



Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

November 18, 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; Mary Vermillion, Community Relations Manager; Lisa Gresham, Collection 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; Allyson McBride, Records Management Specialist & Executive Assistant; Marty Jimmy, PSA – Nooksack Cultural Liaison Deming Library; Jamie Jedinak, Page Deming Library; Christian Cultee, PSA – Lummi Cultural Liaison Ferndale Library

Guests: Virginia Naef and Beth Basabe, Friends of the Deming Library; Grace McCarthy, *The Northern Light*; Calvin Bratt

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

Virginia Naef, a Friend of the Deming Library, addressed the online wording on the location of the monthly Board meetings. It was mentioned that as a member of the public, it can be quite confusing if you do not know where the Administrative Services building is. When you look up the location on the WCLS website, it is noted as just Northwest Drive. Virginia requested that the online resources are updated to be more clear.

Jes joined the meeting at 9:03 a.m.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the October 21, 2025, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- Sep 16-30, 2025 payroll: check nos. 1044624520-1044624528 and voucher nos. 564084-564228 totaling \$241,247.17 and October 1-15, 2025 payroll: check nos. 1044799835-1044799842 and voucher nos. 564233-564391 totaling \$270,137.78.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$107,582.93; \$63,578.95 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 2025-40G: warrant nos. 1264860-1264873 totaling \$32,559.13
- Claim 2025-41G: warrant nos. 1265151-1265182 totaling \$104,717.68
- Claim 2025-42G: warrant nos. 1265510-1265533 totaling \$61,425.26
- Claim 2025-43G: warrant nos. 1266069-1266083 totaling \$43,547.67

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2025-16C: warrant no. 1264874 totaling \$570.79
- Claim 2025-17C: warrant no. 1265183 totaling \$23,806.54
- Claim 2025-18C: warrant nos. 1266084-1266086 totaling \$26,334.31

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 October notes and highlights section. She pointed out that majority of categories are on track with the exception of Collection Materials. She noted we have received 94% of the property tax levy as of the end of October, and an additional \$400,000 was received at the beginning of November. Jackie reported that there are outside factors impacting collection materials spending due to the closure of Baker & Taylor. Baker & Taylor was not a vendor for WCLS but their closing is increasing demand on our vendor, Ingram.

PUBLIC HEARING: Proposed 2026 Operating Budget Revenue Sources

Jackie presented the Preliminary 2026 Budget and Capital Plan. The final budget will be presented in December. Jackie explained how the 2026 property tax levy is calculated, and noted that the levy amount must be approved in November, before final district valuations are known. Once set, the levy cannot be increased so a cushion is added in the event the final district assessed valuation is higher than preliminary values provided by the County Assessor.

Jackie reviewed other revenue sources and expenditures. The 2026 Wage and Benefit Agreement approved last month includes a 3% COLA increase and a 4% proficiency increase. Wages are further increased by restoring the partially vacant full-time Facilities Planning Coordinator position and adding a Communications Assistant position and a second, part-time, Custodial position at Administrative Services. WCLS will also be adding limited accrued paid leave for non-bargaining unit staff members to provide compensation when hours are lost due to holiday closures or for other time off.

Jackie reported some areas of cost savings in 2026, including decreased toner costs through swapping to leased copier/printer equipment at the Blaine, Ferndale and Lynden libraries and energy savings through a lightning update at Administrative Services, and insurance renewals. Reduced electricity costs from solar panels at the Deming Library will be reallocated to cultural programming.

Jackie shared the 2026-2030 Capital plan and noted that it will be fleshed out further during next year's strategic planning process. She reviewed the projects planned for the next few years. Regarding the lighting upgrade projects, Ms. Basabe asked why we were replacing bulbs that are still working. Ryan confirmed that most of these lights are close to or at end of life, and will be disposed of properly. He noted that replacing fluorescent bulbs with LED will result in energy savings.

John congratulated Jackie on her report and the detail she included. He asked for confirmation on increasing insurance deductibles which Jackie confirmed are not changing. Jackie shared a spreadsheet which showed how she is tracking levy funds; this will be updated and shared each year. Danielle pointed out that the levy rate listed goes up continuously. Jackie will investigate to confirm the tracking system is showing the correct information. Jes reiterated thanks to Jackie for making this a transparent and digestible report for non-finance savvy individuals.

Rod moved to approve resolution 11/18/25-18 Adopting the Fiscal Year 2026 Preliminary General and Capital Fund Budgets. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Rod moved to approve resolution 11/18/25-19 Adopting the 2026-2030 Preliminary Capital Plan. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Danielle asked if the Public Hearing needed to be announced. Rod confirmed that it was announced in writing and this meeting is a public forum. Rod brought this to the group and asked if they are in agreement about how the public hearing was discussed.

John motioned that an open discussion was had in lieu of announcing the public hearing. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Policy Updates

Animals in the Library Policy 6.02 – Michael presented this new policy, which is presented in response to two minor animal incidents in WCLS branches and guidance from our insurance carrier. If approved, the new policy will go into effect December 1st. Jes requested confirmation on signage that will be posted at branches. Michael provided an example of the message that is to be communicated, including being clear that service animals are still welcome. Mary confirmed that South Whatcom is working on a plan to still provide dog treats outside of the library. John gave thanks to Michael for the paragraph which explains the limits of the law and confirmed that he was unaware of the last sentence "By law, staff may ask if the animal is required because of a disability; they can also ask what tasks the animal has been trained to perform."

Rod moved to approve the updated Policy 6.02, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Land Acknowledgement

John noted it has recently been learned that land acknowledgment readings may be controversial in some indigenous communities. He wants to be sure that we are being respectful of our tribal community members and that readings of the land acknowledgements are not just performative or rote. With this in mind, a committee was created to discuss how WCLS may want to move forward. Mary Vermillion, Marty Jimmy and Christian Cultee represented the committee at the today's meeting.

The committee shared initial discussions on the feelings of the current acknowledgement and how it may be rephrased. They also confirmed, though the conversations were good, they feel that more time to discuss is needed. Marty thanked those involved for bringing this issue and discussion forward. Christine confirmed that WCLS is looking into having new signs at each branch to acknowledge the land and our local tribes. There is a

wait on posting as the accurate locations and place names in local languages need to be identified. It was discussed that some feel the new signs may be enough and some feel they will be glossed over and a verbal reading will still be needed. The committee confirmed this is a large reason why conversations are needing to continue, so they can find the right balance.

John informed the group of a film titled "Unconquering Last Frontier", which he strongly recommended folks watch.

Christian joined the meeting.

Christian stated that he feels it would be good to highlight the actual actions that WCLS is taking to truly acknowledge and uphold our relationships with the local tribal communities. Rod stated that he appreciates what this team is doing and thanks them for sharing what they are working on. Matthew requested clarification that this discussion is not around policy. Christine confirmed that this is procedure but she appreciates the Board's input, which is why it was brought to them today. Rod thanked the committee.

Marty and Christian left the meeting.

Executive Session to Discuss the Executive Director's Annual Review

At 10:15 a.m., Board Chair Rod Lofdahl moved the meeting to Closed Session, as per RCW 42.30.140(4)(a), to discuss the Executive Director's Annual Review. He stated that the Closed Session would end at 10:30 a.m.

At 10:30 a.m., Rod reconvened Open Session for final action on the Executive Director's Annual Review.

Executive Director's Annual Review

John read a memo written to WCLS Board of Trustees from Rod and John serving as personnel committee with conclusion of the status of Executive Director's review. The personnel committee recommends that the Executive Director receive the same consideration for compensation adjustment in 2026 as the rest of the staff: a 3% COLA and 4% proficiency increase. These changes will be effective January 1, 2026.

John moved to approve the recommendation as written. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Break

Rod adjourned for a break from 10:35 to 10:50am.

Strategic Planning Process

Christine began conversations around the 2026 Strategic Planning Process with the understanding that this is a preliminary discussion. She confirmed that when the last planning process happened, it was kicked off with a Board retreat. The Board discussed whether they would like to move forward with a retreat or reserve time at each meeting to discuss the plan.

The Board was in agreement that a retreat would be beneficial, but the timing would need to be discussed. The Board discussed the benefit of waiting for the application process to be completed for the new Board member before confirming a date for a retreat. The Board requested the results from community surveys from the last planning process to help gather thoughts on what is needed. Christine said that she will gather the previous survey results, as well as the agenda from the previous retreat, to share with the Board. Danielle requested

information about the deadline to complete the strategic plan. Christine confirmed planning should begin in January and wrap up in August so that the plan can inform budget discussions. Rod said that the Board will take this next month to organize thoughts around the process and further conclusions will be made at the December meeting.

Christine shared three handouts: the current Mission, Vision and Values statements, an example of the 2022-2025 Strategic Goals, and a timeline of how WCLS wants to move forward through the next 20 years.

Grace McCarthy joined the meeting.

2026 Addendum to Agreement with Whatcom County Library Foundation

Friends of the Deming Library, Virginia and Beth, and staff member Jamie left the meeting.

Christine brought the yearly addendum to the Board with the updated pay scale and other changes for 2026. This is legally required each year, and defines the relationship between Whatcom County Library Foundation and Whatcom County Library System.

Rod motioned to approve. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Blaine Library Staff Area Remodel

Ryan presented a PowerPoint, including a floorplan, showing a number of issues that need to be addressed at the Blaine library and the plan for the remodel. Ryan discussed the impact of a closure due to the remodel that is predicted to last approximately three days. Christine noted that during Deming library carpet installation project some staff members experienced a reaction to the products used. Learning from that experience is helping Facilities navigate the Blaine project. The funds to be able to fully update or replace the Blaine library will not be available for a few years. In the meantime, WCLS will be doing what it can to make the branch feel fresh for staff and patrons. Ryan noted that several items purchased for this project can be used in the new facility when the time comes. The Board discussed adding the Blaine branch to the strategic plan to prioritize advocating some much-needed updates. Michael thanked the Board for their input and support.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine introduced Allyson McBride as the new Executive Assistant and Records Management Specialist.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared this year's Whatcom Literacy Council breakfast was held at the Four Points on Lakeway. The event had Nancy Pearl as the speaker, who has been the speaker for the last 15 years. Michael was recently elected Chair of the Whatcom Literacy Council.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Christine highlighted, on Thom's behalf, the visit from author Dan Gemeinhart this month. Dan was able to meet students at Blaine Middle School, Vista Middle School and the Juvenile Detention center. He also spent a morning with educators across the county where he was able to express appreciation and gratitude for the work WCLS does with the ConnectED program. WCLS is thankful to the Whatcom County Library Foundation for making this possible.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary had no further notes on her report.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that jail stats have been adjusted due to changing the formula for how stats are counted. A note can be found at the end of the report stating the change. Digital materials were mistakenly excluded in this month's report. Allyson will investigate and the stats will be included at next month's meeting.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

There were no further notes.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

No discussion on the report.

Announcements and Adjourn

No further announcements. Christine wished all a happy Thanksgiving.

Rod adjourned the meeting at 11:53 a.m.

Next Meeting

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

/s/	12/16/2025	/s/
Danielle Gaughen, Board Secretary	Date	Allyson McBride, Exec. Assistant