



Location

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

In Attendance

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

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; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Em Olpinski, Administrative Assistant; Jonathan Jakobitz; Blaine Public Library Branch Manager.

Guests: N/A

Call to Order

Rod called the meeting to order and determined quorum at 9:00 a.m., followed by a reading of the WCLS Land Acknowledgement by Michael.

Open Public Comment

No public comment.

Service Anniversary Recognition: Christine Perkins

Rod recognized Christine for her ten years of service as the Executive Director of WCLS. Before joining WCLS in 2013, she served as the Assistant Director of Bellingham Public Library and the Director of Burlington Public Library. Many projects have commenced under her leadership, including: the construction and opening of the Ferndale Public Library, the opening and re-opening of the South Whatcom Library, the construction and opening of Island Library, the design and purchase of the current Bookmobile, a year-long 75th anniversary celebration in 2019, the remodel of the Everson McBeath Community Library, work on the Birch Bay Library Capital Facilities Assessment (LCFA), and ongoing conversations with the City of Blaine about a new library. In her time at WCLS, Christine has also hired five of the current seven members of the leadership team, eliminated overdue material fines, and led WCLS through unprecedented challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the historic 2021 Nooksack flooding, and the 2022 network cyber-attack.

Rod shared some notes written by staff members about Christine with the group. Rod thanked Christine for both her professionalism and accessibility as a leader.

Holly asked Christine if she knew her position as Executive Director would entail so much work with facilities and buildings. Christine responded that she did not expect this after completing library school. Christine said that working with the public and getting to work with and oversee the many staff members who contribute to WCLS' projects are the most energizing parts of her position.

Jackie presented Christine with a gift prepared by the Community Relations Team—a CD featuring a personalized Freegal playlist.

Lori commented that Christine's leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic has been unflappable. Christine thanked the group for their kind remarks and commented that none of the projects completed during her time with WCLS could have happened without the work of WCLS' incredible staff.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the March 21, 2023 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- March 1-15, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1033605404-1033605408 and voucher nos. 554449-554599 totaling \$220,472.29 and Mach 16-31, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1033804682-1033804684 and voucher nos. 554606-554752 totaling \$221,373.54.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$90,298.59; \$30,030.01 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2023-010G: warrant nos. 1164051-1164066 totaling \$10,894.53
- Claim 2023-011G: warrant nos. 1164345-1164371 totaling \$101,289.09
- Claim 2023-012G: warrant nos. 1164737-1164762 totaling \$18,196.20
- Claim 2023-013G: warrant nos. 1165342-1165363 totaling \$122,133.65

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2023-04C: warrant nos. 1164372-1164373 totaling \$540.26

Policy Update:

Substitution Policy 12.16 is updated to correct an outdated reference to a clause in the Bargaining Agreement.

Lori moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded. Approved Unanimously.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her report, including the March Notes and Highlights section. She noted that revenue from property taxes continued to lag in March, as is expected for this time of year. To keep up with current expenses, we have dipped into the Cash Flow reserve fund. The fund will be replenished at the end of April when we receive our first larger influx of property tax revenue for the year.

Holly asked Jackie what the \$1.00 of cashier's overages listed under March Revenue in her report represents. Jackie explained that each branch has a cash drawer to take payments for lost materials and printing. The \$1.00 overage represents the net accumulation of small variances that occasionally occur when branch cash drawers are reconciled.

Jackie shared that we are currently on track with budgeted expenditures for 2023. Auto, liability, and property insurance premiums have already been paid this year, and we are also currently under budget for repairs and maintenance expenses, which allows us to have some cushion for potential unexpected expenses. Though it

appears that we have spent about 8% less on fuel this year as compared to 2022, this likely does not indicate a decrease in gas prices. WCLS vehicles are filled at the county fuel lot, and Jackie believes that they have not billed us for all the fuel we've used this year.

Jackie is currently working on our State Annual Report for 2022, which is due at the end of May. State auditors use data from this report for government transparency.

At the February board meeting, Jackie discussed potentially participating in cost-sharing with the City of Sumas to repair damage to the roof of the building that houses the Sumas Library. At the February meeting it was agreed that if there were funds budgeted for the Sumas Library remodel project left over at the project's close, these funds would go towards repairing the building's roof. Jackie informed the trustees that we will be able to contribute \$15,000 towards repairing the roof. Rod asked Jackie when repairs to the building's roof will be completed. Jackie responded that we do not know yet.

Jackie informed the trustees that a power outage occurred at the Administrative Services building on Saturday, April 8, and lasted for five hours. Many systems impacted by the outage did not automatically switch back on when power returned to the building. This caused some damage to the HVAC units in the building, which are currently under repair. Jackie thanked Christopher Phillips, System Engineer, for coming in that Saturday to help restore network services.

Holly asked Jackie if Administrative Services has a generator. Jackie replied that Administrative Services has a gas-powered generator, which cannot switch on automatically in the event of a power outage. We will hopefully be installing a new generator once the Facilities Services Manager is hired.

Trustee Education: First Amendment Audits

Jonathan Jakobitz and Maggie Mae Nase shared a presentation with the group about First Amendment audits. Maggie Mae explained that a First Amendment audit is when someone tests their First Amendment rights by filming in public spaces. Audits can be conducted by individuals or groups, and the auditors often view themselves as citizen journalists.

First amendment audits are legal when conducted in public forums. Libraries are a limited public forum, meaning that people can film in public spaces at WCLS libraries but cannot film patron data, in staff areas, and cannot violate Disruptive Behavior Procedure 6.01.03.

There appears to have been a nationwide uptick of audits at public libraries starting in 2021, many of which have been at small libraries where few staff members are present. Jonathan noted that three First Amendment Audits have occurred at WCLS locations—two have occurred in Blaine, and one has happened in Lynden. It can be uncomfortable for staff members to be filmed while working, which can make it more difficult to calmly communicate with an auditor while continuing to assist patrons.

Two posts have been made to WCLS' intranet to help educate and prepare staff for potential audits. Our main guidance to staff thus far has been to lead with service and to not let the act of filming define an encounter with an auditor. Staff should offer to help the person conducting the audit and engage them with information about library services and materials, if they are interested.

Our goal is to help the auditor have a positive library experience. However, if an auditor violates our Disruptive Behavior Procedure, library staff should follow the procedure and provide clear and concise warnings to the auditor of what will occur if they do not alter their behavior. An auditor should only be asked to leave if they continue to display disruptive behavior after a warning, and staff should clearly explain to the auditor why they are being asked to leave.

Trainings are being developed to prepare WCLS staff to have conversations about intellectual freedom, which is a topic that often applies to First Amendment audits. Jonathan pointed out that both libraries and auditors support the First Amendment. Jonathan then gave a summary of what occurred during the most recent audit at Blaine Public Library.

Lori mentioned that it could be beneficial to begin having conversations with staff about Second Amendment rights in libraries. She also asked if Branch Managers are being trained as the primary staff members to engage with auditors. Maggie Mae responded that Branch Managers are not always present at libraries, but all Public Service Assistants and Managers are being trained and prepared to interact with auditors. Rod suggested that branch staff have discussions to plan how they will keep library operations running smoothly in the event of an audit.

Christine thanked Maggie Mae and Jonathan for their presentation. If a First Amendment Audit occurs at a WCLS location, we would like it go smoothly, but if this is not the case, our system will be able to recover.

First Amendment to the Interlocal Agreement Between the City of Lynden and WCLS

Christine presented the First Amendment to the Interlocal Agreement between the City of Lynden and WCLS. Our original agreement with the City of Lynden is reaching the end of its 21-year term this month. Christine and Dianne Marrs-Smith have met with the Lynden City Manager and Public Works Director to discuss the agreement, and all parties agree that based on the age of the building, another ten-year term would work well for the City and WCLS. The City of Lynden has proactively maintained the exterior of the library building and has been cooperative about updates we have made to the building's interior. The most significant change to the agreement in the first amendment is that the City is now requiring WCLS to carry umbrella insurance up to \$10,000,000, which is something that WCLS already does.

Rod asked the trustees if they have any questions. Lori asked Christine if WCLS' lawyer has had a chance to look over the amended agreement. Christine replied that our lawyer has done so.

Holly moved to authorize Christine signing the First Amendment to the Interlocal Cooperative Agreement between the City of Lynden and WCLS. Seconded. Approved Unanimously.

Christine announced that the City of Lynden is interested in working with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) to install an electric vehicle charging station in the Lynden Library parking lot. This amenity would help benefit the whole city, and Christine is interested in having Lynden be a trial location for charging stations at libraries. Funding is available from PSE to have their staff maintain the stations. Charging stations may result in the loss of a few parking spots at the library, but will offer a great resource to the community.

2023 Strategic Action Plan Update – Q1

Christine gave a summary of the progress that has been made towards the items listed in the 2023 Strategic Action Plan during the first quarter of 2023. Many projects are currently in progress, and a few have already been completed.

We had a great 2023 Whatcom READS season with author events featuring Jess Walter. Preparation for the 2023 Summer Reading program is currently underway and work is being done to further develop the ConnectED program. Tamar Clarke, Teen Services Coordinator, will be presenting a trustee education on ConnectED at the May board meeting. Storytimes are being hosted in-person at libraries again, and [A Forest of Words](#), the yearly county-wide teen poetry anthology, will be released in May. The IT department has successfully migrated the entire system to Microsoft 365, and work continues to replace all printers in the system with printers that use a less-expensive toner.

All Staff Learning Day (ASLD) is being hosted this year on May 5. Christine extended an invitation to the trustees to attend the event, which will be a full-day field trip of staff taking different bus routes to tour branch libraries in our system. Lori commented that ASLD events have been phenomenal in the past—she highly recommends attending if you can. The Community Relations team recently completed the 2022 Annual Report, which gives a great summary of WCLS' year. Jennifer Rick provided the trustees with copies of the report.

Progress is also being made towards many new strategic projects in the 2023 Action Plan. Jazz at the Library concerts are being coordinated by multiple Friends of the Library groups, and WCLS is planning to have a

presence at several community events this year. Planning for the new Birch Bay Library is in progress again following our project scope change request being approved, and our MOU with the City of Lynden will go to City Council for approval in the coming weeks. Library services have been restored to the Sumas community, which was celebrated with a ribbon-cutting in February.

The project for a new library in Blaine is still in the conceptual phase, but conversations are occurring with the Kulshan Community Land Trust about potentially partnering to construct a new library that would have affordable housing units on the floors above it. Michael is attending a meeting later today to learn more about the concept.

Em stepped out of the meeting. Jackie began taking the minutes in their absence.

The Kulshan Community Land Trust has invited WCLS trustees and Blaine City Council members to participate in a planning session in May or June. The date is not yet finalized, and the trustees provided their availability. Christine noted that this concept is still in the exploratory phase.

Christine and Tamar Clarke have presented their idea for an online ad campaign promoting information literacy to the University of Washington Information Literacy Grant committee. Their idea was greenlit by the committee and they will present it again at the American Library Association (ALA) conference later this year.

Em resumed taking the minutes.

Levy lid lift planning is currently underway and will be discussed in greater detail at the June board meeting. We are also midway through the hiring process for a new Facilities Services Manager.

Geoff shared that our Cybersecurity audit with Moss Adams is ongoing. The management team will be having a meeting with our consultants later in the month to review potential IT disaster scenarios and how our system would respond. At the May 16 board meeting a summary of our audit with Moss Adams will be given during an executive session. The IT committee will be receiving a detailed version of the report. Following the audit, IT Services will be creating a strategic plan, which will hopefully be completed by the end of July.

Lori asked if any information about how to obtain Narcan (Naloxone) is listed on the WCLS.org Community Resources page. There have been two reported fentanyl-related overdoses in Whatcom County in the past month. Michael shared that there is [a link on how to get free Narcan](#) mailed to you in Washington state on the Community Resources Page. Lori mentioned that she also knows of some resources available on the University of Washington website.

Break

Rodney adjourned the meeting for a break from 10:17 – 10:30 a.m.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

Christine shared her written report and highlighted an article Sarah Miller wrote for Alki: the Washington Library Association Journal titled “Say What? Adding Closed Captions is Easy and Benefits Everyone.” In the article Sarah gives tips on how libraries can add closed captions to the videos they develop. Sarah’s work is an example of how WCLS is leading the way in making library services more accessible.

Christine included two articles with her report in the April agenda packet about the Idaho State Legislature’s attempt to pass a bill that would allow \$2,500 in statutory damages to be collected from libraries for each instance that a child was able to obtain a “harmful” material from a library. Idaho Governor Brad Little vetoed this bill, recognizing that it could have unintended consequences for libraries and library patrons. The House was only one vote short to pass a measure that would override the governor’s veto. It is good to keep an eye on political trends relative to libraries nationwide.

Christine also included a Publisher’s Weekly article with her report that discusses library print collections. Use of eMaterials is currently on the rise at libraries, but circulating print materials is significantly more cost effective.

The premise of the article is that the key to reversing the declining use of libraries is to improve library features relating to books and reading. At WCLS, a limiting factor for our print collection is having enough space to house print materials.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

Michael shared that a new Framery meeting pod has been installed at Blaine Library. The new workspace was generously funded by patron Joyce Vanderpol. The private meeting pod is soundproof, fits two people comfortably, and features power outlets and a ventilation fan.

Lori asked if the pod needs to be sterilized after each use. Jonathan replied that the surfaces in the pod are cleaned regularly. Jennifer believes that WCLS is ahead of the curve with the new meeting space.

Christine thanked Jennifer, Michael, and Jonathan for working with the project donor to fulfill both her wishes and a need of our system. Joyce also donated a new projector and screen to the Blaine Library. The screen, projector, and meeting pod can be transported to a new location, if necessary.

Michael noted that the meeting pod is not ADA accessible because of the two-inch step to get inside, but there are other accessible meeting areas at the library that can be used by patrons. The Framery manufactures an ADA approved meeting pod, but it features a very long ramp and is significantly more expensive than the pod installed in Blaine. Christine commented that she has seen other brands of meeting pods with different entrance variations. This could be something to look into if we decide to install meeting pods at more locations.

The Birch Bay Library scope change has been approved. Michael thanked everyone who has helped advocate for this library. The next step in the project will be raising the remaining funds needed, which come to just under \$300,000. At the May board meeting Michael will be presenting a proposal to the trustees for funding the project.

Michael asked the trustees to consider questions they may have about the Birch Bay Library to prepare for the presentation at the May meeting. Discussion followed about the historic Vogt home that will be housing the Birch Bay Library, and the current design for the new library express.

At the Washington Library Association Conference held in Wenatchee, Neil McKay led a presentation titled “Reach Out Through a Library Podcast,” and Michael helped lead the presentation “Building Community Connections by Hiring for Cultural Knowledge” alongside Cultural Liaisons Diana Antaño, Amelia Martinez, Joshua Olsen, and Tashina Villaluz. Both sessions were well received.

Michael closed by announcing that WCLS’s Adult Programming Coordinator, Ann McAllen, will be retiring in May. The hiring process for this role is currently underway.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report, highlighting Youth Service’s (YS) collection of American Girl Dolls. The collection began in 2016 with 10 dolls. YS now has 135 dolls, including 21 different characters. The collection includes historical characters, the most recent of which are twins from 1999, and characters from diverse backgrounds—the 2023 Doll of the Year is of Indian-American descent. Most dolls have holds queues on them at any given time.

It costs about \$200 to purchase a doll, an accessory set, and a book about the character to be checked out together. WCLS has spent \$27,000 on the American Girl Collection in the past seven years. The collection offers something extraordinary to the youth of Whatcom County, as the cost of these dolls is beyond what many families in the County can afford. There is evidence that creative play helps literacy and emotional development in children, and the dolls help show kids that the library is a place for them.

Thom commented that patrons take great care with the dolls. The dolls circulate on a 3-week period, and most are returned on time. Sometimes dolls are returned with new outfits created by young patrons.

Since YS began circulating dolls, we have been conscientious to talk about the collection as being for young people, not just young girls. It is nice to see kids across the gender spectrum enjoying the dolls.

Rod thanked Thom for his work on this collection and commented that he will make certain his grandchildren are aware of it. Holly asked Thom how the collection began. Thom replied that it began with a donation of one doll to the Lynden Library.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report, mentioning that the Community Relations team recently completed the 2022 Annual Report, which gives a great summary of WCLS' year.

A priority for Community Relations is making certain WCLS.org is accessible. Mary's team has considered utilizing different website accessibility features, such as "web accessibility overlays" that allow a visitor to modify text size, contrast, and other features. However, overlay features can be inconsistent and can sometimes make content less accessible (and are not compatible with the platform BiblioCommons, which houses our online browsing catalog). Online Experience Coordinator Neil McKay has worked to make certain accessibility is built into the operating system of our website, so we don't have to rely on an overlay tool.

The LibCal Events Calendar was recently updated to include information about requesting ADA accommodations at WCLS events. The Community Relations Team also plans to create an accessibility page on WCLS.org with more information for patrons about available accommodations.

Mary concluded by thanking branch managers for keeping in touch with local weekly publications across the county. These relationships help get information about WCLS out to the community.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that circulation of physical materials was down 3% from March 2022 to March 2023, which is representative of a trend we've been observing with physical circulation in recent months. Use of eBooks and eAudiobooks increased in March, offsetting the decrease in physical circulation. Rod commented that it is encouraging to see Sumas Library included in the performance measures again as patrons return to this library.

Michael mentioned that door counts decreased significantly at South Whatcom Library from March 2022 to 2023, which could be related to an issue with this branch's door counter. The cause of this decrease will be further investigated.

A great number of new borrowers were registered in March. It is unclear if this is related to a single factor. Holly speculated that people who can't afford to live in Bellingham are relocating to the county, which could account for the increase in new borrowers.

Lisa commented that the campaign being run by the Community Relations team about eAudiobooks on the Libby app could account for some of the new borrowers recently registered. She shared an anecdote about a Deming Library patron who recently made the switch from audiobooks on CD to the Libby app. Lisa also said that materials with simultaneous access licenses have been popular on Libby in the past month.

Use of Kanopy rebounded slightly in March, with the most popular content on this platform being from BBC. Spreading the word about this content could potentially help increase patron engagement with Kanopy.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

Christine reported that the Personnel Committee is beginning to look for a replacement for a trustee who is still on the board but has expressed difficulty fulfilling board functions due to work commitments. Once a candidate or group of candidates are identified, they will be meeting with the Personnel Committee. The Committee will alert the County Executive once a candidate is nominated for the position.

