



Location

This meeting was held in a hybrid manner, with remote attendance via Microsoft Teams and in-person attendance at Ferndale Library, 2125 Main Street, Ferndale, WA 98248.

In Attendance

Trustees: Matthew Santos, Chair; John Miller, Vice Chair; Danielle Gaughen, Secretary; Riley Sweeney 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; Allyson McBride, Records Management Specialist & Executive Assistant; Katrina Carabba, Deming Branch Manager; Christopher Phillips, Systems Engineer

Guests: Ed Trott

Call to Order

Matthew determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Open Public Comment

No public comment.

Service Anniversary Recognition

The Board recognized Katrina Carabba, Deming Branch Manager, for her 20-year service anniversary. Michael shared facts from 2006, the year Katrina started at WCLS, noting that 2006 was before the Deming library expansion. Katrina has been a patron of WCLS since before the Deming library was built. Growing up within the WCLS system, Katrina may hold more institutional knowledge than most staff. Michael shared a story of his first experience with Katrina when he visited the Deming Library incognito. A few of the many skills he applauded were her radical listening, customer service and leadership. He also highlighted how Katrina takes things to heart. She is a wonderful leader who cares deeply for her team. Christine mentioned how impressed she is with the grace that surrounds Katrina. Michael ended his recognition by thanking Katrina for these 20 years she has given us. Katrina thanked Michael, and the Board, for the kind words and said she is honored to be with the WCLS system.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes from the February 17, 2026, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting, authorization to void a warrant, ratification of a public works project award, and the following expenditures:

General Fund:

- January 16-31, 2026 payroll: check nos. 1046045627-1046045633 and voucher nos. 565329- 565484 totaling \$263,008.50 and February 1-15, 2026 payroll: check nos. 1046196391- 1046196396 and voucher nos. 565489-565639 totaling \$254,756.56.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$88,136.83; \$46,662.97 of this is for employee-funded contributions to dental and vision insurance premiums, Health Savings Accounts, and PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2026-05G: warrant nos. 1271379-1271391 totaling \$13,336.49
- Claim 2026-06G: warrant nos. 1271668-1271691 totaling \$218,442.11
- Claim 2026-07G: warrant nos. 1271940-1271959 totaling \$48,427.39
- Claim 2026-08G: warrant nos. 1272335-1272357 totaling \$41,803.80

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2026-01C: warrant nos. 1271392-1271393 totaling \$22,740.21
- Claim 2026-02C: warrant no. 1272358 totaling \$19,157.57

Riley 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 February Notes and Highlights section. She noted that money from the Levy Lid Lift will not begin to appear until April and reminded Trustees of the need for cash reserves. Several annual payments are made at the beginning of the year. Jackie noted that we received our payment from the insurance company for the Sumas flood loss. Many of the items that were damaged were purchased in 2021, and the insurance adjuster took into account depreciation when calculating the payout

Jackie provided a Levy Lid Lift update. She updated the spreadsheet that Christine shared during the lead up to the levy lid lift election. All in all, there are no substantial changes from the original projections. We expect to show an operating deficit again in 2035. Jackie wanted to share this with the Board to show we are on track and to provide context to the Strategic Planning process. The Board had no questions related to the spreadsheet.

Trustee Education

Christopher Phillips, Systems Engineer spoke to the Board about the WCLS IT network. Christopher shared that previously everything was connected to the main office in the Administrative Services building. This resulted in many issues, such as all locations losing internet when system was down at AS. Systems were updated so that they all connect to the internet and are cloud-based. Having everything in a cloud-based system means that there is less opportunity for a systemwide failure. This switchover has also allowed IT to increase the service they can provide to patrons.

Christopher confirmed that if a data center that hosts our data goes down, we may have to wait for them to bring services back up. However, we are with Microsoft who is quick to be back up and running with so many data centers worldwide. He also confirmed that all of the data is encrypted in transit, making it a secured connection when asking the server for information. There are two different backup systems. One runs every night backing up Teams and OneDrive. The other happens once a month with Christopher placing long term, archived items on a hard drive in a safe.

Matthew moved to adjust the break to take place before the policy updates to swap the Meeting OWL due to technical difficulties. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Break

Matthew adjourned for a break from 9:37-9:48 a.m.

Policy Updates

Write-off of Uncollectable Debts Policy 20.13 – Jackie and Lisa presented this policy update, which updated the policy language to allow WCLS to resume sending accounts to collections in the future should WCLS desire to, but it does not require accounts be sent to collections.

Riley moved to approve the updated 20.13 Policy, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Sumas

Due to the December 2025 flood damage in Sumas, the Sumas branch is now back to the bare bones of the building. This fresh start gives us an opportunity to build a small, quiet meeting space in the branch. The City of Sumas has agreed to this as a tenant improvement. In order to move forward, we will need to provide the City of Sumas with a Memorandum of Understanding which Ryan prepared and presented to the Board.

John moved to authorize WCLS Executive Director to sign a memorandum of understanding with the City of Sumas to develop a meeting room at the Sumas library. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Strategic Planning Update

Christine provided the Board with the results of the Cardholder and Stakeholder surveys for their review before the Board retreat on March 25. She confirmed that 3,196 cardholders completed the survey this year! It was noted that many of those patrons have been using the WCLS Libraries for 10 or more years. Christine highlighted the rich responses patrons provided in the comments sections.

Riley was encouraged by some seemingly “easy wins” and noted that negative responses were not as high as expected with such a large response rate.

The Board discussed the possibility of using tools to help quantify responses. Christine will investigate the options that may help provide the best results.

Christine and Mary discussed the Non-user Survey RFP and the strong engagement it has had so far. Responses to the RFP are due Friday, March 27. More information to come as results are provided.

Christine distributed a handout that summarizes an “environmental scan” of the public library environment and proposes various future scenarios. This document is meant to help the group through brainstorming sessions during the Strategic Planning process.

Christine provided a schedule of community events that we will be attending through this summer. The point is to be more involved with the community, rather than only hosting events at the library. This will provide opportunities to have impactful conversations with all community members, whether they are cardholders or not. Christine asked the Board to review the event list and sign up to attend and be involved with the process.

Christine reminded the Board of the retreat next week on Wednesday, March 25 at the Lynden Library.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted *Cascadia Daily News*' full feature interviews with Thom and Mary Kinser, Collection Development Librarian, speaking about audiobooks. She also applauded the Whatcom READS team and how wonderful this year turned out. This year was different to how Whatcom READS has been done in the past, but it was still a great success. Since both public author events were sold out, Whatcom READS provided its first ever livestream which 561 people attended.

Christine updated the group that One Book, One Coast is continuing to move forward and that she received confirmation that there will be a livestream available of George Takei speaking in Los Angeles on May 31. WCLS will host a watch party at the Ferndale Library

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael announced that WCLS will have an interim North Fork manager, Carol Dapogny, while the current branch manager, Mariya Farmagey, is out on maternity leave.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom had no further comments on his report.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary provided hard copies of the 2025 Community Report for the Board. She also shared that WCLS is working on a Summer at the Library program, encouraging patrons to spend their summer with the library. Thank you to Whatcom County Library Foundation, Whatcom Community Foundation and People's Bank for providing funding for the effort. With this support, WCLS is able to provide T-shirts for all staff to help promote the program. Mary encouraged the Board to sign up for shirts, as well, if they would like to participate in the campaign.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael said we are continuing to see a slight decrease in use of physical items and an increase in the use of digital items. It was also noted that program attendance is increasing.

Announcements and Adjourn

It was announced that WCLS All Staff Learning Day is this Friday, March 20, from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. The Board was invited to attend if they are available. John applauded last year’s guest speaker and how it helped prepare staff for the Levy Lid Lift.

Christine also reminded the Board of the Board of Trustees Strategic Planning Retreat taking place next Wednesday, March 25, from 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. at the Lynden library.

Matthew reminded the Board to review the pop-up schedule for community events and be ready to sign up for participation at the listed events on Wednesday, at the retreat.

Matthew adjourned the meeting at 10:48 a.m.

Next Meeting

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on April 21, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. online via Microsoft Teams and at Ferndale Library, 2125 Main Street, Ferndale, WA 98248.

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Danielle Gaughen, Board Secretary	Date	Allyson McBride, Exec. Assistant