

Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

July 15, 2025

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: Trustees: Rodney Lofdahl, Chair; Matthew Santos, Vice Chair; Danielle Gaughen, Secretary and Jes Stugelmayer. Absent: John Miller, with prior notice.

Staff: Christine Perkins, Executive Director; Michael Cox, Deputy Director; Jackie Saul, Director of Finance and Administration; Mary Vermillion, Community Relations Manager; Lisa Gresham, Collection Services Manager; Beth Andrews, Human Resources Manager; Dianne Marrs-Smith, Birch Bay and Lynden Library Manager and Friends of the Birch Bay Library FOBBL) President; Jessica Burson, Foundation Development Director; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Amy Jones, Communications Specialist; Siri Beckmen, Community Relations Aide.

Guests: none

Call to Order

Rod determined a quorum and called the meeting to order 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

The Board recognized Amy Jones, Communications Specialist, for her 10-year service anniversary. Amy oversees major design projects for WCLS and Mary shared examples of how Amy has evolved the WCLS brand, most notably the logo. Other significant projects include the First 500 program, Open Book, the WCLS Community Report, *Explorations*, levy lid lift informational materials and branch display signs. Amy asks good questions to understand and gain insights into a project, and this shines through in her designs. Mary shared positive comments from Amy's colleagues.

Amy thanked the Board for their trust and noted that she appreciates being made to feel valued. This makes her work a joy. Christine stated that Amy has elevated WCLS by taking a feeling and making it visible. Her work is happy and joyful but also professional and pulled together, adding sophistication to our messaging.

Amy and Siri left the meeting.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the June 17, 2025, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- May 16-31, 2025 payroll: check nos. 1043194573-1043194579 and voucher nos. 562829-562980 totaling \$246,057.78 and June 1-15, 2025 payroll: check nos. 1043371857-1043371860 and voucher nos. 562985-563140 totaling \$241,906.82.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$104,534.23; \$51,007.38 of this is for employee funded contributions to medical, dental and vision insurance premiums, Health Savings Accounts, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2025-22G: warrant nos. 1258106-1258116 totaling \$11,785.06
- Claim 2025-23G: warrant nos. 1258564-1258587 totaling \$145,149.51
- Claim 2025-24G: warrant nos. 1258630-1258651 totaling \$25,338.30
- Claim 2025-25G: warrant nos. 1259075-1259099 totaling \$56,736.06

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2025-11C: warrant no. 1258588 totaling \$3,279.84

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 the June Notes and Highlights section. We are halfway through 2025, with revenue and expenditures tracking close to budget. We received an influx of timber tax revenue in June, about half of our annual budgeted amount. We continue to see high printer usage and are reviewing equipment options to reduce staff time and printer wear and tear. Jackie recently evaluated paper and toner costs to ensure our patron print fees are still an appropriate amount. The report includes a link to the State Auditor's Financial Intelligence Tool (FIT) and Jackie briefly reviewed the WCLS FIT report with Trustees.

Rod noted that postage costs recently went up and wondered about the impact of this. Jackie reported that we have recently updated how we send bills to patrons which has reduced the number of paper bills mailed. Overall Communications costs are running ahead of budget but this is because some IT fiber costs were front-loaded in the year. Jes noted that insurance costs are also ahead of budget and wondered if these are also front-loaded. Jackie confirmed that most of our policies renew in January.

Today's packet includes a resolution to transfer funds from the General Fund to the Capital Fund. Jackie explained that this transfer is included in the budget and the resolution authorizes her to complete the transfer.

Rod moved to approve Resolution 07/15/25-12 authorizing an interfund transfer from the General Fund to the Capital Fund as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

As requested at the January meeting, Jackie provided a mid-year incident report update. So far there have been only 33 incidents reported, as opposed to 96 in 2024. In particular, Ferndale has seen a reduction and Blaine has seen a minor uptick (although only a total of seven so far this year). The most common type of incidents are patron accidents or illnesses. Jackie noted that these are reviewed by the Safety Committee and any safety hazards have been addressed. The second most common type of incident is harassment/threats to patrons. Jes asked if this has changed from last year and what type of training is offered to staff to address this. Jackie referred back to last year's report and found that this incident type happened less frequently last year. Michael discussed the Ryan Dowd curriculum and strategies for staff approach to and documentation of these incidents.

A number of updates to personnel policies are required in response to laws passed during the most recent state legislative session. Beth walked Trustees through the changes.

Personnel Records Policy 12.03

The definition of what is in a personnel record has been updated, along with what must be included if someone asks to review their own file. Additional details, such as how to request access to a personnel file and response timelines, will be noted in an administrative procedure to accompany this policy.

Christine suggested that a change is needed to the second paragraph of the policy to allow for sharing a personnel file with legal counsel, and that the word “only” may restrict access in a way not intended. The second sentence of the second paragraph was changed to read, “*Additionally* (rather than “only”), the employee, the employee’s immediate supervisor and Department Head, the Director of Finance and Administration, Human Resources, the Executive Director, *and/or legal professionals* may examine employee personnel records.”

Rod moved to approve the updated Personnel Records Policy 12.03, as amended. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Sick Leave Policy 12.22

This policy is changed to include the need to prepare for or participate in immigration proceedings involving the employee or their family as an acceptable use of sick time, in compliance with state law.

Matthew moved to approve the updated Sick Leave Policy 12.22, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Beth noted that the state laws necessitating changing the preceding policies go into effect July 27. The following changes are not required until January 1, 2026. We are making them now for consistency.

Family & Medical Leave Policy 12.23

Beth explained the difference between the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Washington Paid Family Medical Leave (WApfml). FMLA provides job and benefit protection while WApfml provides compensation during leave. They are intended to be used simultaneously so that employees have wages and benefits along with job protection during medical leave. In reality, eligibility for and usage of the two programs can differ. WCLS addressed this in our policy and in the bargaining agreement by allowing for job and benefit protection to employees using WApfml even if not using FMLA. This practice was recently codified into state law. The law also removes the potential for stacked leave periods (using both consecutively rather than simultaneously). We have updated our policy accordingly to prevent double benefits.

The law also reduces the minimum leave period from eight consecutive hours to four.

Lastly, the policy is updated to state that WCLS will not refund accrued paid leave used while waiting for WApfml approval. If an employee uses accrued leave while waiting for approval, they cannot claim WApfml for that period and request to reverse their use of WCLS paid leave. Alternately, employees have the option to not use leave accruals during the waiting period.

Rod moved to approve the updated Family & Medical Leave Policy 12.23, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Domestic Violence Leave Policy 12.24

This policy is updated to include dealing with hate crimes as an additional reason for use of such leave, in response to state law. The definition of a family member is updated to be consistent with other policies.

Matthew suggested clarifying that the policy addresses hate crimes “*as defined by WA state law*,” as the state’s legal definition can vary from Federal law. Beth will confirm the relevant RCW and update the policy language.

Matthew moved to approve the updated Domestic Violence Leave Policy 12.24, as amended. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Birch Bay Easement Update

Christine reminded Trustees of the strip of land in question, at the rear of the Birch Bay property. There is a fence along this strip and although our property line extends beyond the fence, it does not impact the building and parking lot plans. There is one mobile home pad that needs to be moved. In prior meetings Trustees approved entering into an easement agreement with the property owner, Edgewater Estates. Edgewater would prefer to purchase the strip of land rather than have an easement, due to easement restrictions.

Michael introduced a third option, which is to take no action regarding the strip of land, as it does not impact our plans. Discussion followed regarding these options. Trustees agreed that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is needed at a minimum. They would like to proceed with the easement but agree that the restrictions could be reduced. They would like Edgewater to share legal costs; Michael reports they have agreed to this.

Once an MOU is in place regarding legal fees, Trustees are comfortable moving forward with discussing a future sale of the strip of land if still of interest to Edgewater, although preference is to enter into an easement agreement with reduced restrictions. Christine stressed that removal of the mobile home pad must be included in the MOU.

Michael reported that our permitting application with the County refers to the easement, so this discussion is not holding up that process.

Levy Lid Lift Update

We have sent out an informational mailer to households in the district. It is intended to remind community members that the lid lift election is happening and direct them to our website for more information. Christine was interviewed by *Cascadia Daily News* and provided more information about the lid lift. Christine and Michael continue to make informational presentations to local community groups.

Christine is sharing weekly updates with staff and noted that some are feeling the stress of the uncertainty of the lid lift and WCLS's finances if it does not pass. The lid lift election is taking a toll on staff, which speaks to the interest in going out for larger lid lifts less frequently rather than smaller increases more frequently.

Jes asked if there has been any negative feedback and Christine reported that we are monitoring social media. We are not hearing of any organized resistance to the levy lid lift, although there have been a few comments about the cost of taxes during community presentations.

Break

Rod adjourned for a break from 10:15-10:30 a.m. Danielle left the meeting.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

Christine expressed appreciation of the North Fork Friends' efforts that have secured \$95,000 for a retractable wall that will create a more functional meeting space in the library.

Christine shared articles about recent court rulings regarding library collections and government speech versus free speech as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

Michael's report spotlighted the Deming Library, which is one of only two WLCS libraries whose building is owned by a Friends group. Recent activities include the addition of solar panels, a Whatcom Grooves concert, and the installation of a mural by Coast Salish artist Jason LeClair, all of which were grant funded. Beth reported seeing the Twin Sister's Farmer's market at the library this past weekend.

Christine informed Trustees that there is a ribbon cutting for the North Fork Freedge on August 23 at 11:00. She shared a “Freedge Manual” prepared by Sustainable Connections which features pictures of North Fork Freedge.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom is away for today’s meeting. Christine highlighted that there have been fourteen Summer Reading Kickoff Parties and over 1,600 forever books were given to young participants. The books are provided courtesy of Peoples Bank and Whatcom County Library Foundation.

Jes volunteered at the South Whatcom party and reported on a young patron who attended and then came back later in the day because they had so much fun.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary’s report includes information about the levy lid lift informational mailer and visitor stats from the information page on the WCLS website. She noted that despite all the information we can provide, it’s the work of branch staff over the past 16 years that will really make the difference to the community.

Christine reported that County Councilmembers Scanlon and Stremmer held a community listening session at the Lynden library last week. While there, Christine spoke with a patron who is a care giver for home bound individuals; she is excited to place holds on the animatronic cats to share with them. Discussion followed about the importance of such “non-traditional” items in our collection.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

Michael reported that there are no surprises in this month’s report and it is good to see more use at the Northwest Indian College location. A dip in physical circulation is countered by an increase in electronic circulation, as has been the trend for the past few years. Program attendance numbers are high, which is not surprising as we are busy with pop-up libraries and other events. Overdrive use continues to increase year-over-year. Database usage can depend on how much they are promoted. Michael and Lisa Gresham are coordinating promotion of databases in relation to the Library Game. A new card in August will promote Freegal.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: IT Services Committee

The IT Services Committee had nothing to report.

Danielle rejoined the meeting.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee had nothing to report.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Jessica reported that the Foundation is transitioning to a new customer relationship management (CRM) software. Her goal is to be fully migrated before Branch Out. Branch Out invitations will be mailed mid-August. Jessica is out of the office July 17-23.

Announcements and Adjourn

Christine reminded everyone that Election Day is August 5.

Jes reminded everyone of the Whatcom Grooves concert at the Glenhaven Clubhouse this Saturday, July 19.

Rod adjourned the meeting at 10:51 a.m.

Next Meeting

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on August 19, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. online via Microsoft Teams and at Administrative Services, 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226.

<u> /s/ </u>	<u> 08/19/2025 </u>	<u> /s/ </u>
Danielle Gaughen, Board Secretary	Date	Jackie Saul, Director of Finance and Administration