



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; Lori Jump, Vice Chair; Matthew Santos. Absent: Erika Lautenbach, Secretary; Holly Robinson.

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; Ryan Cullup, Facilities Services Manager; Beth Andrews, Human Resources Manager; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Dianne Marrs-Smith, Lynden Library Manager and Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL) President; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Katrina Carabba, Deming Library Branch Manager; Erin Suda, Deming Library Public Services Assistant; Rheannan Pfnister, Lynden Library Clerk; Ruth Nail, Minutes Recorder.

Guests: FOBBL Board of Directors Members Brian Bell and Ruth Higgins.

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

On the behalf of Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL), FOBBL President Dianne Marrs-Smith presented a \$40,000 check to the WCLS trustees as a contribution toward the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express (BBX) project costs. She expressed gratitude to Michael for being the project manager and Ryan for his facilities input this year.

Christine expressed appreciation to the Whatcom County Council for granting WCLS \$315,000 of pass-through ARPA funds for the project. Christine thanked Dianne, Brian Bell, Ruth Higgins and FOBBL for their persistence in communicating with the County Council and Executive Sidhu. She extended kudos to FOBBL's Doralee Booth, who spoke directly with Councilmember Kaylee Galloway to secure this additional funding for the BBX project. Dianne added thanks to Sen. Sharon Shewmake, who introduced Dianne and Doralee to Kaylee. This grant is a culmination of years of many people working together for the common goal of securing a library for the Birch Bay community.

Dianne invited the trustees to join in a photo opportunity with the County Council, Executive Sidhu and FOBBL members after the January 16 board meeting. Michael confirmed availability with the BBX Design team.

Service Anniversary Recognition

The Board recognized Erin Suda, Deming Library Public Services Assistant for her 20-year service anniversary. Katrina introduced Erin and commended Erin's superstar customer service, which is based in empathy and compassion. Katrina highlighted Erin's continuing work collecting, digitizing, and uploading collections of local historical photos to the [Washington Rural Heritage](#) website, headquartered at the Washington State Library. In addition to her archival work, Erin enjoys cultivating local poets throughout the community and organizing programs and events, including co-hosting three Whatcom READS author interviews.

Thanking Katrina for her incredible support as a manager, Erin shared some moments in her journey with WCLS and the Deming Library. Erin expressed her gratitude for being able to do work that is so fulfilling.

Christine noted Erin's ease in exchanging skills and information with other library staff and professionals, attending library conferences to share presentations and facilitating conversations with authors.

Rod spoke of his many opportunities to chat with Erin at the Deming Library and experience her stellar customer service.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the November 21, 2023, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- October 16-31, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1036320851-1036320855 and voucher nos. 556809-556956 totaling \$229,347.21 and November 1-15, 2023 payroll: check nos. 1036507380-1036507383 and voucher nos. 556964-557116 totaling \$225,846.69.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$219,303.52; \$116,887.86 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, Health Savings Accounts, state paid family medical leave and long-term care fund premiums, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2023-43G: warrant nos. 1179807-1179824 totaling \$112,077.16
- Claim 2023-44G: warrant nos. 1179852-1179883 totaling \$46,711.10
- Claim 2023-45G: warrant nos. 1180387-1180408 totaling \$22,089.34
- Claim 2023-46G: warrant nos. 1180684-1180713 totaling \$152,536.88

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2023-21C: warrant nos. 1179836-1179838 totaling \$1,861.69
- Claim 2023-22C: warrant no. 1179884 totaling \$9,360.00
- Claim 2023-23C: warrant no. 1180714 totaling \$981.80

Rod moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report and Resolutions

Jackie reviewed her report, including the November Notes and Highlights section. She reported that we have collected most of our annual levy but are behind on intergovernmental revenue, such as local grants and entitlements. Jackie noted that our collection materials spending is currently at 85% and is expected to end the year close to budget.

Jackie reported that our biennial audit begins in early January. The team from the State Auditor's Office offers an audit entrance conference for the Board prior to the onset of the audit, and Jackie asked the trustees if they wished to accept that invitation in January. The trustees answered affirmatively.

Jackie reported that the 2024 preliminary budget has been approved by Whatcom County Council and our levy is set for next year. She reviewed the 2024 Final General and Capital Fund Budgets, highlighting what has been updated since the Preliminary General and Capital Budgets were presented at the November 21 regular meeting and public hearing. Jackie recapped the updates made to the Preliminary 5-year Capital Plan for 2024-2028, following last month's meeting. The roughly \$625,000 deficit in the General Fund Budget and need to begin planning for a levy lid lift were briefly discussed. There were no further questions.

Jackie presented Resolution 12/19/23-13 Adopting the 2024 General and Capital Fund Budgets and Resolution 12/19/23-14 Adopting the 2024-2028 Capital Plan.

Rod moved approval of Resolution 12/19/23-13 Adopting the 2024 General and Capital Fund Budgets, as presented. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Matthew moved approval of Resolution 12/19/23-14 Adopting the 2024-2028 Capital Plan. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Executive Session to Discuss the Executive Director's Annual Review per RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)

At 9:40 a.m., Board Chair Rod Lofdahl moved the meeting to Executive Session, as per RCW 42.30.110(1)(g), to discuss the Executive Director's annual performance review. He announced that the Executive Session would end at 10:00 a.m.

At 10:00 a.m., Rod briefly reconvened Open Session to announce the Executive Session would be extended until 10:05 a.m.

At 10:05 a.m., Rod reconvened Open Session.

Executive Director's Annual Performance Review

Rod reported that the Board has completed the Executive Director's 2023 annual performance review and provided recommendations for her 2024 leadership goals, as well as approved a 3.2% COLA and a 2% performance increase in the Executive Director's annual salary. It was noted that the Personnel Committee had discussed these items at the November board meeting with trustees Erika and Holly, who were absent from today's meeting.

Matthew moved to approve the Executive Director's 2023 annual performance evaluation and salary increase as discussed during today's Executive Session. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

BREAK

Rod adjourned for a break from 10:10-10:15 a.m.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine expressed appreciation to our Facilities Services Manager, Ryan Cullup, especially for the emergency support required lately at the North Fork Library due to water pipe issues. Fortunately, WCLS had assumed ownership of that facility a few years ago from the Friends of the North Fork Library (FONFL), because WCLS is better positioned to provide the funding and expertise for this repair.

Christine highlighted two new additions to our Library of Things, non-book items that can be checked out by library patrons. She thanked Thom for donating picture book illustrations that have been framed for display and thanked Lisa for her generosity in sewing the custom bags to protect these items during transportation. Christine noted that ukeles also joined our collection this month, a novel expansion in the items available to check out from WCLS.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that we are in the Request for Qualification process for an architectural design firm for the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express. After a recent site visit, at least three design firms have indicated their intent to apply. There is an upcoming Q&A session and investigation period for the BBX Design Team, with plans to present a design firm recommendation at the February board meeting.

Michael added some insights into the annual tabulation of reference questions and congratulated Mariya Farmagey on her new position as Branch Manager there. Mariya, who is fluent in Ukrainian and Russian, has worked at the North Fork Library for 18 years and was ready to transition into a leadership role at the branch.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and highlighted booklists for three segmented youth categories. He noted that BiblioCommons is a great tool for making lists, and the Youth Services team has made these lists easier to find and more searchable. The team is able to introduce themselves through their staff shelf. In addition to staff shelves, these booklists are displayed in calendar entries for the programs, expanding opportunities for patron interface. Thom noted that previously the team often started with a program and built booklists around it. Now, they can curate booklists and build programs around them.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary presented her written report and invited the group to read the embedded media links and listen to the latest WCLS podcasts. Mary encouraged everyone to read [*Red Paint: The Ancestral Autobiography of a Coast Salish Punk*](#), the selection for Whatcom READS' 16th season, if they have not already done so.

Mary offered gratitude to the Friends of the Library groups and thanked the members of FOBBL for their extensive fundraising work. She shared a photo from the farewell celebration of Friends of Ferndale Library's Norine Amend. With so many people there—friends, community members, a former mayor-- and coverage by *The Ferndale Record* newspaper—the event highlighted the difference a person can make in a community and in the library. Christine added that Norine's husband was a WCLS Trustee, and that the artwork featured in the photo that Mary shared was created by Ferndale Library Clerk Catherine Watson.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that our physical collection size has remained within a designated target window, constantly in flux and staying fresh, as we add and prune items. While we have seen a downward trend in physical DVD and CD circulation, increases in electronic circulation offset these reductions. Michael reviewed door counts, highlighting the high-water mark of 2019 and noting that South Whatcom Library has exceeded their 2019 count. In January, the statistics will reflect 2023's full year of activity and he asked trustees if they wished to retain the 2019 column going forward.

This year's new borrowers started off slow in the first half of the year but are coming back strong in the second half. Michael reported that he had to go back to June of 2018 to find any number as high as the 611 registered in November 2023. Volunteer hours and program and activities attendance are strong.

