Community Center on the other side of the building opens to the public. On the night of the ribbon cutting we were able to use the space for Carl Crouse to discuss his book, [The Waters are Rising](#). Until the Sumas Community Center officially reopens, we may be able to keep utilizing this space.

Deming Library has invested in an Ottlite Therapy lamp, commonly known as a “happy” lamp. This lamp gives off light that is very similar to the sun’s natural light spectrum and can help alleviate the symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Michael shared that he has been able to attend a few WCLS events in recent weeks, both online and in person. WCLS’s events and programs help cultivate lifelong learning and a strong sense of community for those in attendance. Michael is grateful that library programming is running again in full-force.

The Whatcom Asset Building Coalition is providing a free tax preparation and resource event at the Lynden Library. In the past, similar programming has been offered at Bellingham Public Library. Michael is happy the WCLS community will now have access to this helpful program. Holly asked Michael what the Whatcom Asset Building Coalition is. Michael responded that it is a community organization that helps support financial stability and self-sufficiency through education and advocacy work. Michael noted that their website, Whatcomabc.org, does a great job of connecting people with resources.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared that in recent months Youth Services has been working to provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation at some programs. While ASL interpretation is expensive, being able to offer it to patrons is extremely valuable. The average minimum rate for interpretation is about \$200 per hour, but we have been working with a private contractor who is a patron at Lynden Library and is offering interpretation services at a reduced rate. Thom thanked Dianne Marrs-Smith and Theresa Morrison for helping secure this arrangement and Jackie for making room in the budget for these expenses.

Youth Services is aiming to make the experience of families who need ASL interpretation at library events the same as for other families, meaning that they do not have to alert the library when they will not be attending a weekly event. Even when the family in need of ASL interpretation is not present, everyone benefits from exposure to ASL.

Holly pointed out that she believes WCLS is legally required to offer ASL interpretation. Jackie responded that WCLS is required to offer interpretation services when they are requested. Holly mentioned that many people going to school to learn ASL need a chance to practice. She suggested reaching out to local schools with ASL programs to see if students could offer interpretation at a reduced rate.

Thom mentioned the importance of providing a high level of interpretation to patrons in order for this service to be helpful.

Jennifer asked Thom how often ASL interpretation is currently being offered. Thom responded that it is offered weekly at one Library. Jennifer is curious if private funding could be pursued to help WCLS offer interpretation services.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report, sharing that Community Relations has launched a new quarterly “Friends Shipment” to the Friends of the Library groups to help keep them informed about library news and to show ways they can help support WCLS. The first shipment included information on Whatcom READS, Library Giving Day with WCLF, and news about the Sumas Library. Each shipment comes in an in-house designed package and will focus on different library initiatives and updates.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that physical circulation was down about 2% in January, as compared to January 2022. Blaine and Deming observed the largest decreases in physical circulation in January. Use of Northwest Drive Express was also down, possibly because people are returning to visiting full-service libraries in person.

Rodney asked if the decrease in circulation at the Blaine and Deming Library represents a trend. Michael responded that it is hard to tell because of the impact of the pandemic. However, this decrease in circulation could be a sign of decreasing engagement with physical media like CDs and DVDs. Holly noted that door counts at Blaine and Deming Library have increased from January 2022. Lisa believes that patrons are likely seeking out services at libraries more and are not always checking out materials during visits.

Rodney asked if there are other performance measures available that could supply some context surrounding the decrease in circulation. Holly commented that having more context behind this measure would be helpful.

Michael replied that there is a wealth of data that could be included in the performance measures report. The statistics that are included monthly are those that have proven to be consistently useful over the years. It could be investigated, though, if there are other measures that would be helpful to track.

Jennifer commented that the seasonal residents of Blaine can travel again, and she is curious if this could be a factor behind the decrease in circulation at this branch. Michael commented that he believes the pandemic has been the biggest factor behind shifts in circulation. Throughout the pandemic many people changed their habits and are likely still adjusting to using the library again.

Christine noted that circulation at Blaine and Deming Library has been consistently down throughout the past year. It could be helpful to further investigate patterns of behavior in these communities to understand why this is occurring.

Holly commented that the *New York Times* article Christine shared in her report focused on the services libraries offer and how they utilize their spaces, while less emphasis was placed on the circulation of materials. There may be a shift occurring at libraries of patrons seeking out services more than materials. Holly is also curious how patron engagement with libraries can be captured either statistically or anecdotally. Michael commented that value creation stories at branch libraries are shared at board meetings, just usually not in the form of performance measures.

Lisa shared that use of Overdrive increased significantly in January, and Kanopy was accessed by WCLS patrons in ten countries. As local cardholders travel the world, they are still able to benefit from WCLS’s resources. Lisa also noted that working closely with Community Relations helps increase database engagement—following a campaign that ran in December, we observed increased use of Creativebug.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

No report.

