



October 17, 2023

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Location

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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.

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In Attendance

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

**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; 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; Linda Shindruk, Circulation Trainer; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Ruth Nail, Minutes Recorder.

**Guests:**

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Call to Order

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Rodney determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., followed by a reading of the WCLS (Whatcom County Library System) Land Acknowledgement by Michael.

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Open Public Comment

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No public comment.

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Service Anniversary Recognition

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The Board recognized Linda Shindruk, Circulation Trainer, for her twenty-year service anniversary. Lisa introduced Linda, whose career with WCLS began as a library Page and then a Clerk. Shortly thereafter, Linda moved into her current role as Circulation Trainer, in which she trains all branch staff, a key aspect to setting the tone of their employment experience at WCLS. Linda also graciously serves as a last-minute Public Services Assistant substitute at our branches across the county and in the Interlibrary Loan department at Administrative Services. Her role requires continuous flexibility, with a work schedule and location that is constantly changing. With insights gained through her work at the branches, Linda developed and continues to refine training materials for our branch staff, who share glowing comments about Linda's patience, kindness, knowledgeability and unflappability. During her years with WCLS, Linda has shared her input with many committees, ranging from ILS (Integrated Library System) vendor selection to streamlining patron registration procedures and phone system training.

Christine presented Linda with a recognition gift from WCLS and highlighted that material Linda teaches is incredibly complex and she excels at making it streamlined and approachable. Linda expressed her thanks and appreciation for the supportive Board, management and staff at WCLS.

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## Consent Agenda

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The Consent Agenda included minutes of the September 19, 2023, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

### Expenditures:

- August 16-31, 2023, payroll: check nos. 1035627088- 1035627093 and voucher nos. 556168-556317 totaling \$230,756.77 and September 1-15, 2023, payroll: check nos. 1035826188-1035826191 and voucher nos. 556326-556473 totaling \$218,173.51.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$89,263.64; \$31,068.51 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, Health Savings Accounts, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2023-34G: warrant nos. 1175624-1175633 totaling \$3,596.44
- Claim 2023-35G: warrant nos. 1175877-1175886 totaling \$100,106.65
- Claim 2023-36G: warrant nos. 1176103-1176134 totaling \$66,613.93
- Claim 2023-37G: warrant nos. 1176598-1176619 totaling \$131,807.14

### Capital Fund:

- Claim 2023-15C: warrant no. 1175677 totaling \$10,995.29
- Claim 2023-16C: warrant no. 1175887 totaling \$11,523.06
- Claim 2023-17C: warrant no. 1176218 totaling \$1,215.00

***Holly moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded. Unanimously passed.***

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## Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

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Jackie reviewed her report, including the September Notes and Highlights section. We are 75% through the year and have dipped into Cash Flow reserves slightly, which is typical at this time of year. These funds will be replenished next month with the influx of revenue from the property tax payments due at the end of October. Jackie noted that revenues from investment interest, as well as rents and leases, are outpacing budgeted expectations. The latter reflects the commercial use of meeting rooms in our branches, which has increased dramatically since 2019, and is notable for revenue budgeting and facilities use planning. Discussion followed regarding current and potential trends in meeting room usage.

Jackie said we are slightly underspent in Salaries and Wages but are still filling multiple open positions. She added that this year's fuel expenses to date are significantly less than the prior year. Although the September fuel invoice from the County is still pending, current projections indicate this annual expense will remain under budget, although savings in this category may be offset by increasing utilities expenses. Jackie reviewed our Washington Paid Family Medical Leave (WAPFML) reporting and payment issues, highlighting that a resolution is in sight before the end of this year. She shared that the Deming lighting project is almost done and very close to budget, with both patrons and Friends of Deming Library providing positive feedback.

Jackie recapped that property tax revenue includes a payment in abeyance received in August, in the amount of \$230,000, and prior board discussion of identifying these funds in the budget. She presented Resolution

10/17/23-09 amending the 2023 General Fund Budget, reflecting that said amount is transferred to the Designated Fund Balance, specifically earmarked for an Abeyance Fund.

**Rod moved to approve Resolution 101723-09 amending the 2023 General Fund Budget as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.**

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#### Closed Session to discuss 2024 Bargaining Unit MOU and Wage & Benefit Negotiations

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At 9:22 a.m., Board Chair Rodney Lofdahl moved the meeting to Closed Session, as per RCW 42.30.140(4)(a), to discuss the 2024 Wage and Benefit Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Bargaining Unit. It was announced that the Closed Session would end at 9:55 a.m.

At 9:55 a.m., the meeting was reopened briefly to convey that Closed Session will be extended to 10:00 a.m.

At 10:00 a.m., Rodney reconvened Open Session for final action on the 2024 Wage and Benefit Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding.

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#### 2024 Wage and Benefit Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding

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**Holly moved approval of the 2024 Wage and Benefit Agreement and 2024 Memorandum of Understanding which revises and clarifies language in the current bargaining agreement. Seconded. Unanimously passed.**

Dianne Marrs-Smith, as Local 1581's Union President, thanked Rod and Holly, along with the management team, for their contributions to this year's successful negotiations.

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#### Policy Updates – Diversity Committee Policy 1.04

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Christine presented this new policy, which outlines organizational guidelines and responsibilities pertaining to the establishment of a committee to provide input to administrators regarding policy and procedures related to equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and in the provision of public services.

Christine shared the history of the library system's Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) and how the committee's input has helped to shape policies, procedures and strategic planning, such as the creation of Public Services Assistants with a Cultural Focus, diverse programming and compensation for staff with demonstrated bilingual skills. Matthew asked Christine for confirmation that the DAC was an existing committee. Christine responded affirmatively and clarified that this policy underpins it, in accordance with legal advice. Holly and Matthew commented on such a committee providing feedback on a wide spectrum of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) applications. Lori suggested DEI planning and the DAC committee as a trustee education topic. Christine noted Lori's suggestion for future planning.

**Matthew moved to approve the new Diversity Committee Policy as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.**

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#### IT Services Update

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Geoff addressed the Board and gave a detailed progress update on the implementation of recommendations resulting from our 2023 audit by contracted cybersecurity specialists. He stated that almost all these tasks are complete, and the balance is scheduled for 2024, with budget approval. Geoff reviewed backup and software update schedules, ongoing security awareness training for all staff and other measures designed to ensure continuity of business and operational resiliency. He discussed the expansion of our current electrical generator capabilities at Administrative Services to increase the power resilience of the library system's network equipment and administrative services. In coordination with the Facilities Services Manager, his department is currently analyzing options. Geoff noted that the Board IT Services committee's next meeting in early January 2024 will primarily focus on finalizing an IT Services Policy, which encompasses processes such as vendor

management and network security and will codify WCLS IT Services' requirements and responsibilities. He plans to have this policy ready for Board approval in February. Geoff welcomed the trustees' input and questions.

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## Break

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Rodney adjourned for a break from 10:16-10:25 a.m.

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## Staff Reports: Executive Director

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In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted the ceremonial tree planting done in partnership with Whatcom Million Trees project. With the success of this aspect of the Summer Reading Program, WCLS is planning on doing it again next year.

Christine recapped the September 25 Blaine City Council study session, which she attended with trustee Matthew Santos and Blaine Library Manager Jonathan Jakobitz. During the session, Zervas Architects presented preliminary drawings of a multi-floor mixed-use building with space that would incorporate housing, parking and a library. Christine noted that further discussion with the Blaine City Manager and Mayor, followed by the rest of the City Council, is required. She shared the Zervas drawings, answered questions and discussed options for funding the library portion. Funding mechanism options discussed included the local community funding the building with a MOU with WCLS to provide services; City and private contributions; Library District funding, such as a Library Capital Facilities Area bond; and a combination of these measures. Christine recalled the combination of funding measures required to build the Ferndale Library, which included private fundraising by the Whatcom County Library Foundation and Friends of the Ferndale Library, a \$1 million private donation, a city budget contribution of several million dollars, plus a bond measure. This collection of funding sources, along with the support of private donors, Ferndale City Council and voters, was required to bring that project to fruition.

Holly inquired about examples in Washington state of library spaces in mixed use with housing. Discussion followed on this topic, with examples provided of libraries sharing mixed use space that did not specifically include housing, as well as residential mixed used space that currently includes library facilities, although not originally designed for such an application. Local examples include the Bellingham Public Library (BPL) system's Barkley and Bellis Fair Mall branches, which operate in smaller rented spaces. The use of WCLS branches for their free and easy parking, pastoral locations, Library Express options and the ability to reserve meeting and study rooms was noted, as well as patrons' ability to use WCLS and BPL library cards interchangeably between the two library systems.

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## Staff Reports: Deputy Director

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In addition to his written report, Michael shared his excitement and details about the Open Book festival coming up on November 5. Mary Vermillion provided insight that John Cotton Dana Award funds prompted the origins of this festival, which has been designed with the idea of elevating the library system with books, reading, writing, author events and related activities in a single venue, similar to other metro areas. Christine noted that the Whatcom County Library Foundation (WCLF) is providing supplemental funding, which adds to funds being allocated from other programming budgets. After the event, management will evaluate its success to determine if WCLS will do it again another year, with the aid of community sponsors.

Michael highlighted the apprenticeship of Joshua Olsen, Nooksack Cultural Liaison at the Deming Library, who will be learning a Nooksack Language under the tutelage of tribal elder George Adams.

Michael recapped highlights of the national Association of Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) conference in September and the presentation made there by Katrina Carabba and Erin Suda, Deming Library Branch Manager and Public Services Assistant. He shared about the departure of North Fork Branch Manager Katrina Buckman, as

she moves into her new role of Head of Public Services at BPL. WCLS will continue working directly with Katrina in her new role at BPL, adding to the partnership opportunities between the two library systems.

Michael noted COVID tests are still being distributed by the library system at all branches. Lori asked if the link for free Narcan is on our website, and Michael confirmed that it is. Christine added that WCLS has been revamping Narcan training and is investigating distributing these supplies. Lori recommended consideration of Narcan shots, versus nasal spray, for speed and efficacy.

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#### Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

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Christine noted Thom's absence, stated that there was no Youth Services report this month and lauded the success of the 2023 Summer Reading Program.

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#### Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

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Mary discussed her written report and more details on the Open Book festival and the promotional materials and efforts underway. She noted that Christine and Collection Development Librarian Emma Radosevich were just interviewed on KGMI by Margaret Bikman, who also spoke with biologist and author Thor Hanson, a featured speaker at Open Book.

Mary thanked Public Services Assistants Coreen Kurtz (Lummi Cultural Liaison) and Joshua Olsen (Nooksack Cultural Liaison) for their contributions as spokespeople for the Indigenous People's Day video produced by WECU in partnership with WCLS and BPL. Attendees viewed the video, which was filmed at the Deming Library.

Mary expressed thanks to everyone involved in the tree planting ceremony at the Deming Library: WCLS patrons and staff, Whatcom Million Trees Project, Friends of the Deming Library, WECU and WCLF. She is happy to report that more tree planting is planned for next year.

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#### Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

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In addition to his written report, Michael shared circulation statistics and commented that physical circulation is down by 6%, largely due to a decrease in circulation of DVDs and CDs. Christine added that this decrease in physical circulation is less than last month. Michael noted the increase in electronic materials circulation, which may be partially attributed to easy access to eMagazines via the Libby app.

Michael highlighted the 500% increase of circulation at Sumas + SLX, adding that this increase extended beyond collection materials to in-person service and additional programming. He noted that added programming is helping door counts at many branches, which can also drive physical circulation counts. Responding to trustees' questions, Michael expounded on similarities and differences in door counts between branches and possible contributing factors.

Michael reviewed Electronic Resources and Activities statistics, and Lisa presented digital and database usage statistics. She noted that, effective November 1, streaming video service provider Kanopy is retiring their "play credit" system for viewing movies in exchange for a "ticket" system. Patrons will receive thirty (30) tickets each month. Movies and series will require a different number of tickets to view, which may allow some patrons more views. Lisa credited Thom and Youth Services staff for encouraging county students to utilize WCLS databases as homework support resources.

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#### Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

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Rodney, on behalf of the Personnel Committee, reported that surveys—one for trustees and one for staff—will be emailed for input regarding the Executive Director's annual review. Beth offered to assist the Personnel Committee in this process.

Christine noted that Lori’s second term as trustee expires in January and gave a brief recap of the trustee recruitment process. She noted that the request for applications is posted on our Trustees webpage and included in a press release on the website landing page. Applications go directly to the County and are forwarded to the Board Personnel Committee, which includes Holly and Rodney. The Personnel Committee then reviews the applications.

Christine noted that although we are publicizing the opening, no applications have been received at the County yet. After discussion on the application's accessibility on the Whatcom County website, Jackie and Matthew noted that the Trustee position does not appear to be posted on the Boards and Committees Openings webpage. Jackie verified that our webpage links to the County’s “Form Center” which includes the application form. To assist everyone in the recruitment process, Christine will send out an email with the application link to trustees, staff and management.

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### Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

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Jenn reported that the Foundation is continuing to exceed its fundraising goals. She noted that the Whatcom Grooves music programs in our library branches have proved to be a highly successful crossover with lots of attendees and donations. Jenn was excited about WCLF funding the Open Book author’s room and the additional fundraising opportunities at the event. She announced that WCLF is looking for Board members and requested suggestions from the WCLS Board.

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### Announcements and Adjourn

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WCLS Trustees Budget Retreat – 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, October 31, 2023, at Ferndale Library.

Open Book, Sunday, November 5, from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Christine performed a quorum check for the November 21 and December 19 Board meetings. Holly noted that she will be attending the November meeting remotely.

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

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### Next Meeting

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Next meeting will be November 21, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. online via Microsoft Teams and at Administrative Services.

Address: 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham.

<u>        </u> /s/ Rodney Lofdahl, Board Chair	<u>        </u> 11/21/2023 Date	<u>        </u> /s/ Ruth Nail, Minutes Recorder
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