



October 22, 2024

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; and Danielle Gaughen.
Absent: John Miller.

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; Ryan Cullup, Facilities Services Manager; Beth Andrews, Human Resources Manager; Dianne Marrs-Smith, Birch Bay & 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; Alix Prior, Ferndale Library Manager; Tess Reding Hoffart, Youth Services Assistant.

Guests: None.

Call to Order

Rod determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m., followed by a reading of the WCLS Land Acknowledgement by Michael.

Open Public Comment

No public comment.

Service Anniversary Recognition – Lisa Gresham

The Board recognized Collection Services Manager Lisa Gresham for her 20-year service anniversary this month. Lisa joined WCLS in 2004 as the Ferndale Library Manager. She supported and added stability to the branch staff there. In 2006, she became the Adult Services Coordinator and a selector, and in 2014 she stepped into the role of Collection Services Manager. Her position is a great fit for all her skills including her ability to lead staff. Lisa was one of the original Whatcom READS committee members and has reviewed books for *Cascadia Daily News* for ten years. She was integral to the creation of the Washington Digital Library Consortium and is a member of the Puget Sound Collection Development Group. Lisa has developed collections for new branches, and branch remodels. She is approachable and friendly no matter how busy she is. WCLS values all that Lisa brings to the system.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the September 17, 2024, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- August 16-31, 2024 payroll: check nos. 1040004102-1040004108 and voucher nos. 559958-560109 totaling \$237,833.78 and September 1-15, 2024 payroll: check nos. 1040167199-1040167204 and voucher nos. 560115-560266 totaling \$229,520.48.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$98,289.93; \$48,056.40 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, Health Savings Accounts, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2024-35G: warrant nos. 1198961-1198973 totaling \$41,796.45
- Claim 2024-36G: warrant nos. 1199290-1199301 totaling \$128,915.18
- Claim 2024-37G: warrant nos. 1199631-1199655 totaling \$54,124.47
- Claim 2024-38G: warrant nos. 1200103-1200126 totaling \$31,679.50

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2024-16C: warrant nos. 1199656-1199657 totaling \$22,481.05
- Claim 2024-17C: warrant no. 1200127 totaling \$1,878.07

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

Facilities Plan

Ryan spoke to the Board about the facilities projects over the past year and the upcoming projects for 2025. One of the items on the list for next year is furnishings enhancement and replacement at many branches. This will involve either recovering or replacing well-used furnishings that are worn.

Holly asked if Ryan is regularly checking that WCLS's accessibility is still up to ADA compliance. This is checked regularly to ensure that WCLS is in compliance.

Ryan reviewed which accounts the funds for these improvements come from and the changes from 2024 to 2025. He asked for feedback from the Board. Holly inquired about what percentage of the funds were to cover deferred maintenance. Ryan said that about 12% is for deferred maintenance. The EV Chargers project was delayed until 2025 due to PSE's timeline.

One concern Matthew had was the intent to decrease the funds for repairs and maintenance in 2025 by \$20,000. Jackie said it was her suggestion to lower that because there are sufficient funds set aside for unexpected repairs. The amount budgeted reflects a realistic capacity for what projects and repairs Ryan's team can accommodate next year, along with money for contingencies. The money that has been set aside for maintenance has not been exhausted this year and lowering it for 2025 makes sense.

Holly asked how Ryan prioritizes projects. ADA compliance and projects that could cause more harm if delayed are prioritized. The remaining projects are then prioritized based on the skill set of his team and their workload capacity. Ryan's team also balances the needs of each branch and considers which locations haven't had much attention or updates as recently as others and what kind of funding is available for those projects.

Rod asked about the time frame and commitment for the North Fork Library meeting room project. Michael stated that the timeline is contingent on the ability to raise funds for this project. Many grant applications have already been submitted. There are a few grants whose application period has not yet opened. Applications for those grants will be submitted when the appropriate timeframe comes around.

Matthew asked if there are outstanding facilities requests at branches that have not been added to the 2025 projects list and how they make it to Ryan and onto the project list. Ryan explained the process he and Jackie have in place to meet with branch managers to receive requests for projects each year.

Closed Session to discuss 2025-2029 Bargaining Unit Contract and Wage & Benefit Negotiations

At 9:57 a.m., Board Chair Rodney Lofdahl moved the meeting to Closed Session, as per RCW 42.30.140(4)(a), to discuss the 2025 Wage and Benefit Agreement and 2025-2029 contract with the Bargaining Unit. It was announced that the Closed Session would end at 10:20 a.m.

At 10:20 a.m., the meeting was reopened briefly to convey that Closed Session will be extended to 10:25 a.m.

At 10:25 a.m., Rod reconvened Open Session for final action on the 2025 Wage and Benefit Agreement and 2025-2029 Bargaining Unit Contract.

2025 Wage and Benefit Agreement and 2025-2029 Bargaining Unit Contract

Holly moved approval of the 2025 Wage and Benefit Agreement and 2025-2029 contract. Seconded. Unanimously passed.

Christine thanked Holly and John who were part of the negotiations team. The entire team, including our new Union Representative Rosie Ventura, did a great job and brought many insights.

Break

Rod adjourned for a break from 10:29-10:35 a.m.

Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

Jackie reviewed her report, including the September Notes and Highlights section. Jackie checked with the County Treasurer's office yesterday about WCLS's total amount of collected property taxes so far for 2024. Wages and benefits and all other expenses are still right where we need to be. Going into October, we have dipped into the Cash Flow reserve fund, which will be replenished with the remaining 2024 property tax revenue once it arrives later this month.

Jackie reviewed the 2024 General Fund Budget Amendment. There is no change to the ending fund balance as revenue increases will cover new expenditures. Some additional existing costs were moved between accounts.

Rod moved to approve Resolution 10/22/24-12 amending the 2024 General Fund Budget as presented. Seconded. Unanimously passed.

Jackie reviewed the 2025 General Fund budget draft. These numbers are estimates based on the information available so far this year and will change as more information comes in and projects are either completed or pushed to 2025.

Jackie walked Trustees through the preliminary budget draft. She noted the amount budgeted for property taxes includes a 1% increase over the 2024 highest lawful levy along with an estimate of new construction amounts. The amount budgeted for Contributions & Donations will decrease in 2025 as there were a few one-time only contributions in 2024. In 2024, office supplies were higher because of a few projects that took place and will not be happening again next year. It is expected that Professional Services expenditures will be increasing quite a bit. Attorney fees are going up, but this line also includes a cyber audit.

Rod asked about the increase in new construction in the county and how accurate that estimate is. Jackie spoke about the analysis that goes into the levy increase WCLS asks for the next year.

Jackie talked about possibly un-designating certain cash reserve funds soon to free up designated money to help cover 2025 operating expenses.

Trustee Education: Open Book

Michael shared his gratitude for all the staff, community partners and volunteers making Open Book possible this year. He spoke about the thought behind the choice of location. Last year, 775 people attended Open Book. We reached people beyond our usual library users. There will be many sessions, booths and hands-on activities for readers of all ages. We are celebrating books, reading, building relationships with partners and community advocacy. Open Book may happen again in future years, but it will not return in 2025. Mary would like to thank WCLF who are funding Open Book 2024.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted the All Friends Gathering that took place earlier this month. Holly was in attendance as well as close to fifty representatives from Friends groups throughout the library system. Holly said she was excited to see a different generation of Friends from the branches.

Christine, Ryan and Michael recently took a tour of the new Mount Vernon Library Commons.

The Grand Tamal Showdown at the Everson Library brought in around 200 people. Cultural liaisons Diana Antaño and Amelia Martinez coordinated the competition to make this event so successful.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

In addition to his written report, Michael reminded the Board that WCLS has internet hotspots available for checkout. WCLS can provide these devices thanks to a program that offers the equipment at a reduced cost but in limited quantities. Holly asked about the difference in price on the devices with and without the discount. One internet hotspot device purchased without the discount is \$87 compared to \$18. The Mendery and our IT Services staff have been helpful in getting each device ready to go out into circulation. Megan Succi, Public Services Assistant at Everson manages activation on devices that are not returned on time or missing. The usage of the devices shows representation from all over the county.

Michael is appreciative of the Cultural Liaisons for their work getting the Spanish language phone line up and running.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and highlighted some of the efforts that Youth Services has been pursuing, including visiting the schools in the county. His report reflects a small glimpse of what is happening behind the scenes to get books into the hands of kids throughout Whatcom County.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report. She noted some big news regarding the WCLS website. The website was recently revamped and is live. The Marketing Committee received feedback and developed a plan to make it easier to find what you need when browsing our main page. Neil McKay and Siri Beckmen did a great job addressing issues as they arose.

Mary spoke about the All Friends Gathering which took place earlier in October. There was a strong turnout and all of the Friends groups were represented.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that the circulation of physical materials is softening. Digital circulation is increasing. Door counts for branches are surpassing 2023 totals. They will be diving deeper into

