



Location

This meeting was held in a hybrid manner, with remote attendance via Microsoft Teams and in-person attendance at the Blaine Library, 610 3rd Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

In Attendance

Trustees: Rodney Lofdahl, Chair; John Miller and Danielle Gaughen. Absent: Matthew Santos, Vice Chair.

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 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; Jonathan Jakobitz, Blaine Library Manager.

Guests: Virginia Naef, Friends of the Deming Library; Eric Lewis, Blaine City Council.

Call to Order

Rod determined quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m., followed by a reading of the WCLS Land Acknowledgement by Michael.

Open Public Comment

Eric Lewis with the Blaine City Council was introduced.

Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda included minutes of the January 21, 2025, Board of Trustees Regular Meeting as well as the following:

Expenditures:

General Fund:

- December 16-31, 2024 payroll: check nos. 1041464254- 1041464262 and voucher nos. 561251-561403 totaling \$234,635.02 and January 1-15, 2025 payroll: check nos. 1041677506- 1041677510 and voucher nos. 561409-561564 totaling \$239,877.11.
- ACH transactions for employee benefits, telecommunication services, annual insurance premiums and monthly sales/use tax filings totaling \$123,211.63; \$65,400.37 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 2024-52G: warrant nos. 1250002-1250021 totaling \$97,183.90
- Claim 2024-53G: warrant nos. 1250068-1250112 totaling \$112,076.10
- Claim 2024-54G: warrant nos. 1250664-1250677 totaling \$8,507.63

- Claim 2025-01G: warrant nos. 1250022-1250024 totaling \$18,015.43
- Claim 2025-02G: warrant nos. 1250297-1250308 totaling \$181,396.68
- Claim 2025-03G: warrant nos. 1250678-1250689 totaling \$65,959.18
- Claim 2025-04G: warrant nos. 1251380-1251395 totaling \$99,322.87

Capital Fund:

- Claim 2024-27C: warrant nos. 1250025-1250026 totaling \$909.89
- Claim 2024-28C: warrant nos. 1250690-1250691 totaling \$2,820.00
- Claim 2025-01C: warrant no. 1251396 totaling \$5,838.30

Authorization to Void Warrants

- Resolution 02/18/25-01 voiding warrants 1250070, 1250097, 1250101, 1250102 and 1250307

Danielle 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 December Notes and Highlights section.

The finance report this month includes 2024 year-end and January 2025 information. General property taxes collected for WCLS in 2024 were \$44,570 less than expected.

The county implemented a new accounting system at the end of 2024. Due to this change, investment revenue that would normally post in January 2025 instead posted in December 2024.

Wages and benefits for 2024 were under budget by \$122,000. This is due to position vacancies and unused hours, along with associated benefit costs. The office supply budget was overspent due to inflation and the continued rising costs for office supplies. Collection materials were under budget by \$41,410. This is a payment timing issue that Lisa and Jackie hope to resolve. Tools and Equipment were also under budget and some items will be carried into 2025. Communication was over budget. The rising costs of postage prices were a contributing factor to the higher-than-expected expense throughout 2024.

Although net income was better than projected, WCLS was still operating in a deficit for 2024.

Jackie also briefly reviewed the Capital fund expenses in 2024. There are still plans to install EV charging stations at multiple WCLS locations. However, the charging stations are on back order. WCLS is waiting for the charging stations to be installed before purchasing the replacement electric vehicles which has caused a surplus of funds while the project carries over into 2025.

Jackie reviewed a recent settlement of a property valuation dispute and the impact of the settlement on WCLS levy taxes collected in 2025.

Jackie reviewed the 2025 budget amendment. This included the 2025 beginning balance which has been updated to reflect the 2024 ending balance. She analyzed the increase in costs and the decrease in revenues.

Rod moved to approve Resolution 02/18/25-02 Amending the 2025 General Fund Budget as presented. Seconded. Unanimous board approval.

Friends of the Deming Library Update

Virginia Naef with the Friends of the Deming Library spoke about the upcoming projects taking place at the Deming Library. The Friends of the Deming Library own and maintain the library building and property it is located on. A few projects happening in 2025 are the installation of solar panels on the new metal roof and a battery pack preventing the library from being impacted by power outages. These improvements are possible because of a grant awarded to the Friends of the Deming Library. The interior of the library is also getting new carpet this year. Carpet installation costs will be split between the Friends and WCLS.

Recently, flooding of a nearby street and culvert impacted the Deming Library and backed up into the yard. The Friends are working with the county to find a solution to the problem before it happens again.

Trustee Education: Blaine Library Tour and Update

Jonathan led the Board and attendees on a tour of the Blaine Library and provided a brief history about the current library building. He spoke about the redesigns and upgrades that are being planned to better utilize the current space.

Michael and Christine spoke about the recent history of plans to rebuild the Blaine Library. WCLS plans to refocus on finding funds for a new Blaine Library building once funding is secured to address the deficit impacting day-to-day operations at WCLS. The upcoming improvements Jonathan spoke about during his tour will help the Blaine Library continue to provide patrons the best possible service until that time.

Eric Lewis thanked Jonathan for the tour and said that WCLS is making great use of the limited space it currently has. He says that when – not if - the new library is built, it will be a great space for the community.

Break

Rod adjourned for a break from 10:45-10:51 a.m.

Policy Updates

Required Leave Policy 12.36 – Beth presented this policy update, which clarifies the ability to pay staff when they leave work following work-related incidents. Christine provided an example of when this may happen. Jackie clarified that the updated policy covers incidents that impact mental and physical health. Discussion took place about the difference between what this policy update covers in comparison to L&I. WCLS will always encourage staff to seek medical attention if they are injured to the point they cannot return to work on their next shift.

Rod moved to approve the updated Required Leave Policy 12.36, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Birch Bay Easement

Michael updated the Board about an ongoing matter with a property line at the Birch Bay location. A land survey in 2024 discovered use of the neighboring property is encroaching on the property line towards the back of the WCLS property. There is a tentative agreement between WCLS and the neighboring owner, Edgewater Estates, regarding an easement along an existing fence line to continue to allow the adjacent property owner use of the area. Michael provided a cost per square foot estimate of the affected WCLS property that was used to calculate the cost of the easement. The property owner will also be asked to share the legal fees associated with creating this easement.

John moved to approve the Birch Bay property easement agreement with Edgewater Estates, as presented. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Budget Listening Sessions Report

Christine spoke about the two recent Budget Listening Sessions that have happened so far at branches. Trustees discussed their takeaways from the sessions they were able to attend. The remaining Budget Listening Sessions continue at branches through February and into March and will conclude the weekend before the March board meeting. The trustees discussed the timeline for reviewing the feedback from the sessions and the dates the board would need to vote on whether or not to pursue a levy lid lift this year.

Staff Reports: Executive Director

In addition to her written report, Christine highlighted her recent trip to the State Capitol for Library Legislative Day. While there, she spoke with elected officials about re-appropriating grant funding for the Birch Bay Vogt Library Express for the next biennium. This was followed by the Washington State Public Library Director's meeting. The Washington State Library relies on federal funding for certain services, including the Washington Anytime Library. Changes at the federal level may impact this popular consortium, which could in turn have an impact on WCLS's ability to offer such a wide variety of eBook and eAudiobooks to patrons.

Staff Reports: Deputy Director

Michael presented his written report and thanked Jonathan Jakobitz for his contribution to Michael's report this month.

Staff Reports: Youth Services Manager

Thom shared his written report and highlighted the project to have WCLS library locations added to school bus routes throughout the county. Students could ride the school bus to the public library after school. This will increase library access for youth patrons. Deming and Lynden branch managers are already working towards this goal.

Thom is working with the Opportunity Council to develop a portal for families to access services for their children. Thom will have more information as this project moves forward.

Staff Reports: Community Relations Manager

Mary discussed her written report. She spoke to the Board about the updated tactics of WCLS's communication plan. WCLS will be segmenting emails going forward to reach patrons on a more individual level and with information that may be of particular interest to them. This was recently tested for Pajama Storytime and it increased attendance at this program immediately.

WCLS's Spanish language phone line will be highlighted in the local media soon. After a brief hiatus, the podcast is back with a new episode.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Performance Measures

In addition to his written report, Michael shared that numbers between January 2024 and January 2025 may be skewed due to multiple inclement weather closures in 2024. Unique users of digital resources are at a record high since Lisa started tracking these statistics. eAudiobooks are still the most popular digital items accessed. WCLS took advantage of a temporary discount to fill holds for a recently released popular title that had over 200 holds. This opportunity filled most of WCLS's existing holds and lowered the holds queue for the Washington Anytime Library.

The database usage statistics were estimated for January due to an issue with the website used to gather these statistics. The statistics will be updated for the March meeting.

Performance Measures & Committee Reports: Personnel Committee

John and Christine had two interviews with Board of Trustee candidates last week. Jessica Stugelmayer is a highly promising candidate they are recommending for Trustee appointment.

John moved to approve the recommendation of Jessica Stugelmayer for Position 2 on the WCLS Board of Trustees to the Whatcom County Executive. Seconded. Passed unanimously.

