

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, March 14, 2006 - Library Board Room
02:30 PM - 05:15 PM

Minutes of Actions and Decisions of the Board of Library Trustees of the Bellingham Public Library as Authorized by RCW 27.12.210 and SEC. 7.02 Charter of the City of Bellingham.

Board Members Present: Chairperson: Tim Douglas, Vice-Chairperson: Alan Kemble, Faye Hill, Vicky Marshall, David Edelstein

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pam Kiesner; Iris Kaneshige; Gladys Fullford

Others: John Watts, City Council Liaison, Tom Glenn, and Margaret Ziegler

Called to Order

Executive Session: To consider labor negotiations and acquisition of real property by lease or by purchase

Regular Session: Convened at 3:10 pm

Contract ratification: David Edelstein moved to ratify the 114L labor agreement. Vicky Marshall seconded. The motion carried.

Public Comment: Tom Glenn is attending as liaison between the Friends and the Board of Trustees.

Trustee Education: Alan Marriner, Assistant City Attorney and liaison from the Legal Department to the Library, explained the Public Disclosure Act, the Open Public Meetings Act, and their impact on Board members. All communications (written, electronic, video, recorded, emails) are considered public unless there is a statutory exemption. If a portion is exempt, only that portion is deleted. There are penalties for failure or delay of disclosure. Disclosure is free; the only fee would be for photo copies, depending on the amount requested. The formal process would include the Legal Department's review of documents for exemption. Jorge Vega, past Planning Director, was quoted, "Never write anything in an email that you are not willing to see on the front page of the newspaper." Tim asked about emails concerning an executive session. Alan said they are not necessarily protected. Items in personnel files are exempt. Attorney advice is protected.

Under the Open Public Meetings Act, a meeting with a majority of Board members present to discuss library business needs a 24-hour notice. This includes Board retreats, workshops, special meetings, committee meetings and electronic meetings, but not training sessions, travel, or when not conducting or discussing business. Alan passed out information from the Municipal Research Service Center. Executive sessions must meet statutory criteria, such as consideration of purchase of real estate when public knowledge would have a negative impact. When the regular meeting is called to order, the Chair announces the purpose of the executive session and the time it will end. If the executive session runs long, the public should be informed. If it runs short, the Board waits until the specified time to restart the regular meeting.

Assume all records are available to the public. If a majority of library board members attend an open community meeting, the concern is whether there was any discussion of library business. Do not sit together. Be clear of statutory basis for going in to executive sessions. No action may take place in executive session. Any action as a result of an executive session takes place in open session. There is no legal requirement to take minutes during an executive session. Board members are reminded that they may not disclose the substance of an executive session and there can be penalties for doing so.

Tom asked if the Friends would fall under these Acts. Alan said the key is whether it is a decision making body using public funds. The Friends are not legally bound by these laws.

Tim asked if the Board needs to adopt City policy. Alan says the Board follows City policy unless there is something unique to the Library Board.

Iris explained UNIQUE debt collection. UNIQUE is a nationwide billing agency that partners with libraries to collect debts. It can take 120 days for a patron to go into debt collection. We send information to UNIQUE, averaging 10 names per week. UNIQUE charges \$8.95 per account. Recovery rate is 50%. Iris handed out information about UNIQUE which included a graph comparison of what has been submitted and collected.

David asked about how to get our customers to return materials in a timely manner. Iris mentioned one issue related to the number of items allowed to check out to new registrants and that some libraries have a probationary period. Patrons need proof of residency to obtain a library card. We do not have a probationary period. Patrons can check out 50 items from BPL, 120 items from WCLS. David suggested the Board has a fiduciary responsibility to the community to protect the collection. Faye asked if probation periods are common. Vancouver has a three month probationary period. Iris can do more research for the Board. David would like to know how many items leave the Library and do not come back. Most often it is media items. This subject will be scheduled for discussion at a future meeting.

Minutes approved: February 21, 2006 regular meeting minutes approved as read.

Claims approved: February, 2006 general fund \$46,093.09; gift fund \$1,735.35

Pam explained that Whatcom Community Foundation distributes the fund's earnings to us, calling it a grant. We return the distribution to the fund. Pam will invite the new Foundation director to come to a Board meeting and talk about our account, and the services of the Foundation.

Statistics: John asked if we attempt to count and record the number of people in attendance when our meetings rooms are rented or used. This would be a good extrapolation of information to present to the public on the use of the library. Pam explained that we currently do not ask for that number from members of the public who reserve our rooms. Pam plans to add the use of express check-out to the statistics. It was 44% in February. Alan Kemble noticed a waiting line to use the express check-out. Instructions have been clarified. Tim complimented the staff on its public service attitude.

Communications: One email from Garey Vodopich. Board members expressed appreciation for his good ideas. Vicky suggested thanking him for his thoughts for the Board's consideration. Pam has spoken with him on the phone, and will also follow up with a thank you on behalf of the Board.

Strategic Planning: Pam spoke with Myron Carlson about commissioning the Fairhaven structural review. They will possibly start with the previous assessment, and update it. Tim asked if it addressed all structural issues. The Board needs to know the range of things that need to be done. Fairhaven is a one floor library. Two floors are for community use. Pam will bring a draft RFP for the Fairhaven structural review to the Board. Pam mentioned the property next door to the Fairhaven Library is for sale. A purchase would be forward looking for any future addition. Tim said better information on the future growth of Bellingham is needed.

Pam has asked Chris Behee to provide a map showing current and projected population of all Bellingham neighborhoods. Approximately 12,000 people live in county urban growth areas. Is there a potential to possibly annex with the promise of a library presence? David suggested that when someone wants to submit a master plan for a community, property is sometimes given for parks, school, library, hospital, town hall. The middle area is zoned commercial with land further out, residential. The City in exchange staffs the public facilities. The library is a learning facility and will attract good development. Pam is gathering materials to bring to the Board about how we might define library "presence."

John suggested that perhaps Janice Keller could help with the planning and staging of a learning party. Vicky appreciates what John wrote in response to a recent Whatcom Independent editorial. Faye said she was uncomfortable with the word “party.” Other ideas included, “celebration, festival, reception.” Tim said we need to find a way to engage representative groups in the community, and engage some of their ideas. Vicky said the schools should be made aware of what the Friends have volunteered to the schools. She also suggested using an intern from WWU for the groundwork to put this together. Healthy Communities Coalition uses WWU people representing WWU departments.

Pam met with Carl Oekerman, who facilitated the previous public process. She asked him for a proposal on how to bring the community back to continue the “community conversations” begun in 2003. Alan said Carl handled the previous process very well.

John suggested sharpening the goal after debate. Use the “informed consent” process to identify interested parties. Patricia Decker would be a good resource in bringing the final process together before going to a bond issue.

Reports: Tim spoke to Stowe Talbot. Their first townhouse construction in Barkley Village starts in June. Multi use space will be in the second building.

John reported that City Council was successful in getting the Greenways levy on the ballot. It must pass to get all the needed things funded.

Vicky mentioned that she appreciates that our brochures are in Spanish and Russian as well as English.

Director’s Report: Pam cited a report she received from Dick Little, City Lobbyist, who reported the legislative session did not pass SB5333 which dealt with property tax levy lids as follows: Library districts, ports, and cities worked to pass SB5333...Existing law allows levy increases for up to 6 years or for specific purposes. However, at the end of the period, the dollar amount upon which further levies are computed is “rebased” to the original amount. SB5333 would have allowed future levies to be computed based on the ending amount of the levy lift, but the bill died in the House Rules Committee. Pam has been asked to serve as a board member of the Whatcom Literacy Council. Pam is going to the PLA conference and pre-conference on library building in Boston next week. Applications for the Assistant Director position and the Head of Information and Reader Services are being reviewed.

A new “Campaign for the Arts” brochure was distributed to the board members. Their brochure shows a new library on the current site. The Library block is included in the Arts District. Copies of newspaper articles concerning the Library were also passed to the board members.

Other Matters: None.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – April 18, 2006 will begin at 2:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees