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Location

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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.

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In Attendance

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

**Guests:** N/A.

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Call to Order

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

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Open Public Comment

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No public comment.

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Consent Agenda

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The Consent Agenda included minutes of the May 16, 2023 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- May 1-15, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1034299814-1034299818 and voucher nos. 555069-555221 totaling \$232,628.32 and May 16-31, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1034496047-1034496050 and voucher nos. 555228-555380 totaling \$224,418.67.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$92,942.96; \$30,909.76 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2023-17G: warrant nos. 1167523-1167537 totaling \$89,719.35
- Claim 2023-18G: warrant nos. 1168353-1168374 totaling \$41,209.19
- Claim 2023-19G: warrant nos. 1168640-1168658 totaling \$112,894.22
- Claim 2023-20G: warrant nos. 1169129-1169149 totaling \$84,737.66

- Claim 2023-21G: warrant nos. 1169129-1169149 totaling \$48,942.62

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2023-07C: warrant no. 1167604 totaling \$20,198.92
- Claim 2023-08C: warrant no. 1168375 totaling \$1,304.40
- Claim 2023-09C: warrant no. 1169150 totaling \$810.00
- Claim 2023-10C: warrant nos. 1169635-1169636 totaling \$4,332.88

Jackie shared that Ruth Nail, WCLS Accountant, noticed that in the original June Agenda Packet, Claim 2023-10C was accidentally listed as Claim 2023-19C. Em said that they will make this correction. Em has also corrected an immaterial spelling error found in the Unapproved May Meeting Minutes.

***Holly moved to accept the Consent Agenda with the correction to the reporting of Capital Fund Claim 2023-10C. Seconded. Approved unanimously.***

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## Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

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Jackie presented her report and May summary, noting that we received additional property tax revenue in May, as May 1 was the first of two annual payment deadlines. We have now received 55% of our budgeted revenue for 2023. New sources of revenue in recent months include professional development grants from the Washington State Library and the University of Washington to support staff attendance of the Washington Library Association Conference earlier this year and \$1,500 from participating in a class action lawsuit. Jackie thanked Christine for including WCLS in this lawsuit.

As of May, we have spent 42% of our budget for salaries and wages. Several new hires have been onboarded in the past few months, and we expect this expense to be closer to budget as the year progresses. Reported fuel spending has continued to be under budget because the County is not up-to-date with billing us for our fuel use. Once we are billed, fuel expenses should be on track. As of the end of May, we have spent 38% of our budgeted expenditures for 2023.

We are still waiting to receive two final payments from FEMA this year, which will supplement the management costs involved in requesting other funding from FEMA related to COVID-19 and flooding in Sumas. The 2023 Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) rate change was lower than Jackie had predicted, which will result in savings of approximately \$22,000. This change will be addressed in today's budget amendment.

Jackie is interested in hosting a budget retreat for the Trustees in either September or October and asked the trustees for their availability. It was decided that the end of September will be a suitable time for a retreat.

Jackie then presented the WCLS' 2022 Annual Report to the State Auditor's Office to the trustees. Each year every government institution in Washington must submit this report to the State Auditor's Office, for the purpose of having uniform financial reporting across the state. The State Auditor reviews the data from our reports when we are audited every two years. The data from these reports can also be viewed online and acts as a source of government transparency.

Jackie gave a summary of the report, which discloses detailed information about the financial proceedings of WCLS in 2022. The report also includes information about WCLS' accounting policies and practices. WCLS operates on a cash basis following the Budgeting, Accounting, and Reporting System (BARS), meaning that we only report transactions when they are received or paid, not when they are initially invoiced.

Jackie highlighted some important details of our financial practices, including that since our budget is legally approved by the board each year, if approved funds are not spent within the fiscal year in which they are approved, they must be reapproved by the board before being spent in future fiscal years.

In the report, the Whatcom County Library Foundation (WCLF) is referenced as a Joint Venture, based on the nature of the relationship and the amount of support WCLS receives from WCLF. Our 2022 cybersecurity event

was also disclosed in the 2022 report, as it had a significant impact on the functioning of our System. The complete 2022 report can be found in the June Agenda Packet.

Christine thanked Jackie for her work on the report, which is a very significant undertaking. Holly asked Jackie why these reports are required annually. Jackie replied that it is possibly so the State Auditor's Office can have real-time data.

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## Financial Report and Resolutions: Budget Amendment

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Jackie presented Resolution 06/20/23-06 Amending the 2023 General Fund Budget to the trustees. The fiscal impact of this amendment is an increase of \$19,729 in revenue and a decrease of \$21,018 in expenditures. This results in a net increase of \$40,810 to the ending fund balance.

The amendment accounts for increased revenue for staff professional grants and a decrease in revenue from FEMA. We also anticipate to receive additional revenue from investment interest compared to initial projections, which is included in the amendment, along with updated year-to-date COBRA reimbursements and expenditures. A new revenue account code has been added to the budget for the funds received in the class action lawsuit, and personnel expenditures are updated to reflect an anticipated reduction in our PERS contributions in 2023. The amendment also reallocates funds to different sections of the budget, including moving money originally budgeted for insurance to the Emergency Fund.

**Rod moved to approve Resolution 06/20/23-06 Amending the 2023 General Fund Budget, as presented by Jackie. Seconded. Approved unanimously.**

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## Policy Updates

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Beth presented the update to the Management Benefits and Leave Policy 12.20, which we were advised to make by our employment attorney Karen Funston, as per WAC 357-28-285. The proposed change to the policy recognizes that if an employee were to accrue 240 hours or more of compensatory time, we would be required to pay this time out through the normal payroll process.

Jackie stated that we have checks in place that make it unlikely an employee would be able to accrue 240 hours of compensatory time. However, if someone were to accrue this time, we would be required to pay it out.

**Holly moved to approve the updated Management Benefits and Leave Policy 12.20, as presented by Beth. Seconded. Approved unanimously.**

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## Staff Reports: Executive Director

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On Saturday, June 17, Christine attended Joan Airoidi's memorial service. Joan was the former Director of WCLS and passed away at the end of 2022. Christine said that it was a wonderful event that captured Joan's spirit.

Christine then introduced Ryan Cullup, WCLS' new Facilities Services Manager, to the trustees. Ryan introduced himself, sharing that he received a Master's in Business and Administration from Western Washington University and spent the last 13 years working for the University, most recently as a Facilities Services Coordinator.

Christine is happy to have Ryan joining WCLS' management team and thanked Jackie for her work managing facilities during her time with WCLS. Jackie will be available to advise Ryan as he becomes acquainted with his new position.

Over the weekend of June 17, a letter was written to the editor of the Lynden Tribune, in which a person stated that they believe some books at the Lynden Library push an LGBTQIA+ agenda. Christine said that in the past when public complaints have been made about WCLS' collection or services, we have sometimes waited to see if there is a larger public response before making a statement. We have yet to decide if we will make a statement in response to this letter.

Holly asked if the letter was written by someone representing a larger group or organization. Christine responded that the letter appeared to be from an independent person.

Mary commented that Dianne Marrs-Smith, Branch Manager of Lynden Library, is doing a great job leading staff following the publication of the letter. Holly asked Christine if WCLS has a policy regarding what to do if a book or library material is challenged. Christine responded that we do and that she will share it with Holly.

Christine and Mary shared that we also received recent feedback from a patron who felt that an Overdue Notice email was pushing an agenda, potentially because of WCLS' colorful logo. Christine commented that some community members are sensitive to specific topics currently and may be finding significance or controversy in places where it isn't intended.

In the June Agenda Packet, Christine has included an article with her report about a recent Illinois law that will penalize libraries that ban books. This new law represents how diverse the climate towards library materials currently is across the country.

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### Staff Reports: Deputy Director

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Michael shared that there has been high turnover at Ferndale Library in recent months. Alix Prior has been the Branch Manager of Ferndale Library for nine months, and her entire team of direct reports has been hired during her time with WCLS. This has presented a challenging situation for the branch but has been a great opportunity for Alix to build her team. There has been an emphasis on hiring employees capable of responding to an increased incidence of disruptive behavior at Ferndale Library. New hires have also continued their learning at WCLS, in part through trainings created by Ryan Dowd, an expert in the field whose work is influenced by brain development research and trauma-informed practices. Michael passed out an informational flyer from Ryan Dowd to the group.

Holly asked Michael if there have been more incidents throughout Ferndale in recent months. Michael confirmed that there have been, though there isn't a simple explanation for why this is occurring. Historically, Ferndale Library has observed a higher incidence of disruptive behavior than other WCLS libraries. Michael noted that the Ferndale Youth Coalition has been assisting with the response at Ferndale Library, and Community Services staff have been supporting library employees. There has been significant interplay between community organizations and WCLS in response to disruptive behavior at Ferndale Library, with great sharing of information and strategies.

Michael recommended the trustees look into Ryan Dowd's work, including his newsletter and trainings available to members of the WCLS organization. Rodney commented that Dowd's newsletter is energizing, and Erika has found his trainings informative.

Thom commented that Ferndale Library has two Youth Librarians, Theresa Morrison and Sarah Lavender, both of whom have been with WCLS for years and offer a great source of knowledge to the Ferndale team. Michael mentioned that Ferndale also has a number of experienced Pages. He also thanked Alix Prior for her strong leadership and resilience during her time with WCLS.

Eleven Wi-Fi Hotspots were recently added to WCLS' Library of Things, using the same model that the Bellingham Public Library (BPL) has been utilizing. Michael thanked North Fork Branch Manager Katrina Buckman for coordinating this project. WCLS' Hotspots work using T-Mobile. If patrons prefer Verizon's service, they can reserve Verizon Hotspots from BPL. We are currently waiting to qualify for reduced rates to purchase more Hotspots, at which point we plan to double our collection.

The Hotspots have a three-week checkout period, and staff can turn Hotspots off once the period lapses to encourage patrons to return them on time. Holly asked what the Hotspots look like. Michael and Thom responded that they are small, handheld devices. Holly also asked how we are advertising Hotspots to patrons. Michael replied we are not actively advertising Hotspots since we have a limited number that already have consistent holds queues. Once we are able to purchase more, we will begin sharing more widely about this resource.

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## Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

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Thom reviewed his written report, highlighting the large presence of WCLS staff at the Whatcom Youth Pride parade. WCLS employees joined staff from BPL to cheer on the parade. Tamar Clarke; Teen Services Coordinator, Ollie Holm; Youth Services Assistant, and Thom helped run a pop-up library at the parade's resource fair. Tamar had the chance to speak with Representative Rick Larsen at the event, who affirmed his ongoing support of libraries.

Many people from across Northwest Washington came to the parade, and Thom could tell the event was meaningful to the young people participating. He was also able to talk to parents at the event about how meaningful the library is to their families. Christine said it was powerful to be able to support the kids participating in the parade and help them feel recognized. Christine also noted that WCLS has a presence at many community events across Whatcom County, Whatcom Youth Pride being just one of them.

Thom commented that complaints about LGBTQIA+ materials in libraries can feel like a personal attack to the members of this community.

Thom then presented to the trustees about Staff Shelf, a searchable database of staff book recommendations available on WCLS.org that was started for youth readers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each Youth Services (YS) staff member has contributed 60 book recommendations to the database, which now consists of over 700 titles. A searchable database of BiblioCommons booklists have also been added to the Staff Shelf page of WCLS.org, and QR codes (complete with an image of Sasquatch) linking to a staff member's Staff Shelf have been added to the back of YS business cards.

Many of the titles in the Staff Shelf are being requested for holds pickup in schools that offer this service through the ConnectED program. Thom commented that it is gratifying to see young people engaging with this resource. Thom thanked the YS team and Community Relations for making this resource possible.

Rodney asked Thom if there is significant overlap in the titles included in different Staff Shelves. Thom responded that there is some, but not a significant amount. Matthew asked if there is a way to track who is accessing Staff Shelves through QR codes. Mary responded that this could potentially be implemented.

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## Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

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Mary shared her written report, noting that the graphics included were created in-house; Cynthia French designed the image of Sasquatch reading the newest edition of Explorations on the first page of her report.

Mary then highlighted Whatcom Grooves, a free jazz concert series being presented by the Friends of South Whatcom, Ferndale, and Blaine Library. These events are a continuation of a jazz series that began in Sudden Valley in 2011 to help raise funds for the South Whatcom Library. Three concerts are being hosted over the course of the summer, and Mary hopes the trustees will be able to attend one or more to support the Friends of the Library groups. Mary also included a QR code in her report that leads to a Freegal jazz playlist created by Neil McKay, WCLS Online Experience Coordinator, to help everyone get excited for the summer concert series.

Mary concluded by sharing that she, Christine, and Lisa regularly write books reviews for *Cascadia Daily News* to help share new books with the readers of Whatcom County. She has linked to three recent reviews in her report and hopes everyone gets a chance to read them. Rod thanked Mary for her report and work to share library services and events with people across the County.

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## Break

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Rodney adjourned for a break from 10:10-10:20 a.m.

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## Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

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Michael shared that in May we experienced a net decline in total circulation, as compared to May 2022. This trend was also observed in February and April of this year. Christine commented that Bellingham Public Library has been experiencing similar trends in circulation.

Holly asked if it is meaningful that electronic circulation has generally been increasing as physical circulation decreases in recent months. Michael responded that many people became comfortable using eMaterials during the pandemic, and many of these habits remain. Mary added that there has been a large uptick in people listening to media in recent years, which can be seen in the consistent increase in patron engagement with eAudiobooks. Michael said that it is a challenge to bring visiting the library back into people's regular habits following the pandemic.

Holly asked Michael why we are concerned about physically bringing people back to the library if circulation of electronic materials is up. Michael responded that a library is more than its collections. Holly commented she will think more about this trend, as she doesn't necessarily view this shift in engagement with the library negatively. Rodney added that he doesn't view the shift towards eMaterials negatively, as long as the same number of people continue using the library.

Branch door counts in May were trending down. As of last week, Geoff was able to restore consistent emails to branch staff about daily door counts. It is important for staff to receive regular updates on this data so they can know that the door counters are functioning properly.

Rod asked how WCLS' door counts compare to those of other library systems? Christine replied that nationally libraries are observing decreasing door counts. Based on the issues we have experienced with our current door counters in recent months, Michael and Geoff are investigating alternate door counter technologies, such as a camera door counters. There is no consensus yet if we will adopt a new method for tracking door counts, but we need to make certain we are receiving accurate data.

Michael noted that there was a significant increase in new borrowers in May. Internet sessions on WCLS branch computers increased during May, while Wi-Fi sessions on non-WCLS devices decreased. We continue to see great increases in the number of programs offered and the number of people in attendance. In May the Youth Services team was busy going to schools to talk about Summer Reading,

Lisa Gresham will share both May and June Database and Digital Use Performance Measures at the July board meeting.

Matthew asked who compiles the performance measure data and how it is being used outside of board meetings. Michael said that several people work on compiling the data. Christine replied that circulation data is monitored for any significant decreases, and when this happens, Lisa reaches out to the branch to see what shifts we can make to the collection to better serve its patrons. Michael added that sometimes changes are made in branches because of observations from data, but sometimes adjustments are made based on observations within a branch.

Christine noted that a limit to our performance data is our consortium membership, as we are not able to see where people who are using eMaterials live or what their home library is.

Mary shared that she uses performance measures as a metric to measure how well a marketing campaign is doing. Thom added that Youth Services looks at programming turnout as one metric to measure how well they are reaching young people. Christine commented that this is also looked at with adult programming.

Matthew said he would be interested in having more specific information about the types of programming WCLS is offering included in the Performance Measures. Rod commented that it would also be interesting to have a Trustee Education about the programs and events WCLS offers. Christine commented that she will look into providing this information to the trustees.

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## Open Book Introduction

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Christine announced to the trustees that a new event called Open Book is currently being planned for Sunday, November 5. The event is funded through contributions from WCLF and funds Community Relations received for winning a John Cotton Dana Award in 2021. We are partnering with Village Books to host the event, which will be held at the Ferndale Events Center. The event will celebrate all thing books and will feature many different book-related experiences for community members of all ages. We want to surprise and delight people with this event and hope that attendees will be compelled to stay for a large portion of the event.

Michael commented that Open Book will also be a chance for members of the community to experience library services and build their reading lists for the coming year. We are considering helpful services that could be offered at the event and active ways to engage those in attendance. Christine hopes the trustees will be able to attend the event.

Erika exited the meeting.

Holly asked if anyone has looked into having a local historical society attend the event. Michael responded that the planning team could look into what experiences these societies could bring to the event.

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#### Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

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No report.

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#### Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

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In Jennifer's report, she shared that she is excited about several grants the Foundation has recently issued, including \$5,000 to support the upcoming Open Book event and a \$2,500 grant in support of Whatcom Grooves. WCLF will also potentially be awarding a grant to support putting land acknowledgment art in every branch library.

Jennifer also announced that there are currently several openings on the WCLF board. The Foundation will need assistance with Branch Out and planning for other events in the coming months.

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#### Trustee Education: Tour of Mobile Services and Bookmobile

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Greta Haas and Rika Lee Vanderhorst, Mobile Services Public Service Assistants, led the trustees through a tour of the Mobile Services office, and Greta led a tour of WCLS' Bookmobile. The Mobile Services office is where the behind-the-scenes work for WCLS' homebound service, jail service, and mobile outreach work occurs.

Rika shared that currently 95 patrons are served by the homebound program. This program delivers library materials to patrons residing in retirement homes, nursing homes, adult family homes, and assisted living facilities, in addition to individuals who are permanently homebound. Some of these locations feature reserved shelves for these patrons to easily access library materials. People residing in these facilities can also request different materials to be brought to them. Greta and Rika both have many close relationships with the patrons they serve through the homebound service.

Books-by-mail is a newer program offered by Mobile Services where patrons can be mailed their holds via the United States Postal Service. In this program, patrons get to keep their materials for about two months, and WCLS prepays for the postage needed to return the materials.

Greta then gave the trustees a tour of the Bookmobile. The Bookmobile brings library services to residents of the County in Glenhaven, Birch Bay, Wickersham, and Lake Samish. Our current Bookmobile was custom built by the local Ferndale company TriVan Truck and Body in 2019. The Bookmobile offers patrons a small browsing collection and the ability to pick up their holds on the truck. The Bookmobile spends four hours at each of its scheduled stops, allowing members of these communities' adequate time to browse and check out materials. The Bookmobile also features a BraunAbility Lift, for patrons who are not able to use the stairs to enter the truck.

Following the tour, the trustees thanked the Mobile Services Department for their work bringing library services to people across the county.

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### Announcements and Adjourn

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Em announced that the July board meeting will be held at Island Library. Christine will reach out to the trustees about carpooling.

Rodney adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

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### Next Meeting

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Next meeting will be July 18, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. online via Teams and at Island Library.

Address: 2144 South Nugent Road, Lummi Island.

<u>                    /s/                    </u>	<u>          07/18/2023          </u>	<u>                    /s/                    </u>
Rodney Lofdahl, Chair	Date	Em Olpinski, Admin. Assistant