

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

April 2005

Director's Report and Highlights

April 19, 2005

Submitted by Pam Kiesner

2006 Budget

The City Department Heads just received a draft of the budget calendar, including activity of the Budget Advisory Committee and Departmental presentations to the committee. Once the calendar is finalized I will be able to frame an outline for our own budget discussions for the remainder of the year in order to meet key budget target dates.

As a starting point, City Finance Director Therese Holm asked departments to review their fee structure and forward changes to her as soon as possible. Included in your packet are copies of the library fees and fines, and an overview of meeting room comparables, compiled by Diana Black who handles our meeting room reservations. As you review these, please let me know if there is additional information I can provide in advance of your meeting.

I recommend that you approve an increase to our meeting room fees, which have not increased for four years.

Our overdue fees are at the top of what most libraries in the area charge, were increased in July 2003, and I do not recommend an increase.

Other fees and fines appear appropriate, and I do not recommend further increases.

Studying the Merger Issue

Periodically questions are raised about the advisability of a merger between the county and city library systems. The Directors, Library Boards, and staff are keenly aware that it is our responsibility to provide library services in the most efficient and effective way to the communities we serve.

As you know, we cooperate in numerous ways, and have for decades. The reciprocal borrowing agreement has been in place for sixty years, and is the hallmark of our cooperation. In the mid-1980's, we cooperated in the selection of an Integrated Library System, even though WCLS was unable to jointly purchase the system at that time. When Bellingham upgraded its system in the early 90's, the two catalogs were joined together.

The most recent cooperative effort was the shared purchase of Horizon, our integrated automated library system. Implementation of this system requires our continuing efforts to provide a seamless and customer friendly system. Our staff groups work together, make appropriate changes in our policies and procedures, and continue to examine areas where additional efficiencies can be achieved.

Collaboration, cooperation, resource sharing: all familiar topics in the library world, and ones with which Joan and I and our staff members talk about – and implement – regularly. Last week a small group of us met to talk about three questions: In what ways do we currently cooperate? What research do we need to conduct to determine the pros and cons of a merger? And, what is the shared message we should convey when asked questions about a merger?

We agreed that I would take the lead on examining these questions further. Joan and I have discussed that the most thorough and unbiased cost benefit analysis may need to be conducted by a third party consultant. In the meantime, we will continue to gather information and share it with you.

Kudos to Whatcom County Library System

Congratulations are in order to Joan Airoldi for receiving the PEN/Newman's Own First Amendment Award "to honor a U.S. resident who has fought courageously, despite adversity, to safeguard the First Amendment right to freedom of expression as it applies to the written word."

Director Joan, Library Board President Amory Peck, and Attorney Deborra Garrett are receiving the award on behalf of WCLS in New York City on April 20. We extend our support and congratulations.

Educational Sessions

On April 6th I attended an AWC-sponsored seminar on "Public Meetings, Public Disclosure & More: Do You Know the Rules?" It was very informative, and as a follow-up, I will ask Assistant City Attorney Alan Marriner to attend an upcoming library board meeting to provide information on your responsibilities under the Open Public Meetings Act.

"Civic Libraries: Lessons Learned" was the name of an AIA-sponsored workshop I attended at the Seattle Public Library on April 7th. Attended primarily by area architects, this was a revealing session on current library design. I met Seattle Public Library Director, Deborah Jacobs – and two architects who have expressed interest in Bellingham, one from the Portland area. Prior to the seminar, I toured the new Puyallup Public Library and visited with Director Mary Jo Torgeson. It's a beautiful building, however functioning efficiently with some design challenges, is another story.

Highlights

What a pleasure to:

- v Meet four times with our Friends groups – the regular membership meeting, Fairhaven friends committee (twice), and the Annual meeting;
- v Serve as a judge for a *Bellingham Herald* essay contest: 7th graders writing convincingly about the attributes of their own neighborhoods;
- v Work behind our circulation desk – taking page calls, checking in and out materials, shelving holds. The experience provided me a whole new perspective on the good work our staff does, and the exceptional Bellingham public who uses the services of the library;
- v Look forward to attending the Washington Library Association conference next week, where I have the honor of presenting Phyllis and Ken Weber with an award for their work with the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library and their extremely successful book sales.

Hope your National Library Week was happy!