

Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

August 19, 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: Rodney Lofdahl, Chair; Matthew Santos, Vice Chair; Danielle Gaughen, Secretary; John Miller and Jes Stugelmayer. Absent: None.

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; Ryan Cullup, Facilities 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; Rheannan Pfnister, Records Management Specialist & Executive Assistant; Shelley Catwell, Ferndale Assistant Branch Manager; Helen Veitch, Ferndale Library Page; Aimee Flowers, Acquisitions Specialist; Tamar Clarke, Teen Services Coordinator; Tess Reding Hoffart, Youth Services Assistant.

Guests: None.

Call to Order

Rod determined 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 Helen Veitch, Ferndale Library Page, for her 10-year service anniversary. Ferndale Assistant Branch Manager Shelley Catwell spoke about Helen's dedication to her job and the many ways she boosts staff morale. Helen is an invaluable source of knowledge. She has also worked at Bellingham Public Library for many years as well.

The Board recognized Aimee Flowers, Acquisitions Specialist, for her 20-year service anniversary. Aimee started her tenure with WCLS at the Lynden Library as a Clerk and then Public Services Assistant and was there for 14 years. She then worked at Administrative Services as a Collection Maintenance Specialist and then became an Acquisitions Specialist. Lisa read comments about Aimee from her coworkers. Christine noted that Aimee was on the Levy Lid Lift Committee and was also working for WCLS the last levy happened in 2009.

The Board recognized Rheannan Pfnister, Records Management Specialist and Executive Assistant, for her 10-year service anniversary. Before becoming the Records Management Specialist and Executive Assistant,

Rheannan also worked as a Page at Ferndale, Community Relations Aide, and Clerk at Lynden. Christine shared comments from some of Rheannan's coworkers and her previous manager, Dianne Marrs-Smith. She will be leaving in September to take a new position with the City of Bellingham.

The Board recognized Thom Barthelmess, Youth Services Manager, for his 10-year service anniversary. Christine shared some of the many skills that Thom has brought to WCLS. John thanked Thom for correcting him at another Board meeting when he complimented Thom and his staff for the work they did at the Juvenile Detention Center. It helped John change his thinking about what the kids there go through. Thom is proud of his team and thankful for all of the work they do.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the July 15, 2025, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- June 16-30, 2025 payroll: check nos. 1043542072-1043542075 and voucher nos. 563145-563301 totaling \$245,251.11 and July 1-15, 2025 payroll: check nos. 1043738298-1043738301 and voucher nos. 563309-563460 totaling \$252,695.02.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$118,915.45; \$69,612.93 of this is for employee-funded contributions to dental and vision insurance premiums, Health Savings Accounts, state paid family medical leave and long-term care fund premiums, and PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2025-26G: warrant nos. 1259592-1259608 totaling \$55,277.51
- Claim 2025-27G: warrant nos. 1259888-1259916 totaling \$138,517.23
- Claim 2025-28G: warrant nos. 1260185-1260208 totaling \$74,495.74
- Claim 2025-29G: warrant nos. 1260682-1260708 totaling \$42,923.08
- Claim 2025-30G: warrant nos. 1261099-1261113 totaling \$73,800.24

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2025-12C: warrant no. 1260209 totaling \$2,390.48
- Claim 2025-13C: warrant no. 1261114 totaling \$1,886.30

Authorization to Reissue a Paycheck

- Resolution 08/19/25-13 to reissue paycheck 1041677506

Rod 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 July Notes and Highlights section. Beginning today, Jackie and Ryan will be meeting with branch managers to discuss budget and facilities needs at each branch, as part of 2026 budget planning.

A payment to a vendor was reported lost and the Board voted to void the check in Resolution 06/17/25-10. A new payment was sent to the vendor. The first payment was subsequently found by the vendor and mistakenly deposited resulting in a double payment to the vendor. The vendor has issued a refund to WCLS for the second payment. As the check has been deposited, it cannot be voided therefore a motion to rescind approval of the void is needed.

John moved to rescind approval of Resolution 06/17/25-10. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Jackie discussed a proposed cooperative purchasing agreement with Sourcewell. WCLS is actually already a member of Sourcewell, but the contract was entered into prior to Jackie joining WCLS. Jackie and Ryan would prefer to have the board reaffirm the agreement.

Matthew moved to approve continuation of the Cooperative Purchasing Agreement with Sourcewell. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Policy Updates

Family and Medical Leave Policy 12.23 – Beth presented this policy update, which is to add an effective date to one of the recent changes.

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

Levy Lid Lift Debrief

The board and meeting attendees took a moment to celebrate the passage of Proposition 2025-02, approving the levy lid lift.

Christine revisited the entire process of the levy lid lift for WCLS with the Board of Trustees. She highlighted what was expected vs. what happened, what was learned from the process, and what was different this time than the previous levy lid lift in 2009.

Board members discussed their experience with the process, feedback they received from community members during the process, what went well and what could be done differently in future levy lid lift attempts. They acknowledged that it took tremendous effort and was not something WCLS would choose to do often, given the toll on staff and the limited ability to work on other projects at the same time.

Break

Rod adjourned for a break from 10:38-10:46 a.m.

Trustee Education: Capital Planning

Ryan spoke to the Board about capital budget planning. Capital budget planning looks at long-term and short-term goals, especially with facilities and physical assets. When organizations do not appropriately plan for future goals and assets, it can create issues with safety and efficiency. Well-planned facilities maintain staff productivity and patron comfort and safety. He addressed WCLS's Capital budget and the shrinking amount of timber tax that WCLS receives.

Rod pointed out that the dollar amount for backlogged projects that Ryan presented does not match the predicted annual capital transfer for the next few years. What is an optimal strategy to achieve a three year-or-less backlog instead of eight to ten years? Ryan reviewed the risks absorbed by WCLS and the largest risks currently outstanding. Christine clarified that the facilities budget is mostly for WCLS-owned buildings. Ryan says WCLS needs to be prepared and able to share expenses related to WCLS libraries in buildings owned by other parties. Our agreements with building owners provide for this cost sharing.

Dianne inquired about the RMC survey that was completed in 2021 for WCLS, and asked what WCLS is doing with the results. Jackie talked about how it was shared with the owners of other buildings that WCLS libraries are in. WCLS is treating the results as a checklist and has been working on, and completed, many listed items. Rod asked how long the survey would remain relevant. Ryan said that the relevancy timeline varies with surveys but the one in question may be relevant about 10 years. This estimate also depends on how proactive an organization is in addressing the findings.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted Bellingham Public Library's upcoming remodel of their Central Library that will take place at an undetermined time in the future, possibly as soon as Summer 2026. WCLS should be prepared to assist Bellingham patrons who may come to our branches looking for services during BPL's closure during construction.

Christine and Dianne met with U.S. Representative Rick Larsen earlier this month at the Lynden Library to discuss public libraries and the need for federal support, especially following cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Service which affect the Washington Anytime Library and the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library. Many Whatcom County residents use these services.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that he is meeting with the Whatcom County Planning Department about the permits for land use at the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express project this week.

A patron was trespassed from the Blaine Library earlier this month. The police were called after the patron came into the library while his trespass was in force.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and further highlighted the work Youth Services Assistant Tess Reding Hoffart and Public Services Assistant Cultural Liaisons Diana Antaño and Amelia Martinez are doing with our local migrant communities.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report. She noted Deming Library's Coast Salish Mural Unveiling will take place on September 13 at the Deming Library and encouraged all to attend.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

Michael said that once again, circulation numbers are down in physical media, but those numbers are offset by the increase in digital circulation. Freegal has also shown an increase in use recently. Jes inquired about the jump in door counts at Island Library. This summer there has been quite a bit of activity at the Island Library including a Whatcom Grooves concert in July. Michael will take a closer look at the numbers to see if he can pinpoint a definitive reason for the increase in door count statistics.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: IT Committee

Geoff reported for the IT Committee that the third-party cyber security audit has been completed, and the results have been received. Geoff briefly reviewed the findings for the Board.

Announcements and Adjourn

Annual Summer Reading celebrations will take place at all branch libraries on Saturday.

Branch Out is on September 12.

Union negotiations will take place on October 6 and 7 with backup dates of October 8 and 16.

Rod adjourned the meeting at 11:39 a.m.

Next Meeting

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on September 16, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. online via Microsoft Teams and at Administrative Services, 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226.

/s/
Danielle Gaughen, Board Secretary

09/16/2025
Date

/s/
Rheannan Pfnister, Exec. Assistant