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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; John Miller and Danielle Gaughen. Absent: Matthew Santos, Vice Chair and Holly Robinson, Secretary both with prior notice.

**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, Birch Bay and Lynden Library Manager and Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL) President; Maggie Mae Nase, Learning Coordinator; Rheannan Pfnister, Records Management Specialist & Executive Assistant; Alix Prior, Ferndale Branch Manager.

**Guests:** Brad Cornwall, Principal at RMC Architects; Virginia Naef, Friends of Deming Library.

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Call to Order

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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.

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Open Public Comment

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No public comment.

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Consent Agenda

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The Consent Agenda included minutes of the November 19, 2024, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- October 16-31, 2024 payroll: check nos. 1040715249-1040715251 and voucher nos. 560610-560767 totaling \$239,924.80 and November 1-15, 2024 payroll: check nos. 1040889090-1040889094 and voucher nos. 560773-560926 totaling \$236,081.96.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$98,731.03; \$47,995.88 of this is for employee funded contributions to dental insurance premiums, Health Savings Accounts, PERS and deferred compensation plans (made via payroll deduction).
- Claim 2024-44G: warrant nos. 1202986-1203005 totaling \$22,165.44
- Claim 2024-45G: warrant nos. 1203391-1203421 totaling \$117,499.90

- Claim 2024-46G: warrant nos. 1203875-1203900 totaling \$50,700.81
- Claim 2024-47G: warrant nos. 1204842-1204871 totaling \$36,366.96

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2024-22C: warrant no. 1203006 totaling \$14,392.69
- Claim 2024-23C: warrant no. 1203422 totaling \$27,740.00
- Claim 2024-24C: warrant nos. 1204803-1204804 totaling \$24,183.55

Authorization to Void a Warrant:

- Resolution 12/17/24-16 voiding warrant 1203415

John requested that the unapproved minutes for the November Board of Trustees meeting be amended to include “with prior notice” as a note to the absent trustees.

***John moved to accept the Consent Agenda with proposed changes to the UNAPPROVED Minutes. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.***

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Financial Report and Resolutions: Finance Committee Report

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Jackie reviewed her report, including the November Notes and Highlights section. Jackie noted that the lag in remaining levy payments has been resolved and most of the tax funds have been received by WCLS. Jackie noted that it will appear that WCLS is collecting less tax money this year than last year due to a payment in abeyance received in 2023.

Jackie reviewed the proposed 2025 Budget. There were minimal changes to the Preliminary 2025 Budget presented to the board in November. One of the changes was an increase in employee benefit expenses after Open Enrollment closed. The IT budget includes the IT equipment for the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express. This equipment comes from the IT budget and not the earmarked funds for FFE for the new library express. The cost of liability insurance appears to be decreasing but this is because of a timing issue with the billing cycle. Jackie has budgeted for an increase in insurance premiums. WCLS will have an operating deficit next year.

Every year the Board reviews the WCLS schedule of Fines and Fees. There have been no changes in the past few years. Danielle asked for clarification on the difference between Schedule A and Schedule B on the Meeting Room Schedule of Fees. Michael clarified that Schedule A is for personal use while Schedule B is for commercial use of library meeting spaces.

Jackie outlined WCLS’s capital projects for the next five years. Some of the updates include new carpet at a branch, transitioning from fluorescent lighting in all branches still using fluorescent lights and updates to signage. The Birch Bay Vogt Library Express construction and adding electric vehicle charging stations at select locations are the two big projects for 2025.

Due to the timing of Whatcom County closing out the 2024 accounts, there will be no finance report at the January Board of Trustees meeting. Trustees should expect a budget amendment at the February Board of Trustees meeting.

Danielle said that the presented budget was well put together and answered all her questions. She appreciates how detailed and explanatory it is.

***Danielle moved to approve Resolution 12/17/24-17 adopting the Fiscal Year 2025 General and Capital Fund budgets. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.***

***John moved to approve Resolution 12/17/27-18 adopting the 2025-2029 Capital Improvement Plan. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.***

RMC Architects was hired earlier this year to conduct an Administrative Services (AS) Feasibility Study on the current AS building to determine the best options that WCLS has to remodel, rebuild or relocate. Ryan and Christine reminded the board of the purpose of the AS Feasibility Study – to give trustees the information they need before making major repairs to the current AS building. She introduced Brad Cornwell with RMC Architects.

Brad reviewed the report and findings of the study. RMC recognized that AS staff are working in nonideal conditions and overcrowding; both of which are causing staff to work in a deficient way. He applauded the current Trustees for their wisdom and commitment to bettering WCLS.

RMC looked at existing conditions and provided four options for remodeling or rebuilding. Each option addressed different existing conditions. Brad showed the different footprints for each option. Rod asked how long the pricing for each option is good for in the future. RMC provided the pricing estimates for each year into 2027. The costs listed do not include soft costs like architectural and engineering expenses, permit fees, or sales tax. Rod asked about the pricing for moving staff offsite during the options that staff would not be able to remain on site. RMC did not include those costs in the estimates. That cost would be considered a soft cost.

RMC also looked at relocation options and which currently available sites would be preferable in terms of location and size, as well as pricing. Sites for sale and for lease were investigated for long term or temporary solutions. Beth asked for clarification about the for-sale options also needing construction to become an ideal option. Brad confirmed that the estimates provided on those options did not include costs to ready the properties for WCLS use.

Christine asked Brad to clarify the costs for each of the onsite options.

Danielle asked Christine if AS staff were favoring one option over another. Christine said that staff are currently more concerned about the operating budget and increasing annual deficits. Any changes to the AS facility can only happen once operating budgets are stabilized. She also noted that the addition to the square footage at AS is to maintain current services – not add services. Adding services was not factored into the site selections and construction options.

Christine mentioned that the final report from RMC is over 130 pages long and not included in the packet due to length. If Trustees would like to see the report, we can print it for them. Danielle asked if they could receive a digital copy of the report. Ryan will send out a digital copy of the report to trustees.

The board thanked Brad and his team at RMC for the report and the attention provided to detail.

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## Policy Updates

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**Sick Leave Policy 12.22** – Beth presented this policy update, which aligns the policy with the state law update going into effect in 2025. This update further clarifies the definition of a family member and health-related closures of public facilities. Beth also added language to reinforce closure pay versus sick pay if WCLS were to close a facility due to a health-related issue.

Danielle asked if this update covers bad weather closures. This policy is only for health-related closures.

***Rod moved to approve the updated Sick Leave Policy 12.22, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.***

**Temporary Reassignment Policy 12.15** – Beth presented this policy update, which is a result of the negotiations with the union. This change will align this policy with the current bargaining agreement. The update covers temporary reassignments for absences over 30 days and how the hours are counted towards an employee's annual hour cap.

***John moved to approve the updated Temporary Reassignment Policy 12.15, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.***

**Overtime Pay/Compensatory Time Policy 12.43** – Beth presented this policy update, which increases the amount of time allowed to take accrued compensatory time from two months to three months.

**Rod moved to approve the updated Overtime Pay/Compensatory Time Policy 12.43, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.**

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#### 2025 Addendum to Agreement with Whatcom County Library Foundation

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Christine spoke about the agreement between WCLS and the Whatcom County Library Foundation (WCLF) outlining the financial responsibilities between the two organizations regarding the salary of the Foundation Development Director. Christine reviewed a few of the changes included in the 2025 Addendum. The 2025 Addendum has already been approved by the WCLF Board of Trustees.

**Danielle moved to approve the 2025 Addendum to the Whatcom County Library Foundation Agreement, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.**

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#### Break

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Rod adjourned for a break from 10:31-10:41 a.m.

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#### Executive Session to Discuss the Executive Director’s Annual Review

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At 10:44 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 10:55 a.m.

At 10:55 a.m., Rod reconvened Open Session.

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#### Executive Director’s Annual Review

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John reported that the Board has completed the Executive Director’s 2024 annual performance review. The Personnel Committee recommends a 2.5% COLA and a 1% performance increase in the Executive Director’s annual salary. This mirrors the same increase in pay for WCLS staff as in the 2025 wage and benefit agreement between WCLS and the union.

**John motioned to approve the Executive Director’s 2024 annual performance review and a salary increase of 2.5% for COLA and an additional 1% for proficiency. Seconded. Unanimously passed.**

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#### 2025 Meeting Locations

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Christine reviewed the proposed 2025 Board of Trustees meeting schedule locations. Danielle wanted to note that this was previously discussed at a meeting she attended remotely, and she did not catch the conversation. She prefers to attend in person. The board discussed the challenges of meeting at locations other than AS, as well as the benefits of visiting the branches.

**John motioned that only the first three meeting locations of 2025 be approved and the February meeting at the Blaine Library begin at 9:30 a.m. to accommodate Trustee travel. Seconded. Passed unanimously.**

Trustees will also have an opportunity to visit the branches at upcoming Budget Listening Sessions scheduled throughout February and March and are always encouraged to attend a branch on their own or with Christine.

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#### Trustee Education: Classification Process

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Beth spoke to the Trustees about the classification process, including what the job audit application process is like for staff and what the classification committee considers during the process. The process is to determine if a

position is at the appropriate pay level based on the skill level and education requirements for each position. This process can be triggered by staff applying for a job audit or if the position has undergone a significant change in scope, conditions and responsibilities. The committee considers numerous factors, including liability and the impact the proposed changes may have on other staff and positions. Beth reviewed how the applications are scored and how decisions are made. All the application materials are made available to third party advisors for review and advice.

Rod asked about the vacant levels on the pay scale. When the scale was created for WCLS, we intentionally set a 5% difference between each pay level. Some pay levels are vacant because there are no positions that currently fall within that pay level. Christine reiterated that the job audit process only reflects the classification of each position and does not incorporate a salary study, which is completely different. The board is made aware of a position's reclassification if the determination made to reclassify a position creates a significant budget constraint.

Rod inquired if the audits were focused and aimed at individuals or groups of employees in the same position. Although an individual may request a job audit, the audit is completed with the entire group in the same position in mind and the results affect the position and all of its incumbents.

The last classification and compensation study done by a third party on behalf of WCLS was conducted in 2017. It is customary to have a study completed every four years or so. They are expensive to conduct and to implement the results and WCLS does not have the funds to do them as often as ideally needed. Dianne commented that she hopes that WCLS can get back to having the studies done on a regular schedule.

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#### Staff Reports: Executive Director

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Christine highlighted the Deming Library annual High Tea hosted by the Friends of the Deming Library that took place in early December. Christine was able to attend and enjoy the festivities.

A group of WCLS staff have begun using their learning hours to utilize Mango Languages to learn and practice American Sign Language (ASL) together. Christine is excited that staff are interested in this topic and eager to provide a deeper level of service to patrons.

Jennifer Rick is retiring from her position with WCLS as the Foundation Development Director. Her position is currently posted on [wcls.org](http://wcls.org). Be on the lookout for a retirement party announcement in January.

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#### Staff Reports: Deputy Director

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In addition to his written report, Michael said that WCLS has access to language interpretation services but has recently added on-demand video translation services for ASL.

Michael wanted to make the board aware of a fundraising event hosted by the Friends of the Sumas Library at the Sumas Community Center in February.

There is a property line matter at the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express location. The property line of the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express extends past the current fence line. Michael reviewed the options being explored and the area of impact of this issue. John asked if there was an expedient solution to the property line issue. Michael believes that after the next meeting with the affected property owner, there will be a path forward to a solution.

One of the grants WCLS has received to fund the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express expires in June 2025. WCLS will need to start the process with the State to reallocate the funds to this project for the next grant cycle. It is unlikely the State will not reallocate the funds, but it is a possibility of which the Board should be aware. Christine will be traveling to Olympia to meet with state legislators in February and plans to discuss the reallocation of the grant funds.

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## Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

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Thom shared his written report and spoke about the Guadalajara International Book Fair that Youth Services Assistant Jim Pettinger and Collection Development Librarian Emma Radosevich were able to attend a few weeks ago. The American Library Association (ALA) helps subsidize the travel fees for libraries attending this fair, which makes it possible for WCLS to send staff. Attending this conference gives the selectors access to lower cost materials that originate in Spanish speaking countries, as opposed to books translated from English into Spanish, providing a more authentic in cultural experience for our patrons.

Thom also highlighted the American Girl Doll collection that WCLS currently has in the Library of Things. These dolls circulate quite a bit. They are cherished and well taken care of by our patrons. Narrative play is important in the development of reading skills. If you can imagine yourself in a story, it helps your reading development. The American Girl Doll collection encourages and aides in this practice.

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## Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

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Mary discussed her written report. She noted that Whatcom READS season has begun. There are a wide variety of Whatcom READS events taking place throughout the first part of 2025 and she encourages everyone to register and attend them.

The Ferndale Record did a great job reporting the Ferndale Library's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in their current building.

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## Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

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Michael noted that, as predicted, physical media circulation is decreasing, and digital media circulation is increasing. Door counts have increased throughout the system over the year. WCLS has kept the 2019 numbers to refer to in the statistics reports. Michael recommended dropping the 2019 statistics beginning in 2025. The board agreed that the 2019 statistics have been useful as a comparison tool but that they can be removed going forward beginning in 2025. Data from 2019 can be referred to in the future if need be.

Danielle noticed that circulation is down at Island and North Fork branches, but door counts have increased.

The volunteer statistics will be gathered in a slightly different way beginning in 2025 and will no longer be reported in the Board agenda packet.

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## Performance Measures & Committee Reports: IT Services Committee

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The IT Services Committee reported that the network resiliency pilot project that has been taking place at the Lynden branch will be completed soon. The goal of this project is to reduce the dependency of branches on Administrative Services for internet. Geoff reminded the Board that the cyberaudit will be taking place in 2025.

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## Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

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Rod received an email from Holly saying that she will be resigning from her position with the Board and relocating. Her resignation will go into effect after the January Board of Trustees meeting. The Personnel Committee will be posting for her board position after the holidays.

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

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Christine reported that Matthew met with a few members of the WCLF Board of Directors and Christine to review the Foundation Development Director job description. Matthew may join them again to assist with the application process once the position has been posted.

