



Location

This meeting was held in a hybrid manner, with remote attendance via Microsoft Teams and in-person attendance at Sumas Library, 461 2nd Street, Sumas, WA 98295.

In Attendance

Trustees: Rodney Lofdahl, Chair; Lori Jump, Vice Chair; Erika Lautenbach, Secretary; Matthew Santos and Holly Robinson.

Staff: 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, Lynden Library Manager and Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL) President; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Em Olpinski, Administrative Assistant; Paul Fullner, Everson and Sumas Library Manager; Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator; Alix Prior, Ferndale Library Manager; Coreen Kurtz, PSA – Cultural Liaison; Joshua Olsen, PSA – Cultural Liaison; Amelia Martinez, PSA – Cultural Liaison; Diana Antaño, PSA – Cultural Liaison.

Guests: N/A

Call to Order

Rodney 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.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the July 18, 2023 Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- June 16-30, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1034901227-1034901231 and voucher nos. 555547-555691 totaling \$216,236.97 and July 1-15, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1035078759-1035078763 and voucher nos. 555699-555845 totaling \$216,156.73.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$88,542.48; \$30,195.22 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2023-26G: warrant nos. 1172074-1172113 totaling \$163,370.98

- Claim 2023-27G: warrant nos. 1172959-1172970 totaling \$45,795.98
- Claim 2023-28G: warrant nos. 1173067-1173092 totaling \$95,050.89
- Claim 2023-29G: warrant nos. 1173635-1173645 totaling \$66,739.97

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2023-13C: warrant no. 1172119 totaling \$135.00

Holly moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded. Approved unanimously.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her report, including the July Notes and Highlights section. She shared that we have received 56% of our budgeted revenue for the year. We also received a property tax refund of \$33,733 in July, following a dispute over a highly valued property being resolved. Our operating revenue for 2023 is up about 3% from 2022, while our operating expenses are up about 7.3%.

As of July, our operating expenses for the year were at 54% of budget. In July, Jackie conducted an annual inventory of WCLS' capital and small and attractive assets with help from WCLS Accountant, Ruth Nail. This involved visiting branches to count electronics and other valuable supplies. Jackie has no concerns with the findings from this inventory.

Jackie shared that since switching to the Public Employee Benefit Board (PEBB) system in 2021, we have had some issues with deposits to Health Savings Accounts being delayed, largely because they were being sent by mail. We recently transitioned to an electronic payment process that should hopefully reduce delays.

Following some time off at the end of August, Jackie will begin working on the 2024 budget. Ryan will be joining Jackie in meetings with branch managers to discuss facilities needs for the coming year.

The 2023 transfer of \$45,000 from the General Fund to the Capital Fund occurred at the end of last month, following the board's approval.

Jackie then shared some potential dates and times for an upcoming Budget Retreat with the trustees. The retreat was scheduled for October 31 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Rod commented that the lighting project at Deming Library is coming along nicely. Jackie said that Ryan has taken over this project, which encompasses updating the library's fluorescent lighting with LED lighting. Rod said that the new lighting appears to improve the ambience of the building. Jackie commented that the new fixtures project light up, helping to highlight the building's beams, which will be cleaned soon.

Michael informed the group that the meeting was running ahead of schedule and suggested re-ordering the agenda to move item six, Birch Bay Library Planning Project Update, to before Item five, Trustee Education: Cultural Liaison Staff, to give presenters more time to join the meeting.

Holly moved to reorder the agenda, as described by Michael. Seconded. Approved unanimously.

Birch Bay Library Planning Project Update

Michael said that the documents necessary to get under contract for the new library in Birch Bay were shared with the Washington State Department of Commerce (DoC) in early July. These documents are currently still being reviewed.

At Michael's last meeting with DoC, it was indicated that we will not be required to provide a 50% match of the \$2 million state grant we were awarded for the Birch Bay Library project in 2019.

We acquired the Birch Bay Library property in 2017. When we were awarded our grant in 2019, the earliest date for reimbursable expenses relating to the use of the grant was 2016, and we have been informed by DoC that this still applies to our grant. In our initial grant application, we did not request reimbursement for the acquisition of the property, but in our 2022 scope change request we did. The submitted budget anticipates a reimbursement of about \$280,000 for property acquisition. However, this detail needs to be confirmed by DoC

before our contract can be executed. Once we are under contract for this project, we will be able to begin the request for qualifications (RFQ) process.

Michael also informed the trustees that our contact at DoC will be retiring in October and that fundraising efforts of the Friends of Birch Bay Library have been going well.

Trustee Education: Cultural Liaison Staff

WCLS Public Service Assistant (PSA)-Cultural Liaisons Coreen Kurtz, Amelia Martinez, Diana Antaño, and Joshua Olsen joined the meeting virtually to discuss the role that Cultural Liaisons play at WCLS.

Michael shared that it was part of WCLS' 2019 Action Plan to find a better way to meet the needs of traditionally underserved populations in Whatcom County, including the Hispanic, Indigenous, Punjabi, Russian, and Ukrainian communities of the County. We recognized that we needed to have staff with cultural knowledge and experience with these communities in order to meet their needs. The PSA-Cultural Liaison positions were introduced to serve this role. Michael noted that WCLS also has a team of 15 staff who have passed a test certifying that they are bilingual.

Amelia has been working for WCLS for 13 years and is a Cultural Liaison to the Hispanic community at Lynden Library. Joshua is a registered member of the Nooksack Tribe and is a Cultural Liaison to this community at Deming Library. Diana is a Liaison to the Hispanic community at Everson Library. Coreen Kurtz is a registered member of the Lummi Nation and is a Liaison to this community at Ferndale Library. She has been with WCLS since June.

Michael said that WCLS' Cultural Liaison positions are founded on the idea that representation in libraries matters. The demographics of library staff often do not match the demographics of the people they're serving. Michael then gave a summary of how the PSA-Cultural Liaison positions were developed. Involving community stakeholders from the communities we are aiming to serve played a key role in developing the Cultural Liaison model. We aim to fill these positions with pre-existing WCLS staff, when possible. Diana and Amelia were both PSAs before moving into their Cultural Liaisons positions.

Michael posed questions to the panel of Cultural Liaisons, including how their work has changed since assuming this position, what types of projects and programs they have been involved with, what challenges they have faced, and what the hiring and onboarding process was like. Project and program highlights include the Club de Mujeres Latinas (Latin Women's Club) put on by Amelia at the Lynden Library, a screening of the film *Honoring Sacred Waters* planned in part by Joshua, and support at a summer school for children of farm workers. Amelia and Diana have also hosted a Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) program at the Lynden Library and Cuentos y Paletas (Stories and Popsicles) at several library locations. Joshua is currently putting together a presentation about the 2023 Canoe Journey, Paddle to Muckleshoot, for an upcoming library program.

Amelia said that since becoming a Cultural Liaison she has felt more empowered to show her culture at the library. She has also heard from many patrons that they are impressed by the culturally focused programs WCLS is offering.

Michael shared photos with the group from various programs planned by the PSA-Cultural Liaison staff.

Discussion followed with the trustees about ways WCLS is currently serving the deaf community of Whatcom County and potential ways WCLS' resources for this community could be expanded.

Matthew asked if there is a way for bilingual staff to communicate the languages they speak to patrons on their nametags. Michael responded that a new nametag attachment for bilingual staff will be rolled out soon.

Lori said that she has loved watching the PSA-Cultural Liaison positions come to fruition. Michael thanked the Cultural Liaisons for sharing their experiences.

Tour of Sumas Library

Paul gave the trustees a tour of the Sumas library, which shares a building with the Sumas Community Center. The Sumas Library was damaged during the November 2021 Nooksack River flooding event and was closed until February 2023. Following the flood, which filled the building with over two feet of water, all flooring, shelving, equipment, and drywall were removed and replaced inside the library.

The trustees thanked Paul for his tour and commented that the new features in the space make the library feel open and inviting.

Break

Rodney adjourned the meeting for a break from 10:35 -10:45 a.m.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In her absence, Michael shared highlights from Christine’s July report. The final Junior Grooves event of the summer will be at Blaine Library on August 18, and the final Whatcom Grooves concert will be at the Blaine Performing Arts Center on August 19. A new WCLS podcast episode about Whatcom Grooves was recently released.

The Common Threads Farm food truck has been bringing nutritious, free lunches to kids at the North Fork and Deming libraries throughout the summer. Lunches have been served after storytimes and have allowed many families to spend several hours at the library.

Michael said that Christine included a reminder in her report that both the *Bellingham Herald* and *Cascadia Daily News* are available on WCLS.org to people with WCLS and BPL accounts.

Planning for Open Book, an event to celebrate all things reading, is coming along nicely. Several poets will be in attendance, including Arianne True, Washington State Poet Laureate and Rena Priest, former Poet Laureate. Local artist and children’s and young adult author Phoebe Wahl will also be in attendance. Open Book will be at the Ferndale Events Center on November 5 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

Michael shared that a Backyard Concert Series has been taking place at the Deming Library throughout the summer, with a final concert being hosted on September 9 at 6 p.m. Michael commented that the live music creates a free environment for people to meet and talk with the people around them, and utilizing the library’s outdoor space has made for easy set-up.

WCLS’ delivery schedule was recently updated by Mobile Services-Distribution Manager Sam Wallin. Sam analyzed the delivery schedule and was able to increase the frequency of deliveries to multiple libraries by having Distribution Drivers work slightly longer days and shorter work weeks. Sam also worked with branch managers to make certain the new delivery schedule lined up with the schedules of Pages. Michael thanked Sam for his work on this project—it was a large undertaking, and increasing the frequency of deliveries helps increase circulation.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report, highlighting the 2023 Summer Reading Program, which will conclude at the end of August. In July, Youth Services (YS) put on 129 programs, each involving about three to four hours of staff time. Thom gave a summary of the different types of events put on by YS staff for different age groups. In Whatcom County, attendance at summer programs can sometimes lapse because of the area’s nice weather, but attendance was strong this year.

Thom thanked our community partner, the Whatcom Educational Credit Union (WECU), for providing the funding to distribute “forever books” to young people in Whatcom County for Summer Reading. We were able

to give away nearly 1,300 books to young people, ages birth to 18. Thom has included statistics about the types of books given away in his report in the August Agenda Packet. Thom commented that Cultural Liaisons have also been continuing to distribute forever books at recent events.

Holly asked Thom if having transportation to the library is a barrier for some youth to accessing programming. Thom replied that it is, which is why so much energy is being dedicated to the ConnectED program. Holly asked if there are any organizations we could partner with to help facilitate youth transportation to libraries. Mary commented that we already have a partnership with the Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA). Michael mentioned that WTA allows youth to ride buses for free and offers a low-cost van service in Lynden called the Lynden Hop. Holly asked if we are sharing information about these services with patrons. Thom replied that he will investigate more ways we could do this. Michael added that we receive WTA Ride Free passes to distribute at branches each year.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report and reminded the group that the final Whatcom Grooves concert will be in Blaine on Saturday. Mary included a picture from the Whatcom Grooves concert at Ferndale Library in her report. It was great to see the space filled with people enjoying music. Hosting after-hours events like these in libraries can help people begin to see libraries in a different light.

Holly shared that there was live music at the Point Roberts Library 5th Anniversary Celebration, and the community really enjoyed the event.

Mary concluded by sharing that two new WCLS podcast episodes were recently released: a Summer Reading update and an episode about Whatcom Grooves. She thanked Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator, for his work on these episodes and for continuing to improve the podcast.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

Michael presented July Performance Measures to the group, sharing that we are currently having conversations with ILS Administrator Carmi Parker about the ongoing decline in physical circulation. Before the pandemic, CDs and DVDs made up 30% of physical circulation. However, the pandemic encouraged more people to shift to consuming media through streaming services. The circulation of materials on discs is now down 22% from pre-pandemic levels. The decline in the circulation of DVDs and CDs is leading the decline in our physical circulation. And although the use of eMaterials is gradually increasing, it is not offsetting this decline.

Thom commented that early and juvenile materials make up 50% of all circulation, but only account for 28% of our collection. Thom is working with Carmi on how we can better position these items to increase circulation.

Geoff then gave the group an update about door counters. In June of 2022, our database for storing door counts moved into the cloud, and it took about eleven months to reconfigure daily emails to branch managers with updated door count data. Our current door counters are battery-powered, and it is important to have staff monitoring door counts daily so we can know when the batteries are beginning to fail. When the devices fail, we use recent door counts to normalize the data.

Holly asked what the significance of door count data is. Michael responded that they help paint a picture of how many people are visiting libraries, and Rod said that it can be interesting to look for trends in this data. Thom commented that door count trends are dynamic. For example, door counts at South Whatcom have been down in recent months, but circulation at this branch is expanding. Paul said that comparing circulation per patron to door counts can help tell a story of how the library is being used.

Lori asked if Library Express door counts have been analyzed to evaluate the success of these locations. Michael responded that this has not been done yet, but it could be a good time to evaluate this data. Discussion followed about what patrons may gravitate to using Library Express locations and different ways these locations could be made more accessible.

