

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

May 2005

Director's Report

May 17, 2005

Submitted by Pam Kiesner

Fee increases

The Library Board talked briefly at last month's meeting about increasing library fees and fines for 2006. A proposal is included in this month's packet. The Parks Department is not yet ready with their proposed increases, so I included what they currently charge for similar facilities, and a proposed library increase which brings library charges more in line with Parks. I also included, once again, Diana's explanation of our meeting room charges, for your reference.

Below is a historical perspective of our meeting room revenue. Please note that these amounts generally reflect a split of approximately 2/3 for Fairhaven room rentals and 1/3 Central library. The last time meeting room fees were increased was January, 2002.

Bellingham Public Library meeting room revenue:

2000 \$19,100

2001 \$24,178

2002 \$35,900

2003 \$32,116

2004 \$33,836

An additional increase to discuss is our non-resident borrowing fee (shown as "Library Use Fee" in our budget). We currently charge \$35 for use by people outside of Whatcom County. I propose raising this fee to \$43, more accurately reflecting what our per capita cost is to provide library services to our own residents.

Fees vary across the state from \$35 to \$80. Some examples include:

Whatcom Co: \$35

Spokane: \$42

Burlington: \$45

Tacoma: \$51

Seattle: \$55

Mt.Vernon: \$80

Pierce Co: \$80

Bellingham Public Library non resident borrower fees revenue:

2000 \$2,180.00

2001 \$2,619.00

2002 \$4,511.00

2003 \$3,441.00

2004 \$2,563.00

Budget

Advisory

Committee

The BAC (Budget Advisory Committee) meets every other week. I attended their May 3 meeting which focused on Human Resources and labor issues. Our union representatives were invited

to attend as well. It was revealing to watch how the committee operates. Department Heads are presenting overviews of their 2005 budgets on May 17th and 31st.



Complete information about the BAC is available on the City's web site. Look for the Budget Advisory Committee box on the right hand side of the City's home page: www.cob.org. All BAC meetings are scheduled to be televised within a week after the meeting. The Channel 10 schedule, which is subject to change, is available at <http://www.cob.org/btv10/program-schedule.htm>. The library is also receiving copies of the meetings on DVD, but there is much more of a time lag.

Library Budget for 2006

Alan, Gladys, Gayle and I met to discuss how the budget is formatted, the timeline, and how to help make it more understandable. Alan and I will report briefly on that meeting.

Outreach Services

This month's "trustee education" topic is presented by Jane Lowrey. She will provide an overview of current library outreach services to nursing and retirement facilities, as well as homebound delivery.

Strategic Planning

As follow-up to your May 10th strategic planning work session, I'm including in your packet a list of the site criteria that was developed during the site selection process four years ago. This is provided for your review in preparation for follow-up discussion on the current site selection process. We want to determine if the established criteria are still applicable, and then apply them to selected sites, including the current library "block".

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TO: Library Board Members
FROM: Pam Kiesner
DATE: May 12, 2005
RE: Addendum to Director's Report

In our haste to prepare your packets before Gladys took off for Ireland, I did not include three key items/thoughts as follows:

Policy

The policy we are going to discuss is the "Public use of library bulletin boards and literature racks". I thought we would take a breather from the more substantive policies we've been dealing with. The policy is attached to this memo.

Lobby Redesign

I've asked representatives from our "Lobby Redesign" committee to present a report on where we stand with this project. We will cover this under "strategic planning" as it deals with plans to improve customer service, and the challenges we face in this facility.

Non-Resident User Fee – Further Thoughts

I have proposed for your discussion an increase in our non-resident user fee. As you will see, WCLS charges \$35, and so do we. The proposal for an increase is based on what is being charged elsewhere in many systems, and from Bellingham staff feedback. You will note in my Director's report that the revenue raised through this fee is not a significant revenue stream for us: \$2,563 in 2004. It is my goal to raise your awareness of what other libraries charge, and to share with you that our fee does not necessarily reflect what our own residents pay for library service.

On the other hand, some states (like Wisconsin) have "reciprocal borrowing agreements" statewide (like the reciprocity between Whatcom County library service and Bellingham, whereby we have access to each other's collections as if they were our own). Otherwise known as "universal access" statewide, anyone can borrow anything from any library in the state with no fees. Some libraries in Washington are discussing universal access, and some are implementing more reciprocity, but we do not have a statewide initiative yet. Joan Airolodi and I have talked briefly about this, hoping someday for a structure in Washington that is similar to the other states that have universal access. Joan has expressed interest in more reciprocity with surrounding systems, and I share that same interest. The prevailing theory being that our collections are accessible to anyone in the state who pays taxes for library services no matter where they reside.

The very existence of a non-resident fee is antithetical to universal access - so of course, is raising the fee. I share my philosophical conflict with you at the same time I share a proposed increase. I look for discussion on this issue, and in the end, suggest that we consider keeping the fee at \$35 until such time that it is either eliminated, or we reach agreement on further reciprocal borrowing ventures in concert with Whatcom County Library Services.