whatcom county
library system

APPROVED MINUTES

Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

September 15, 2026

Location

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

In Attendance

Trustees: Matthew Santos, Chair; John Miller, Vice Chair; Danielle Gaughen, Secretary; Jes Stugelmayer and Riley Sweeney. 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; Mary Kinser, 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; Emma Radosevich, Collection Development Librarian.

Guests: Ed Trott; Randa Abramson

Call to Order

Matthew determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Open Public Comment

No public comment.

Matthew asked the Board to consider moving the Consent Agenda to take place as agenda item 3 and the Service Anniversary Recognition as item 4.

Riley moved to approve the adjusted agenda. Seconded. Unanimous approval of the adjustment of the agenda.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the August 18, 2026, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting, authorization to reissue a paycheck, and the following expenditures:

General Fund:

- July 16-31, 2026 payroll: check nos. 1048008620-1048008624 and voucher nos. 567270-567424 totaling $278,477.02 and August 1-15, 2026 payroll: check nos. 1048156990-1048156994 and voucher nos. 567429-567588 totaling $273,639.38.

- ACH transactions for employee benefits, payroll processing fees, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling $91,118.18; $48,420.76 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 2026-31G: warrant nos. 1280893-1280917 totaling $59,415.98
- Claim 2026-32G: warrant nos. 1281135-1281152 totaling $128,045.73
- Claim 2026-33G: warrant nos. 1281455-1281477 totaling $26,180.48
- Claim 2026-34G: warrant nos. 1282047-1282069 totaling $36,600.72

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2026-20C: warrant nos. 1280918-1280919 totaling $8,499.02
- Claim 2026-21C: warrant nos. 1281153-1281156 totaling $109,465.68
- Claim 2026-22C: warrant nos. 1282070-1282072 totaling $86,789.85

John asked the Board to consider approving the August 18, 2026 separately as there were two Board members absent, with notice, from the August 2026 Board meeting.

Riley moved to remove the August 18, 2026 minutes from the consent agenda and approve separately. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Riley moved to accept the Consent Agenda as revised . Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

The Board reviewed the August 18, 2026 minutes separately.

Riley moved to accept the August 18, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Seconded. Minutes of the August 18, 2026 meeting approved with 3 approvals and 2 abstentions.

Service Anniversary Recognition

The Board recognized Sarah Nissell (Lavender), Youth Services Librarian, for 10-year service anniversary. Thom started his recognition of Sarah by noting how her degree in drama from Western Washington University and her interest in story have helped shape Sarah's work with WCLS. Sarah is able to work well with all ages of young people and cares deeply about them and they know it. One of the teens that attended many programs with Sarah went on to be valedictorian of their high school and wrote an essay on how Sarah is their hero.

Sarah leads the Summer Reading committee, ensuring that it is a meaningful program for all ages. Her camp model has expanded into many different themes and is now a centerpiece for WCLS summer programs.

Thom expressed that Sarah makes him better at his job and he is proud to work with her. Christine noted that Sarah has built astounding connections with young people and they will forever link these experiences with the public library.

Sarah thanked the Board and left the meeting.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her report, including the August Notes and Highlights section. She noted that she failed to mention in her report that she is currently working with FEMA to secure funding from the December 2025 Sumas flooding. Jackie confirmed that the total losses were around $65,000. The insurance company applied depreciation on top of the deductible so WCLS only got about $45,000 from the insurance claim. When adding

staff time for the cleanup and help, it came to about $11,000 of time. Jackie is expecting $25,000 to $30,000 to come from FEMA. Jackie will continue to provide updates as this progresses.

Policy Updates

Program Policy 4.04 – Thom proposed changes to policy 4.04 which included adding language to affirm programming for patrons of all ages. The updates also included adding information on direct programming with Whatcom County schools.

Riley moved to approve Policy 4.04 as presented. Seconded. Unanimous approval.

Safe Child and Children's Programs Policy 6.03 – Thom presented this policy update, which articulates how young a child can be without supervision in the library. Updates also included specifying what the expectations are for supervision and removed a previously added addendum, added during the COVID pandemic.

Jes moved to approved Policy 6.03 as presented. Seconded. Unanimous approval.

Temporary Adverse Working Conditions Policy 12.45 – Jackie brought policy 12.45 to the Board. In 2020 the Board approved the Emergency Closure Policy to cover all staff, not just benefitted. This policy update is similar in that if the workplace is not accessible due to temporary adverse conditions resulting from a facilities project and out of the employees' control, WCLS will provide Closure pay to the employee for missed scheduled hours resulting from the closure, provided that an alternative work location cannot be used. This policy update also revises the process to determine when a temporary adverse condition may exist.

Riley moved to approve Policy 12.45 as presented. Second. Unanimous approval.

Strategic Plan 2027 – 2031

Christine presented a final draft of the 2027-2031 Strategic Plan to the Board. This final draft includes Key Performance Indicators for each objective. If approved, the next step will be to work on a 2027 Strategic Action Plan.

The Board reviewed the document and discussed their takeaways. Christine confirmed that the net promoter score for WCLS currently stands at 83%. She found that a prior study listed it at 81%, showing that there has been improvement over the years. The Board discussed that simply maintaining the 83% would be good but a focus in this new plan will include continuing to strengthen the net promoter score.

John thanked Christine and all WCLS staff for the work done on this Plan. Riley mentioned that there is a great mix of strategies and values, and Matthew agreed. Matthew noted that he appreciates how many different levels of employees have provided feedback which has been included and incorporated into the final draft.

Riley moved to approve the 2027-2031 Strategic Plan as presented. Seconded. Unanimous approval.

Break

Matthew adjourned for a break from 9:42 – 9:53 a.m.

Blaine Library Update

Christine notified the board that Michael, Ryan, Christine and Jonathon Jakobitz, Blaine Branch Manager, met with the Blaine Mayor, the City Administrator and a council member to have an initial check-in meeting regarding the proposed new building. The purpose of this meeting was to begin discussions about how to work together, where the needed funds will come from, and what the specific needs and interests are for the library. The city is hoping to have a development agreement finalized by the end of the year.

The Board reviewed the notes from the August 2026 Blaine Council meeting, which included proposed building plans. It was agreed that there are still many questions that need to be explored before signing any agreements; though this is a great option, of the options that have been presented so far. Fundraising needs are a concern and will be a focus in the continued discussions. Christine asked the Board to consider a potential special meeting between now and December, if needed, to have more focused conversations. All agreed and asked that there be ample notification if a special meeting is to be held.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted two articles that she included, *We Must Save Our School Libraries at all Costs First* written by Jessica Gigot and *Teaching with Whole Books Boosts Comprehension and Engagement* written by Natalie Wexler. Christine also noted the wonderful cover of the latest release of *Explorations* featuring a Whatcom County couple who is engaged with the library and community. Riley inquired about the listed pie baking contest and expressed his interest in being a judge. Jes also noted that she would like to be considered as a judge for the contest. Christine will pass along their names to Claire who is spearheading the event.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared photos of Erin Suda's car which had been transformed into Snap E. Dragon for a parade which took place on Lummi Island. There were also photos shared of local youth dressed as Snap E.

Michael informed the Board that WCLS is sending two Cultural Liaisons to the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums conference taking place in Spokane. Jes mentioned that she looks forward to hearing about what they learn and hopes they will update the Board on their experience.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and highlighted the performance measures showing a bump in children's programs. He noted that this is due particularly to back-to-school events taking place in Blaine.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report. She noted that she is working on figuring out how to reduce costs with *Explorations*. She also informed the Board that Cynthia French, Communications Specialist, has accepted a position with North Olympic Library System. This has opened a position that has had 35 individuals apply so far. The posting closes Sunday, September 20.

Mary also applauded that hard work that Marty Jimmy, Nooksack Cultural Liaison, and Christian Cultee, Lummi Cultural Liaison, have been accomplishing in our partnership with Whatcom Museum There is a QR code on the WCLS website where you can see a list of the films that will be shown at Whatcom Museum every weekend in November as part of this partnership.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael highlighted that database usage is down a small amount compared to the last few years. He also noted that circulation is down 3% and has fluctuated throughout the year. He confirmed that this is consistent to usage patterns across the state.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Jessica Burson gave the Board an update on this year's Branch Out event. She confirmed that 250 people attended this year, which is 2 tables more than last year. The event raised over $56,000 including a challenge gift from a donor that raised $8,000. The challenge gift will fully fund the 2027 Summer Reading Forever Books.

Christine thanked Jessica for coordinating such a great event. She expressed her pride in the WCLS staff and Foundation members for all their efforts.

Announcements and Adjourn

- Annual wage and benefit negotiations October 5 & 6 and backup day October 7
- All Friends Gathering October 21 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Lynden Library

Matthew adjourned the meeting at 11:06 a.m.

Next Meeting

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on October 20, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. online via Microsoft Teams and at Administrative Services, 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226.

/s/	10-20-2026	/s/
Danielle Gaughen, Board Secretary	Date	Allyson McBride, Exec. Assistant