



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; Matthew Santos, Vice Chair; Holly Robinson, Secretary; John Miller and Danielle Gaughen. 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, Lynden Library Manager and Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL) President; Jennifer Rick, Foundation Development Director; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Rheannan Pfnister, Records Management Specialist & Executive Assistant; Carmi Parker, ILS Administrator/Librarian.

Guests: None.

Call to Order

Rod 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.

Service Anniversary Recognition – Ashley Romana

The Board recognized Ashley Romana, Public Services Clerk at Lynden, for her 10-year service anniversary. Dianne joined the meeting to share a bit about Ashley.

Ashley was hired as a page in 2014 and promoted to a Public Services Clerk in 2019. She has helped the Lynden branch through many collection moves and building projects, such as the Children’s area remodel and the recent new carpet installation. Ashley excels in many areas, including keeping branch supplies stocked and the branch well organized. She also keeps all the plants inside the Lynden Library looking their best. Ashley is a thoughtful and natural leader, but she prefers to provide support to staff and patrons behind the scenes. She has helped train other staff, including the new Lynden Public Services Clerk. At staff meetings, she always has great materials to share. Ashley speaks Punjabi and loves to help with multicultural programming. Congratulations, Ashley, on 10 years!

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the April 16, 2024, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- March 16-31, 2024 payroll: check nos. 1038144230- 1038144231 and voucher nos. 558388- 558539 totaling \$227,138.57 and April 1-15, 2024 payroll: check nos. 1038309235-1038309236 and voucher nos. 558546-558697 totaling \$231,273.02.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$110,763.78; \$44,028.89 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 2024-13G: warrant nos. 1188263-1188275 totaling \$5,916.65
- Claim 2024-14G: warrant nos. 1188620-1188631 totaling \$103,289.01
- Claim 2024-15G: warrant nos. 1189468-1189490 totaling \$21,167.32
- Claim 2024-16G: warrant nos. 1190142-1190170 totaling \$109,691.09
- Claim 2024-17G: warrant nos. 1190705-1190718 totaling \$35,797.44

Capital Fund:

- None this month

Matthew 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 draft of the Annual Report for the State Auditor.

The end of April brought a large influx of tax revenue payments. Jackie noted that local grants and entitlements revenues are down this year. She shared that several hundred acres of Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands in Whatcom County have recently been designated as protected and will not be harvested. This is a positive step for local environmental efforts, although it will impact revenue that is typically designated for the Capital Fund. We may need to consider how Capital projects are funded in future budget years.

WCLS's investment revenue income is ahead of projections. The expenditures on wages and benefits are where they should be for the year. Operating supplies and utilities are being closely monitored by Jackie as these are most impacted by inflation. Overall operating expenses are at 32% and on track for the year.

WCLS received the first payment from Washington State Department of Commerce for the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express project. This check covers the purchase price for the property and the feasibility study done on the property in 2022.

Emergency food and water supplies purchased for the system in 2018 have expired and were replaced in April. Next, Jackie will work with branches to make sure their first aid kits are updated.

The annual report to the State Auditor is due May 29. Jackie briefly reviewed the most current draft of the annual report for the Board and answered questions for clarification about the notes section towards the end of the report. She will submit the report later this week.

Trustee Education: IT Network

Geoff educated the Board about the network that IT Services manages for WCLS. This network keeps the branches connected to the internet and to Administrative Services. Certain branches have a direct connection to

AS and Ferndale and other branches do not. WCLS makes the greatest effort to get the best possible internet access for each branch. However, not all branches are able to have ideal connections, such as the Lummi Island Library which still has a DSL connection and the Bookmobile which is connected to the network using a cellular connection.

Rod inquired if there are statistics about internet reliability at branches that are not directly connected to AS. Geoff said there are not. The internet at these locations is mostly reliable but can be much slower.

The Trustees were shown a list of what data does and does not live on the servers at AS. Geoff went into detail about what WCLS keeps stored at different locations and with different vendors. WCLS tries to keep as little as possible stored on premises and uses other storage companies to host our data. It is more efficient and cost effective for WCLS to contract data hosting and storage out to other businesses.

John asked how many Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests WCLS receives a year and if personnel information is adequately safeguarded. Christine touched on former practices regarding personnel information and how this information is now stored. Jackie spoke about the number of FOIA requests and the information that WCLS is or is not required by law to provide for these requests.

Geoff announced that the IT Services Committee will be meeting soon. Committee members should watch for a scheduling poll in the near future.

Policy Updates

Pets and Service Animals in the Workplace Policy 12.58 – Beth presented this new policy, which addresses expectations regarding employee pets in the workplace. This policy will unify how the system and branches respond to pets and service animals in the workplace and how to facilitate accommodation requests.

Rod moved to approve the new Pets and Service Animals in the Workplace Policy 12.58, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Disability, Serious Illness, and Accommodation Policy 12.48 – Beth presented this policy update, which has been updated to better reflect the process for accommodation requests.

Matthew moved to approve the updated Disability, Serious Illness, and Accommodation Policy 12.48, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Fixed Asset Policy 20.05 – Jackie presented this policy update, which has been updated to simplify the policy language and remove grouped capital assets.

John moved to adopt the updated Fixed Asset Policy 20.05, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Birch Bay Incorporation

A group of residents in Birch Bay have an interest in incorporating the Birch Bay area into a city. The group approached WCLS to inquire about the impact this would potentially have on library services provided to the residents inside the proposed city limits. Christine reached out to our legal counsel, who let her know that immediately upon the incorporation of Birch Bay taking effect, residents of the City of Birch Bay would no longer be part of our library district. In order for City of Birch Bay residents to qualify for WCLS library cards, the City would need to approve a contract with WCLS that the City would pay WCLS an annual amount equivalent to what property owners would have paid to WCLS pre-incorporation. The contract would also require City officials to encourage City residents to vote to annex into WCLS. A contract with the City of Birch Bay cannot be signed until after the creation of the city, and after an election has been held to elect city officials who can sign this contract. None of this can be guaranteed prior to the incorporation vote. WCLS will be upfront and explain to future potential leaders of Birch Bay that the way to receive library services after incorporating is to vote for and sign a contract with the library district, and eventually for residents to vote to annex into the district.

John asked about contracts we have with other cities. Christine said that all of the other incorporated cities in Whatcom County have annexed into the library district. The contracts we have with municipalities are Interlocal Agreements for Exchange of Services.

Discussion took place about the impacts of a city not annexing into the library district for both the library and the existing patrons inside the city limits.

Break

Rod adjourned for a break from 10:26-10:35 a.m.

eBook Legislation

Carmi Parker discussed the current state of the eBook publishing industry and its effect on public libraries. Carmi is WCLS's Integrated Library System Coordinator and serves as the Chair of the Washington Digital Lending Consortium (WDLC). WCLS and Bellingham Public Library are the two biggest library systems in WDLC. WDLC purchases eBook licenses through an aggregator, OverDrive, who in turn works directly with eBook publishers. Carmi shared statistics about the difference in price between a print item and a digital item. License fees for digital items have increased dramatically over the past decade. Assuming the pattern continues, purchasing digital content will not be sustainable for libraries. Libraries across the U.S. are looking into other options. Carmi detailed the efforts to draft eBook legislation to compel publishers to sell eBooks to libraries with fair terms. WCLS is part of a larger group of libraries that are actively working on a bill for legislation to curb the restrictions publishers continue to add to the terms of an eBook license. The group currently has a draft out for review to libraries across the state. The hope is to have a final draft ready for the 2025 legislative session. One claim of the publishing lobby is that authors are hurt by licensing digital materials to libraries, which is not accurate. The entities controlling what authors make are the publishers and not libraries. Theoretically, a potential downside of this measure successfully passing is that a publisher could refuse to sell eBooks entirely in Washington State. WDLC spends approximately \$1 million annually on eMaterials; large systems like King County Library System, Pierce County, Sno-Isle, SPL and others spend tens of millions each. It would be hard to imagine all eBook publishers walking away from this significant amount of business, particularly if other states followed suit with similar legislation.

Christine spoke about why legislation and other strategies are necessary, and the potential peril for public libraries if eBook publishing trends are allowed to continue.

Rod inquired why all libraries in the state are not part of the Washington Digital Lending Consortium. Carmi explained there could be many reasons a library may have been excluded from participating initially, including the size of the library system and preexisting contracts with Overdrive and publishers.

Digital formats are a growing part of library circulations and a large part of the future of libraries are digital books. The Board agreed that based off the pricing model and current pricing trends for eBooks, WCLS is compelled to advocate for libraries.

South Whatcom Library Lease

Christine spoke about the South Whatcom Library building lease in Sudden Valley. She gave background on the history of the South Whatcom Library and the situation that led to WCLS leasing the current location. The current lease expires at the end of June. The previous agreements were between the Sudden Valley Community Association (SVCA), the Friends of the Sudden Valley Library and WCLS. The new lease will be between WCLS and the SVCA only. Christine updated the Board on the most recent proposed terms of a new lease. Christine has not yet heard back from the SVCA General Manager about the negotiations of terms. Discussion ensued about the negotiations between Christine and the SVCA and the hopeful outcome as well as the long-term goals and impacts on library services.

EV Charging Grants Update

Christine and Ryan updated the Board on the EV charging station grants that Ryan applied for on behalf of WCLS in December of 2023.

WCLS has been awarded two grants for multiple charging stations at different locations. The Department of Commerce awarded WCLS a grant for installation at the Deming, North Fork, and Birch Bay Vogt Library Express locations as well as at Administrative Services.

The second grant is from PSE and was awarded to the Administrative Services location for installation and infrastructure improvements to add EV charging stations for WCLS-owned fleet vehicles. The PSE grant requires that WCLS purchases two EV vehicles. This purchase was already planned for the 2022-2025 WCLS Strategic Plan and calculated into the fiscal budget for 2024. This grant also requires a 10-year agreement to reside on the current Administrative Services property. If WCLS decides to leave the current location of Administrative Services after the completion of the AS Feasibility Study, WCLS would have to repay PSE the grant in full if that date is before the fulfillment of the 10-year commitment. The Board indicated that this risk is one worth taking.

Matthew motioned to authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract with PSE regarding the installation of the EV fleet charging stations. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Rod motioned to authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract with the Department of Commerce regarding the installation of the EV public charging stations. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted the upcoming Nooksack Water Rights Adjudication (WRIA 1). Staff will be receiving directions on how to assist patrons that come into our libraries and need assistance with this process.

This week, conversations will be happening about a potential partnership with the Nooksack Tribal Library.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that at the Chardi Kala Celebration this past weekend, he and WCLS Punjabi Cultural Liaison Harneet Sidhu were each presented with a siropa, a ceremonial scarf. This is reflective of the growing relationships in the community and services that WCLS cultural liaisons are cultivating.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and highlighted the 2024 Summer Reading Program which starts at the beginning of June and continues through August. This year, WCLS is partnering with Whatcom Million Trees Project again with the goal of planting 250 trees in the fall. WCLS has gradually moved away from prize associated summer reading programs and has been working to create a program that has a balance of structure and freedom for readers of all ages. Thom thanked everybody involved with the planning and organizing of this year's summer reading program.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary presented her written report. She noted the next Marketing Committee Meeting is Tuesday, June 4 from 3–4:30 p.m. at Administrative Services.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

Michael briefly recapped his written report and shared that despite trends, April 2024 saw a slight increase in physical circulation compared to April 2023. He indicated that the April 2024 program attendance for adults should be corrected from 127 to 527.

Thom noted that attendance for some children’s programming may decrease over the next year due to staffing levels at local schools. Many of the children’s programs at our libraries are promoted at schools by Youth Services staff during school visits. Staffing levels at the local schools are low and may not allow for many Youth Services visits during the 2024-2025 school year.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

Nothing to report.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Whatcom County Library Foundation

Jenn said that the Foundation is ahead of schedule and has reached the 50% mark of their annual fundraising goal for 2024. Some upcoming events that the Foundation is supporting are Pride in the Park on July 14 and the Whatcom Grooves events hosted at branches throughout the system over the summer.

Announcements and Adjourn

There is a Community Engagement Session for the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express on Monday, June 10 from 6 – 7:30 p.m. on the lawn of the Birch Bay property.

Rod adjourned the meeting at 11:58 a.m.

Next Meeting

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on June 18, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. online via Microsoft Teams and at Administrative Services, 5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226.

_____/s/
Holly Robinson, Board Secretary

06/18/2024

Date

_____/s/
Rheannan Pfnister, Exec. Assistant